

The Buzz Group as a Suggested Reading Technique to Improve Reading Comprehension of Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This paper discusses The Buzz Group as a suggested reading technique to improve Junior High School students' reading comprehension. 2006 KTSP curriculum of the Junior High School states that reading is an essential skill to be mastered by the students. Based on the writer's teaching practice at a junior high school, most students found difficulties in comprehending reading texts. Besides, they were not actively engaged in learning activities as the teachers applied teacher- techniques. Teachers should find out appropriate techniques to make the students get more interested in reading activity. In this paper, the writer suggests a technique called Buzz Group as an alternative to teach reading

Introduction

English, which has a significant role as the international language, becomes more and more important in the context of globalization. According to the 2006 KTSP curriculum of Junior High School, the ultimate objective of English instruction is to develop English communicative competence in the form of oral and written language, namely: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Hartoyo (2011) stated that English Language Teaching in junior high school is aimed at enabling students to reach functional level in a sense that they can communicate in spoken and written way to solve daily problems.

He further explains that the purposes of English language teaching in junior high school are:

1) developing communicative competence in spoken and written language to reach functional literacy.

2) generating awareness about the nature and importance of English to improve nation's competitiveness in global society, and

3) developing students' understanding about the relationship between language and culture.

According to the 2006 KTSP curriculum of Junior High School, the standard of competence of English reading at the seventh grade of junior high school is understanding meaning of functional written text and simple essay in the forms of description and procedure texts dealing with surrounding environment. Moreover, the basic competences of English reading at this grade are giving response to meaning of the simple short functional written text accurately dealing with surrounding environment and giving response to meaning and to rhetorical procedure of the simple essay accurately dealing with surrounding environment in the forms of description and procedures texts.

At junior high schools the teaching and learning process is targeted to enable students to gain the functional literacy that is the ability of communication both in simple oral and written English to deal with the daily life content, such as understanding manuals, asking/giving information, apologizing, etc (Depdiknas:

2006). From the standard of competence and the basic competences, it can be concluded that ideally in reading the students should be able to:

- (1) infer meaning.
- (2) find detailed information of the text.
- (3) identify referent of the text.
- (4) identify main idea of the text.
- (5) identify implied information of the text.
- (6) identify the generic structure of the text.
- (7) identify communicative purpose of the text.

Based on the writer's experience during teaching practice in a junior high school Surabaya, the writer found that the students' comprehension was low based on test scores. Some students said that they were bored and not interested in reading class for the teacher dominated the classroom. Moreover, they said teacher only asked them to do some exercises in the workbook. The teacher did not add more materials from another sources. They found it difficult in comprehending a text given. The students also tended to be passive during the teaching and learning process. They were not actively engaged in the learning activities. Only a few of them were enthusiastic in learning reading.

There are some techniques that can be used by the teacher in teaching reading, but the writer suggests a technique to stimulate engagement and discussion called the Buzz Group. This discussion of this paper is, therefore, focuses on the buzz group as

a suggested reading technique to improve the comprehension for junior high school students.

The Nature of Reading

Reading is one of learning ways for students to enrich their ability and knowledge. In reading, the students are expected to be able to comprehend what they have read. It has really been essential in this modern age. It has been an important part of this globalization era. Experts give many definitions of reading. Herewith, the writer represents some of them to draw what reading actually is comprehensively.

Grabe (1991:377) says that reading is an active process of comprehending the text where the students need to be taught strategies to read more efficiently (e. g. guess from context, define expectations, make inferences about the text, skim ahead to fill in the context, etc). It means the teachers should be more creative to teach reading to the students.

William (1996: 2) states that reading is a process whereby one looks at and understands what has been written. In other word, we can say that reading is a process of communication between writer and the reader. A similar definition is stated by Aebersold and Field (1997: 15). They state reading is what happens when people look at a text and assign meaning to the written symbols in that text. It means that reading is the process of reader's mind or process of mind activity trying to interpret the perception of symbols that present language. In other words, the students should read the text by anticipating meaning and interpreting what they read.

