

## Teachers' Problems and Challenges in Conducting Online Assessment

**Dina Handrayani**

Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia,  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2071-7135>

**Abstract:** Assessment is an essential activity in learning and teaching. It is classified into two categories based on its function: summative and formative assessments. During the pandemic, school learning activities, such as assessment, have been altered into online learning, which is quite challenging to carry out. This study investigated the kinds of summative and formative assessments used by EFL teachers during online learning and the problems as well as challenges encountered when conducting the assessment. This study utilized a qualitative approach with narrative design, involving five EFL teachers from five different senior high schools in Bandung, Indonesia. The research participants were chosen using a purposive sampling technique. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews via virtual meetings and WhatsApp video calls to collect the required data. The results of this study showed that the EFL teachers implemented both summative and formative assessments during online learning; for summative, the teachers followed the school policy using midterm and final exams with multiple choice. Meanwhile, in formative assessment, teachers used different kinds of assignments, such as portfolios, videos, podcasts, attendance, and presentations. However, they also found problems and challenges, such as students' academic dishonesty, lack of motivation, internet connection issues, and technicality issues with technology.

**Keywords:** Online assessment, summative assessment, formative assessment, problems, challenges.

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### Introduction

In 2019, the world abruptly changed because of COVID-19. As a result, all the activities carried out outside, such as working, religious prayers, and learning must be done from home. Due to the unprecedented COVID-19 incident, learning and teaching are some of the most affected activities as it is usually conducted in face-to-face classes (Guangul et al., 2020). Nasir et al. (2021) stated that the COVID-19 outbreak had forced learning settings to take place online to avoid the spread of the outbreak among children. UNESCO noticed that 188 countries have suspended schools and carried out learning-teaching processes outside of school using online learning. Indonesia also declared a regulation by issuing circular letter Number 4 of 2020 concerning the implementation of Educational Policies during the Emergency Period for the Spread of COVID-19 to transform offline classes into online classes for all levels of education (Werdiyanti, 2021).

Conducting online learning was challenging. Most learning methods and media had to be altered using the appropriate technology. According to Kuama & Intharaksa (2016), teaching and learning using technology represented a shift away from conventional learning techniques to online learning. Using an online system, teaching and learning become student-centered, allowing students to find their style in learning. The continuously growing learning media technology and internet in online learning proved to deliver a more effective learning and teaching process (Clarke & Hermens, 2001). A variety of new learning models involved technology which is usually utilised in Indonesia, for instance, Google Classroom, WhatsApp, *Kelas Cerdas*, Zoom Meeting, Google Meeting, Zenius, Quipper, Quizziz, Kahoot!, and Microsoft Teams (Hermanto & Srimulyani, 2021). Moreover, Kumar & Nanda (2019) added that social media applications could be used in online learning processes, such as Instagram and Facebook. It is widely approved that many kinds of technology can be used for online learning activities.

Utilizing technology as an online learning tool can be used as a resource throughout the evaluation or assessment process in various subjects in school, such as English (Kristiyanti, 2021). In the online learning and teaching process, EFL teachers still need to assess and evaluate students' needs and abilities, as well as understanding the materials that students obtain from online learning (Lisyowati et al., 2021). Assessment plays a vital role in foreign language teaching (Fitriani, 2019). It is also stated by Fulcher & Davidson (2006) that assessment is considered essential to enhance students' performance in improving teaching and learning. Brown & Abeywickrama (2010) stated that assessment is divided into two types, namely formative and summative assessment. Both types evaluate the students' teaching and learning process.

### **Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment is aimed to evaluate students' understanding by measuring students' progress concerning language learning through the distribution of midterm tests and final exams throughout the semester (Torres, 2019). The results of summative assessment can help teachers determine to what extent students are capable of the materials and decide for materials used in the next lesson. In addition, summative assessment usually analyzes quantitative data from students' academic performance when conducting the midterm tests and final exams following the Ministry of Education policy or the school policy (Siegler & Pyke, 2011). This assessment aims to seek documents comprehensively and describe students' academic performance from their midterm tests or final semester exam scores that mostly involve closed-book activity (Naughton et al., 2011). However, in an online situation, Lesnick & Miller (2004) stated that summative assessment needs to facilitate and document the student's ability with students' perfective and personal experience when learning takes place in a midterm or final exam. The goal of summative assessment in online learning is not to memorize all the learning materials, but to involve the optimization of the use of assessment tools that focus on problem-solving, critical analysis on media sources, and students' experience.