Besides, Milaningrum,E. (2011) says that reading implies both a writer and a reader. A writer puts his ideas onto the page and the reader tries to understand the author's meaning and thinks about what he has read. Because it is used to communicate, when reading one needs to figure out what is being read. In other words, one should comprehend or understand the ideas. Reading is one of the aspects noted as an important ability in broadening readers' perspectives, giving them a chance to see the world.

The Nature of Reading Comprehension

Reading means to understand the meaning of printed word. It is an active process which consists of recognition and comprehension skill (Patel & Jain, 2008). Reading is not only about how to pronounce and to know the meaning of words, but also how the readers comprehend the idea of the writer in written form. Reading cannot be separated from comprehension. Comprehension is an active process which the reader actively engages in a text to construct meaning.

According to Kennedy (1981: 192), reading comprehension is a thought process through which reader becomes aware of an idea, understands it in terms of their experiential background and interprets it in relation to their own needs and purposes. Kennedy adds that reading comprehension is not a skill or ability that can be developed once and for all at any level of instruction. It is a cumulative process that begins in early childhood and continues as long as an individual reads for

information. To simplify, reading is not an instant process. The teachers should make it as students' habits.

Keith Lenz, Ph.D (2000) stated that reading comprehension is the process of comprehending involves decoding the writer's words and then using background knowledge to construct an approximate understanding of the writer's message. It means the teachers should give the background knowledge to the students for they understand the main idea of the text.

Klinger (2007) states that meaning, learning, and pleasure are the ultimate goals of learning to read. Knowing how to read words has ultimately little value if the students are unable to construct meaning from the text. Ultimately, reading comprehension is the process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of complex processes that include word reading, word and world knowledge. It can be concluded that reading comprehension involves much more than readers' responses to the text.

From the authors' definitions above, the writer concludes that in reading comprehension the student interprets the words to make meaning of the words can be different for different students. To master the reading skill, students should not only know the meaning of words. They should truly comprehend the whole idea of the passage.

Meanwhile, reading is viewed as an interactive, social cognitive process involving a text, a reader, and social context within which the activity of reading takes place. It means the reader constructs meaning through his transaction with the

written text. The transaction involves interpretation which is influenced by his experience, language background, cultural framework and purposes of reading

According to the writer's observation at a junior high school Surabaya, reading had not been the enjoyable activity for the students yet. For them, reading was only the obligatory to do. For this reason, the teacher should stimulate the students to be more enthusiastic to do activities related to reading.

Students' Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

The writer found that the students of the junior high school whom the writer taught during teaching practice were facing some difficulties to comprehend reading texts. They really had difficulty in finding word meaning, main ideas, the generic structure and identifying communicative purpose of the text.

Below are some causes of the problems:

1. The students did not have enough background knowledge about the text they would read. It was difficult for them to predict what the text was about. It made them hard to understand the text.
2. The students also faced difficulty in understanding the text because of their lack of vocabulary. In reading activity, the students tended to translate the unknown words that are found in the text word by word. It would change the meaning of the words in the sentence or the text. It was not appropriate to interpret only word by word.

3. The teacher-centered technique that was usually used in teaching reading comprehension made the students still hard to catch the idea from the text.

Furthermore, the writer found some causes why the students were not that enthusiastic in reading activity. Unfortunately, the problems deal with the way the teachers taught the students reading. They did not use any creative technique to teach reading. Teacher-centered approach was always used in their teaching learning process, such as:

- Getting reading materials from a text book and a work book only.
- Asking the students in the class to read silently then answer questions of the text.
- Getting involved too much at the class and only read the written text without knowing whether the students got the information or not.
- Asking them to submit the task without discussing with their friends.
- Making mistakes is really forbidden.

This model of reading directs students to be the passive rather than active readers. Second, the students also lack of motivation in studying English, especially reading. Most students were still afraid and difficult to comprehend and interpret reading text. Besides they did not have self-confidence, they were shy and afraid of making mistakes when they were asked to answer the question orally in reading class.

Success in school is often defined narrowly in terms of the marks that students achieve in tests. This premise, that 'results' are all that matter in education, allows no

place for mistakes. There is a need to realize that the learning process is just as important as getting the correct answer (Salim, Ainee Shehzad. 2014).

In this regard, teachers need to help create a congenial and supportive environment in which students do not fear failure and making mistakes is seen as an opportunity to learn and grow. This will happen if teachers start guiding students to learn from their mistakes, and encourage them to indulge in cycles of strategies, re-strategizing until the required result is obtained. Examples of famous people, whose achievements did not result from their first attempt, should be related and students need to be told that the mistakes that these people made turned out to be the stepping stones towards their success. The inappropriate teaching habits lead the negative effects for the students. Below are the effects:

- The students tend to be passive learners.
- They are not interested in the reading class.
- They do not have sufficient intrinsic motivation to learn English especially in reading classroom.
- They do not have willingness to participate during the teaching learning process.
- They are noisy in the teaching and learning process by chatting with their friends.
- They only read the text when the teacher asks them without knowing what the text was about.

- The teacher seriously needs to change the way she teaches for the students will get more enthusiasm. The lively class situation will lead them to have more spirit in learning English especially reading.

The teacher can classify and use effective technique for this purpose. For Junior High School students, reading technique is very important for students' development. Klinger (2007) stated that reading comprehension is a multi component, highly complex process that involves many interactions between reader and what they bring to the text (previous knowledge, strategy use) as well as variables related to the text itself (interest in the text, understanding of the text type). It can be concluded that suitable techniques are very needed for students' improvement.

There are many kinds of reading technique that can be used. The Buzz Group Technique can be an option for teachers who want to strengthen their students' reading comprehension.

The Buzz Group

A buzz Group is a small group assembled to work on a problem and report solutions. They are frequently used in classroom training. They may also be used in simple problem-solving (Rothwell and Kazam 421:2003). It is used to engage learners and re-energize the group. To initiate the buzz group, pose a question and ask learner to discuss their responses in pairs or group no longer than four learners (Jeffries and Huggett 2010:35). It can be concluded that the buzz group technique is small groups of students find solutions and report back to entire class.

According to Brewer, E. W. (1997) there are some advantages of using Buzz Group, such as: (1) It allows everyone's ideas to be expressed, (2) participants learn to work in real-life situations where others' opinion are considered, (3) it sets the groundwork to get discussion started, (4) because members are expressing opinions, it is good for dealing with controversial subjects.

To sum up, the buzz group technique is very effective to be implemented in reading activity because the teacher can divide a large group into smaller groups. It means all students can deliver their own opinion to their friends without being ashamed. This technique is beneficial because it gives all students the freedom to express themselves equally, so every student gets a chance to contribute to the discussion to solving the problem in question. Moreover, Buzz Group also overcome students difficulties in reading comprehension obstacles such as having not enough background knowledge, having lack of vocabulary and the teacher-centered technique implementation at class.

Main Procedural Steps in Using the Buzz Group

Melendez and Pritchard (1985) argue that to enhance comprehension, students should be engaged in the active process. The buzz group technique is one of suggested technique to encourage students' enthusiasm.

According to Yulmiati (2013), before teaching reading process begins, the teacher has to prepare everything to make teaching reading successful, such as

prepare the lesson plan, choose a topic or a reading material, give time allocation and provide the media.

Furthermore, she stated that in pre-teaching activities, the teacher should do some activities such as greet the whole class, check the students attendance list, give motivation, ask some questions to the students in order to make a good relationship among them or to create a good atmosphere in the class.

Below are the steps of the Buzz Group according to Brewer, E. W. (1997)

- 1) Introducing the issue or problem to be discussed.
- 2) Dividing the class into several groups
- 3) Asking the groups to choose their own leader and recorders
- 4) Giving specified time allocation at the
- 5) Moving from group to group, listening and, when necessary, raising questions to stimulate discussion or bring the discussion back on track.
- 6) Reconvening the group into the large group
- 7) Asking the recorders to get together to summarize their findings into a report on the topic discussed.