There are several techniques in conducting summative assessment in online learning, according to Perera-Diltz

& Moe (2014). They stated that there were three techniques in summative assessment, namely Rubrics: Case Studies, Tests and Examinations, journals, Blogs, and WIKIS. The use of case studies to assess students' abilities that focus on problem-solving and decision-making skills, the textual construction of students' perspective and engagement with the materials, and students' experience. The Rubrics of Case Studies prevent students from closing books that do not impact their achievement (Williams, 2005). Another technique is Tests and Examinations, which were compared by Williams and Wong (2009) when carried out online and when it was implemented face-to-face. Both formats disregard academic dishonesty or cheating. It was then discovered that students preferred having online tests because they were allowed to access any resource and the exam was held asynchronously. Meanwhile, face-to-face situations required students to have closed-resource (book) examinations which were time-limited, synchronous, and allowed only single-attempt submission of exams.

Furthermore, multiple-choice tests are one of the types of summative assessments. A multiple-choice test is a formal and objective test that assesses certain skills, such as English skills (listening, vocabulary, structure, and reading). There are several advantages of multiple-choice tests, such as efficiency, the possibility of bias that teacher grade students' scores, and easier to identify students' mistakes. The disadvantages of multiple-choice in conducting summative assessment include the opportunity for students to randomly guess the answer, students' tendency to have subjective opinions, students becoming less knowledgeable, and the luck factor (Qu & Zhang, 2013). Besides, in conducting summative assessment, the types of tests can be in the form of mid-term tests, final tests in the forms of multiple-choice, short answers, essays, and final projects. Teachers can create summative assessment questions using Google Forms during online learning and share them via online chat, WhatsApp, or Google Classroom (Werdiyanti, 2021)

## **Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment is the ongoing evaluation conducted by teachers in students' learning activities. According to Qu & Zhang (2013), formative assessment investigates, evaluates, and analyzes students' comprehension in learning activities. Formative assessment can often examine student performance, whether formal or informal. It provides the teacher with feedback and students' comprehensive understanding to help them decide on the appropriate teaching methods.

According to Torres (2019), when conducting formative assessments, teachers are able to use alternative instruments, for instance, journals, task-based projects, self-evaluation exercises, and peer assessments. Formative assessments can be evaluated through students' presentation of homework assignments, student attendance, student participation, and their quality of language skills during classroom activities. Gikandi et al. (2011) determined the characteristics of validity when conducting a formative assessment; assessment activity is authentic (i.e., engage students in making decisions and solving problems), effective formative assessment (i.e., feedback is comprehensive), multi-dimensional perspectives, and student support with teacher mentoring. Informative assessment, such as student dishonesty, is not associated with this assessment.

EFL teachers find conducting assessments as a difficult task as they ought to prepare the relevant methods, techniques, and possibilities that may happen in online classes. Teachers encounter problems and challenges in assessments during online learning as there were no clear policies and guidelines. They had difficulties with teaching strategies, applicable assessment alternatives, as well as the growing duties of students and teachers (Guangul et al., 2020). Thus, based on the phenomena of online learning and the difficulties teachers engage when assessing students, the researcher tries to identify EFL teachers' problems and challenges in conducting summative and formative assessments during online learning.

Various related literature reviews have explored other aspects relevant to this study. Mohamadi (2018) examined the comparative effects of online summative and formative assessment on EFL students' writing ability. In his study, an online summative assessment with an IELTS rating scale and an online portfolio writing assessment in the e-writing forum was conducted. The results concluded that the use of engaging technology and techniques when combined with the appropriate assessment strategies contributed to having efficient and powerful learning activities. This research focuses on the challenges of remote assessment in higher education during the outbreak of the COVID-19. This research only focuses on the main challenge identified in the remote assessment: dishonesty, and aligned with the research stated by Guangul, et al. (2020), the best option to solve the problem was using online presentation. Another research carried out by Zhang, et al. (2021) explained that six EFL teachers in China had their first time conducting online assessments. Most of them had to change the formative assessments which were usually distributed and rearrange the summative assessments. Furthermore, Werdiyanti (2021) identified the method teachers utilized in conducting assessments and overcoming the challenges of online learning. She elaborated that the teachers used e-portfolios, self-assessments, and final exams for summative assessment.