The Implementation of the Buzz Group Technique in Teaching Reading to Junior High School Students

There were many creative techniques which the teacher can use. One of the best techniques to encourage passion of learning reading for Junior High School students is Buzz Group. It is best used to enhance discussion, especially when the

overall group is large. It also depends on the teacher who takes role in a classroom. The teacher should be creative. A creative teacher will help the students to master the materials that they have already learned. Reading is not an easy part to learn, because it needs suitable techniques to make reading easier to understand. And not only technique but also some English aspects should include in it, such as understanding to grammatical and vocabulary. Good teaching enables students to learn to read and read to learn (Pang at all 2003:21).

Before implementing Buzz Group technique, there are some preparation should be done by the teacher. First, the teacher should prepare the appropriate yet interesting materials for the level of the students. The material can be taken from package book, internet or the other source. Second preparation is providing the media. The media can be pictures, texts, things, etc., which are suitable with the material that the teacher will teach.

Below are the procedures of implementing the Buzz Group according to Brewer, E. W. (1997)

1. Introducing the issue or problem to be discussed.
 - The teacher may choose to use a new text or material that the class will be reading. For instance, the teacher gives the descriptive text entitled Alaska to all students. The Professional Teacher Education Module Series (1984) suggests narrowing the topic, allowing for participant achievement level, and having time restrictions to prevent a high frustration level among the participants.

2. Dividing the class into several groups.
 - The teacher asks the students to make a group consist of 3-4 persons, depending on the number of students in the class. Buzz groups with more than three people usually involve moving some chairs around so that each group can form its own circle. Circular seating enhances the discussion of each group and helps the members of the group become better acquainted with each other.
3. Asking the groups to choose their own leader and recorders.
 - The group leader makes certain that the members of the group become acquainted with each other, leads the discussion, and tries to get all the members of the group to participate. The group recorders take notes and prepare a summary to be presented when all groups come together. The group recorders may be asked to get together later to summarize their findings into a report on the topic discussed. When the buzz groups are very small, with only two or three members, the formality of selecting a group leader and recorder is not necessary. In those cases, the teacher should just ask each group to appoint a spokesperson to present their information at the end of the buzz group session.
4. Giving specified time allocation at the beginning.
 - The time allocation can range from 2 to 20 minutes, depending on the number of people in each group, the complexity of the issue, and the purpose of the buzz groups.

5. Moving from group to group to stimulate the discussion works well
 - The teacher should move from group to group to listen and, when necessary, raise questions to bring the discussion back on track. However, the teacher should be careful not to stay too long at any group so that the members will not direct their questions to him or her.
6. Reconvening the groups into the large group
 - At the 1 or 2 minute mark, the teacher should sound a warning that time is almost up. When the time has ended, the teacher reconvenes the group into the large group has reported
7. Asking the recorders to get together to summarize their findings into a report on the topic discussed.
 - The teacher asks the group recorders to report their answers of five questions about Alaska in front of the class. The teacher makes certain that the members of the group become acquainted with each other, leads the discussion, and tries to get all the members of the group to participate.

Below is the example descriptive text with questions which the teacher can use for implementing Buzz Group. It is suitable for Junior High School students grade 7 based on the curriculum.

Alaska



Alaska is in west of Canada. It sits on the Arctic Circle, between the Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. The climate there is stormy and cold. Some people call Alaska “The Last Frontier” because it has such huge, empty spaces. Alaska is enormous. It covers over 1.7 million square kilometers. Alaska is almost as large as the entire country of Mexico.

South-central Alaska also lies along the Pacific coast. It includes Alaska’s largest city, Anchorage. Most of the land in Alaska is in what many Alaskans call “The Interior”. The Interior is full of mountains, glaciers, and Arctic tundra. The climate is freezing cold, and it can also be quite dry. Very few people live in this part of state.

Alaska is famous for its snowy mountains, giant forests, crystal-clear lakes, and beautiful coastline. This wild land is home to grizzly bears, moose, polar bears, wolves, bald eagles, and caribou. Whales, seals, sea lions, sea otters, and fish live in its waters. Many animals in Alaska have thick fur or blubber to keep warm.