This research involved EFL teachers from five different senior high schools in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, to examine the problems and challenges found in the use of summative and formative assessments during online learning. This research addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the kinds of assessments employed during online learning?
2. What are the problems and challenges in conducting summative and formative assessments in English classes during online learning?

## Method

This research utilized a qualitative approach with a narrative design that involved five English teachers from senior high schools in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, as participants. These English teachers were chosen through purposive sampling technique. They were selected based on some requirements from different senior high schools in Bandung, the teachers' genders, and their experience.

Table 1. Research Participants

Participant	Sex	Age	Teachers' Experience	Type of School
Teacher 1	Female	47	20	Private school
Teacher 2	Male	41	16	Public School
Teacher 3	Male	30	6	Public School
Teacher 4	Female	25	4	Public School
Teacher 5	Female	24	3	Private School

The researcher used semi-structured interviews conducted online through virtual meeting softwares such as WhatsApp voice calling to gather the data. The interviews were conducted in a relaxed and conducive atmosphere to ensure that the teachers were at ease to express their opinions and explain in detail how they assessed students during online learning. The collected data were analyzed descriptively using an in-depth qualitative analysis completed with detailed descriptions and argumentation. Some excerpts from the interviews were also quoted in the finding section.

## Results

### Summative and Formative Assessment during Online Learning

In online learning activities, the most supporting tools for the learning and teaching process that can be implemented well are the media or technology that teachers use. Based on the interviews with five English teachers from Bandung (West Java), Indonesia, all schools have their own media for the teaching-learning process, including media for assessment. It can be seen from the teachers' statements below:

*"...Media which I usually use for learning activity are Google Meet and edulogy.id (platform for learning)." (Teacher 1)*

*"...Mostly using WhatsApp and Google Classroom, we seldom use virtual meeting softwares because we have to consider students' economic background." (Teacher 2)*

*"...Basically, all of the technology can be used as the media to conduct teaching and learning activities. For me, I will try to use media that make students feel comfortable, for instance, WhatsApp or web-based applications." (Teacher 3)*

*"...As far as I know, most public schools in Bandung mostly use edulogy.id or Seon application, which is a platform for learning. In my school, we use Seon because it can be used synchronously and asynchronously." (Teacher 4)*

*"...In my institution, there are two media that we use which are synchronous and asynchronous. Usually, I will use Zoom Meetings for synchronous activities that the school has facilitated, and for asynchronous activities, I will use LMS (Learning Management System) developed by the school." (Teacher 5)*

Regarding the teachers' statements, it can be concluded that every school in Bandung has different teaching and learning media. The media that teachers use in Bandung are usually the same as in other schools. Most schools use virtual meeting softwares such as *Zoom Meetings*, *Google Meet*, and *WhatsApp* to implement online learning and academic assessment (Rahman Hz & Daulay, 2021). Concisely, the learning media used such as *Seon*, *edulogy.id*, and *LMS* were used as instructed by the school policy in order to make teaching and learning activities more effective (Clarke & Hermens, 2001). According to Kuama & Intharaksa (2016), teaching and learning using technology began to shift from conventional learning techniques to online learning. People had more freedom to select what media they will use to find the suitable learning styles.

### ***Summative Assessment***

Summative assessment is to evaluate students' comprehension by measuring their academic performance through midterm tests and final exams (Torres, 2019). This assessment is still used in online learning situations, but it has different types of questions, portions, and media. In summative assessment teachers were instructed to follow the school policy, despite some teachers having different opinions about the assessment used. It is stated from the interviews:

*"... For midterm and final exams, usually the school will handle it. The teacher only creates the questions and follows the rules that the school made such as using multiple choice and the number of questions." (Teacher 1)*