ANSWER THESE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS!

1. Where is the location of Alaska?

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2. Why some people call Alaska “The Last Frontier”?

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3. What is Alaska famous for?

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4. Mention the animals that live in Alaska’s waters!

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5. According to your opinion, why only very few people live in Alaska?

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This descriptive text entitled Alaska is just an example for implementing the Buzz Group to the students. The teachers may give the other texts which is suitable to learning activities.

The Buzz Group technique really provides opportunities for the students to understand the lesson material more by asking each other group member without being ashamed and afraid, since the students are usually afraid to ask the difficulties to the teacher.

Milaningrum (2011) stated that by using buzz groups technique, students can learn in the group discussion so that they are easier to express themselves and share their understanding of written text in reading classroom. One of the ways to discuss texts deeply and to give students experience is through social interaction. Group interaction in the buzz group technique makes available a broader range of perception than a problem that occurs when an individual thinks alone. When a student solves her/or his problem in solitude, he or she uses his/her own sensitivity and therefore involves limited perception.

In opposite to this, group's interaction is an effective problem solving because the interaction involves others to contribute ideas and perception for solution to a problem. When one individual gives response to the problem, he or she stimulates further analysis by another member of the group. This will lead another student to refine their thinking by giving feed back or share their different ideas. Students will create interaction to each other discussing text, questioning and sharing points of view so that the students can gain and assimilate knowledge and at last find solution for the problem.

Overall, buzz group is an excellent means of getting total participation by large groups. With a well-prepared presenter and good discussion, the buzz group can

be a lively and effective means of learning. Ryan (1992) points out that buzz groups are ideal for the exploration of topics and the revelation of individual and collective opinion. Buzz groups can be used to solve a problem, decide on a question to ask the presenter, or review information that has been previously reported.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, the writer suggests Buzz Group to be one of best techniques to be implemented at class. The activities during The Buzz Group technique can increase students' confidence and also leads the students to be more active and more interested in learning reading. They can learn not only from the teacher but also their friends while the discussion comes up.

The teacher should be more creative in teaching reading instead of using a conventional teaching method that is a teacher-centered. Choosing the appropriate technique is much recommended for teaching reading in Junior High School stage. Setting a good time allocation is also important to make the reading process runs well.

Overall, the writer hopes that by implementing the Buzz Group technique to Junior High School students, they can be more enthusiastic and more active in the reading activity.

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Lesson Plan

Level	: Junior High School
Subject	: English
Grade	: VII
Language Skill	: Reading
Method	: Buzz Group
Topic	: Alaska
Text Type	: Descriptive
Time Allocation	: 1x 45 minutes

A. Standard of Competence

Students understand the meaning of short functional text and essay formed descriptive text in the daily activity and for accessing knowledge

B. Basic Competence

Responding the meaning and rhetoric steps in an essay that uses variety written accurately, fluency and based on daily activity and for accessing knowledge in a descriptive text

C. Achievement Indicators

Identifying the general information of the descriptive text

Identifying the specified information of the descriptive text

Comprehending the descriptive text entitled Borobudur Temple

Answering the questions correctly based on the passage

D. Learning Objectives

Students are able to identify the general information of the descriptive text

Students are able to identify the specified information of the descriptive text

Students are able to comprehend the descriptive text entitled Borobudur Temple

Students are able to answer the questions correctly based on the passage

E. Learning Materials

1. A descriptive text entitled Alaska
2. A task consists of five questions based on the descriptive text

Alaska



Alaska is in west of Canada. It sits on the Arctic Circle, between the Pacific and the Arctic Oceans. The climate there is stormy and cold. Some people call Alaska “The Last Frontier” because it has such huge, empty spaces. Alaska is enormous. It covers over 1.7 million square kilometers. Alaska is almost as large as the entire country of Mexico.