*"...For summative assessment in midterm and final exam, I actually follow the school policy because in this school, midterm and final exams are held at different times and simultaneously with all courses. This exam uses an application, namely Exam 7, in which all the questions use multiple choices. There is no essay or other type of question, maybe because of the application, so the exam only used 40 multiple choices. In my opinion, it will be better if the exam can be altered to the teacher's favor." (Teacher 3)*

The statement of Teacher 3 was similar with that of Teachers 2 and 4. They also had to adhere the school policy, but they agreed that the structures of the final and midterm exams can be changed by the teacher because it is an online situation. In that case, the teacher has more power to try to avoid dishonesty. This was inferred from the interview:

*"...Yes, we have to follow the school policy for conducting the final and midterms. For the final exam, the students only answer 25 multiple choices. It is the rule of our institution. Meanwhile, at the time, the students answered in only five or ten minutes. I think the exam will be good if the teacher is responsible for it because he/she can create the questions in different ways such as in the form of oral exam, direct exam, etc. So, for me, the midterm and the final exam are not the final decision to give students' scores. For this situation, I think students' habits or students' daily learning style is the main aspect of the assessment." (Teacher 2)*

Likewise with the statement of teacher 4:



*“...As a teacher, I have to follow the school policy, including the rules of midterm and final exams. I am not sure about the students' scores because this exam is only multiple-choice, and maybe the students were only lucky to guess the answers correctly. It reminds me that one of my students got the highest score; meanwhile, throughout her daily academic performance, she never comes to my class and never does the assessment. I think she might be asking someone else's help, or maybe she cheated. Because of that, the midterm tests and final exams should only be used for checking students' understanding and not for the main score.” (Teacher 4)*

Nevertheless, Teacher 5 stated that summative assessment in midterms or final exams in online learning situations took the same form during the usual offline situation.

*“...In our school, the midterm and final exam is the same as usual, such as offline learning using LMS. There are multiple choices and essays. I can check students' understanding of the essay because in an online situation. I try to create the essay questions with students' general opinions, such as what you think and your opinion. So that the students will answer based on their knowledge, it avoids students' cheating while answering the exam.” (Teacher 5)*

The interview results show that all teachers in Bandung were obliged to follow the school policy when conducting summative assessments, especially during midterm tests and final exams. It can then be drawn that the findings of this research were similar to that of Perera-Diltz & Moe (2014), in which they stated that summative evaluation techniques in Bandung involved the use of tests and final examination.

### **Formative Assessment**

Some teachers stated that formative assessment is more important in online learning. In formative assessment, the teacher is able to explore students' understanding. It was confirmed by Teacher 1:

*“...I try to assess students by reviewing after explaining the materials. Then, I would ask them directly.” (Teacher 1)*

Several teachers conducted formative assessment in various ways during online learning. Most of them used portfolios, but some used different tasks that might be challenging for students to complete. This was elaborated in the following statements:

*“...For the task, I will ask students to create a portfolio, and they will send it to edulogy. I will give feedback by writing commenta or praising the project.” (Teacher 1)*

*“...Portfolio is one of the tasks that I give to students for checking their understanding in the last of the materials.” (Teacher 2)*

Teachers also try to make variations for the task. The purpose is to promote enjoyable learning and to engage students to do the task using digital learning media during online learning. For instance, Teacher 3 preferred to give tasks such as videos or podcasts that allow creativity. On the contrary, Teacher 4 chose to provide students

with the task to upload contents on their social media accounts because she believed that students were familiar with them.

*“...In a Pandemic situation, the teacher should make students enjoy learning without any pressure to conduct the task. So, I try to give them easy tasks by enhancing their creativity such as making videos or podcasts.” (Teacher 3)*

*“...I used social media to instruct students’ tasks because I believe senior high school students mostly have social media accounts and will open it every day. So, every task that is given to them should involve social media. For example, for writing tasks, they are commanded to post a picture and write a caption that is related with the task given.” (Teacher 4)*

Meanwhile, Teacher 5 rarely gave tasks because she was forbidden to allocate them in her institution. The teacher was to only choose either a productive task or a project, usually two or three tasks in every semester.

*“... Because of the school regulations, I only gave productive tasks such as writing to my students, and they will submit it via LMS. I will give detailed feedback to every student with comments and suggestions. The students should revise the task until it is accepted.” (Teacher 5)*

Additional to the tasks given in formative assessment, teachers also analyze the students' attendance in the classroom through virtual meetings or asynchronous participation in the class. One of the teachers in Bandung stated that one of the most important aspects in formative assessment is students' participation in class, because it showed their willingness to learn.

*“...Online learning is different from offline situations, in which I cannot see what students are doing during the learning activity. At some points, maybe they were not ready yet to study. Most of my students are always off-camera when I explain the materials, I don't know what they do. So, for me, attendance and participation are the most important aspects for formative assessment during online learning.” (Teacher 2).*

Similarly, Teacher 3 also discovered a similar experience. He stated that student's attendance and students' presentation performance also contributed to the students getting high scores. The teacher believed that the students' presentation showed the real skills that they have rather than common tasks such as portfolios, tests, exams, etc. Students' presentations indicated how much they understood the materials.

*“...Another way to give the students a score is to analyze their performance when doing presentations. To me, presentation performance in online learning has a high score for students because only through this performance I can test the students' skills and preparation before the performance.” (Teacher 3)*

## **Teachers' Problems and Challenges when Conducting Assessments in Online Learning**

### ***Problems***

Conducting the assessment for EFL teachers is not easy because they must prepare the methods, the technique, and the possibilities that may happen in online classes (Guangul et al., 2020). Problems and challenges also



occurred to the five EFL teachers, in which they agreed that assessing during online learning is not easy.

*“...There are several problems with implementing assessment and learning activity in online learning. The first problem is trust in students. It is hard for me to trust the students because I think being honest in an online learning situation cannot be assessed. Second, most students cannot understand the instructions of the task. I don't even know if the students had read the instructions or not, or perhaps they did get the point about the instruction. So, I have to tell them slowly and clearly by giving an example of how to answer the task. The last problem is that it is time-consuming to do assessments. I will end up spending more time assessing or giving students feedback, it is different during offline learning.” (Teacher 3)*

Teacher 3 explained that he faced a problem when conducting an online assessment involving the students and also the teacher. Meanwhile, teachers 1 and 2 were troubled by the students' condition.

*“...The problem with online learning, is sometimes students have a problem with connection or internet data. Because of that I tried to offer a solution. The next one is students' motivation.” (Teacher 1)*

*“...Students' condition is one of the problems because I have to adapt the learning and assessment method with that.” (Teacher 2)*

Students' lack of motivation also becomes a problem for teachers to do the learning assessment activity. In addition, Teacher 5 had a problem in searching for the applicable students' assessment materials, as stated in the following excerpt:

*“...I try to find some materials or worksheets that make students happy and enjoy when they answer the tasks or the exam. It is hard for me to create or search for other alternatives because it will spend more time.” (Teacher 5)*

In different circumstances, for Teacher 4, the problem was caused by the school policy which forced the teachers to reduce the materials.

*“...Reducing the indicator of materials makes me confused about rearranging the method. For example, there are 7 indicators, but for this year, teachers are given only 3 indicators that should be delivered.” (Teacher 4)*

From all of the interviews, the teachers stated that various problems arose in online assessments, such as the school, students, and the teachers themselves. Every teacher has different problems depending on his/her situation. It can then be drawn from the statements elaborated by Teacher 4 that the problem came from school policy, that Teacher 5 had problems with herself, and as for Teachers 1, 2, and 3, the problems involved the students.

### **Challenges**

The pandemic was the first time the research participants had to do online learning. They encountered many obstacles when conducting the activities, including assessments. It is aligned with a study by Gaangul et al.,

(2020) in which teachers receive problems and challenges when doing online assessments due to their little knowledge on the appropriate strategy, methods, regulations, and technology they can use. Several problems and challenges that EFL teachers experienced were explained below.