South-central Alaska also lies along the Pacific coast. It includes Alaska’s largest city, Anchorage. Most of the land in Alaska is in what many Alaskans call “The Interior”. The Interior is full of mountains, glaciers, and Arctic tundra. The climate is freezing cold, and it can also be quite dry. Very few people live in this part of state.

Alaska is famous for its snowy mountains, giant forests, crystal-clear lakes, and beautiful coastline. This wild land is home to grizzly bears, moose, polar bears, wolves, bald eagles, and caribou. Whales, seals, sea lions, sea otters, and fish live in its waters. Many animals in Alaska have thick fur or blubber to keep warm.

ANSWER THESE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS!

1. Where is the location of Alaska?

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2. Why some people call Alaska “The Last Frontier”?

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3. What is Alaska famous for?

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4. Mention the animals that live in Alaska’s waters!

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5. According to your opinion, why only very few people live in Alaska?

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ANSWER KEY

1. Alaska is in west of Canada. It sits on the Arctic Circle, between the Pacific and the Arctic Oceans.
2. Some people call Alaska “The Last Frontier” because it has such huge, empty spaces.
3. Alaska is famous for its snowy mountains, giant forests, crystal-clear lakes, and beautiful coastline.
4. Whales, seals, sea lions, sea otters, and fish live in Alaska’s waters.
5. According to me, only very few people in Alaska because its climate is freezing cold, and it can also be quite dry.

F. Approach and Method

Approach : Cooperative Learning

Method : Buzz Group

G. Media and Source

Media : Students' worksheet

A white board

A marker

Source : <http://www.readinga-z.com>

Teaching and Learning Activities

Stages	Teacher's Scaffolding	Students' Response	Time Allocation
Pre-Instructional Activities	Greeting the students: "Good morning, students." "How are you today?" "I'm fine too, thank you" "Nice to meet you again Class"	Responding to the teacher's greeting	5 minutes
	Giving triggering questions: "Ok Class, do you still remember about your last vacation?" "Where did you visit?" "Great, there are so many famous countries in the world" "Can you mention one of them?"	Answering the teacher's questions Answering the teacher's	

<p>Whilst- Instructi onal Activities</p>	<p>“Excellent!, now I’d like you to know more about one of the most popular countries in the world.”</p> <p>“Now, please make a group consists of four people with friends near you. I’ll give a minute to decide. Please do not make any noise!”</p> <p>“Time is up!. Please have a seat with your group members”</p> <p>“Now, each group should choose one leader and one recorder. The leaders are responsible to lead the discussion, and try to get all the members of the group to participate. On the other hand, the group recorders take notes and prepare a summary to be presented when all groups come together.”</p>	<p>questions</p> <p>Paying attention</p> <p>Responding to the teacher’s explanation</p> <p>Paying attention</p> <p>Paying attention</p>	<p>30 minutes</p>
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<p>“Now, I’ll give each of you an interesting reading text”</p> <p>“ Have all of you got the text?”</p> <p>“ What is the title of the text?”</p> <p>“ Do you know what kind of text is it?”</p> <p>“ Great, it is a descriptive text. A text which describes a particular person, place, or thing”</p> <p>“Could you please pay attention at the board?”</p> <p>Descriptive text has the structure as below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification: identifying the phenomenon to be described. • Description: describing the phenomenon in parts, qualities, or/and characteristics. <p>“Do this text use Past Tense?”</p> <p>“So, what tense is used there?”</p> <p>“Excellent! The tense used here is Simple Present Tense</p>	<p>Answering the teacher’s questions</p> <p>Answering the teacher’s questions</p> <p>Answering the teacher’s questions</p>	
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<p>ideas?”</p> <p>“Great!. How about all recorders? Were you nervous to come in front to tell your group’s opinion?”</p> <p>“Overall, what have you done today?”</p> <p>“Great, and what have we learnt today?”</p> <p>“Excellent!”</p> <p>Leave taking</p> <p>“I think it is enough for today, thank you for your cooperative Class. See you!”</p>	<p>Responding to the teacher</p>	<p>Total 45 minutes</p>
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