*“...Absolutely, I got challenges from online learning and online assessment. The most challenging task was solving students’ problems such as their academic dishonesty, their internet problems, and their motivation to join the class”. (Teacher 1)*

Students’ background situation became a challenge for Teacher 1. This unfortunate event was also dealt with by Teachers 2 and 4. They admitted that students’ backgrounds greatly influenced the online learning activity. They declared:

*“...I don’t know if it is true or not, but for me, students’ backgrounds can influence me to implement online learning and online assessment. In my class, there were some students who always had a problem with an internet connection, so I had to change the plan of assessment from synchronous to asynchronous.” (Teacher 2)*

*“...Sometimes, I have to wait for students to submit the assessment. Many students always submit the assessment past the deadline, and they always reasoned that it was due to the internet data or internet connection.”(Teacher 4)*

In contrast, for Teachers 3 and 5, the challenges that they engaged came from the teachers themselves. They felt the need to improve their methods to conduct the assessment.

*“...I have to prepare assessment materials with more than ten options. For example, in the speaking assessment, I will use pictures for students to describe the picture. However, I should have more than ten pictures, because maybe something happens when conducting the assessment.” (Teacher 3)*

*“Many students avoid the assessment, so I have to find a way to do the assessment that is not like an assessment. It is hard for me to find another way to do the assessment.” (Teacher 5)*

Thus, it can be inferred that teachers encountered challenges from students’ conditions such as academic dishonesty, internet connection, and lack of student motivation. The challenges also came from the teachers having to be able to enhance the teaching media or learning method in order to conduct the assessment well.

## Discussion

In summative assessments, the teachers were obliged to follow the school policy which was to conduct midterm tests and final exams. This means that the grading of student academic performance was to be based solely on the examinations (Perera-Diltz & Moe, 2014). Multiple choice is one of the types of questions that the school uses for the midterm tests and final exams because most schools in Bandung use an application for assessment, or *Google Forms* to conduct the exam. Meanwhile, some teachers had doubts about the exam results. It was inferred from Teacher 4, who noticed that the student who achieved the highest score on the midterm test was

the same student who never attended any class nor completed any assignment. Furthermore, it was stated by Qu & Zhang (2013) that the multiple-choice question has disadvantages. For instance, students were able to solely guess the answer, use subjective opinions, use less knowledge, and depend on their lucky charms. Because of these issues, the teachers stated that regardless of the school policy, summative assessment should not be considered as the final decision to determine student academic performance.

Additionally, when constructing summative assessments, teachers can add other kinds of summative assessments such as a task project or daily quiz with an open book. Open resource (book) activity was recommended by Williams (2005). He stated that the teacher could not control the students to use the case studies technique to assess students' ability in online learning. According to Perera-Diltz & Moe (2014), the kinds of questions should be focused on problem-solving, decision-making skills, textual construction of students' perspectives and their engagement with the materials, as well as their experience.

When conducting a formative assessment using tasks such as portfolios, homework, project, and other assignments, feedback is needed for grading the students' scores or distributing evaluations. According to Gikandi et al. (2011), formative assessment should be assessed with authentic assessments, such as giving feedback. Feedback can support students in enhancing their skills and it contributes to the teacher mentoring activity. Gikandiet al. (2011) also stated that one of the characteristics of feedback is easy to comprehend. All of the teachers who assess their students using feedback should only give general feedback.

Based on the results of interviews, the five teachers who came from different high schools in Bandung, West Java, Indonesia, conducted formative assessments during online learning. There were many kinds of formative assessments utilized, such as portfolio, video, podcast, project, presentation, and attendance. The teachers stated that formative assessment is used for activities which are task-based, and usually influences students' scores more than summative assessments.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The current research was conducted on the kinds of summative and formative assessments as well as the problems and challenges encountered by teachers during online learning assessments. In this research, the summative assessment types took place in the form of exams or tests, which were midterm tests and final exams using multiple choice. The assessments were in accordance with the school policy, but some teachers included other summative assessments, such as daily quizzes and final projects. Moreover, in formative assessments, the teachers used tasks for conducting the assessment. The kinds of formative assessments include portfolios, video tasks, podcasts, presentations, and attendance in class.

The five EFL teachers' problems when conducting online assessments were: students' background situation, teachers' low skills, and school policy. Concerning students' background situations, the assessments were often

hindered due to lack of motivation, internet connection, and dishonesty. The teachers also had minimum skills to explore the appropriate learning media for online assessment. Moreover, the school policy prohibited the teachers from using other alternatives for the assessments. Meanwhile, there are two challenges encountered by teachers when conducting online assessments. First, they had to overcome students' problems, such as academic dishonesty, poor internet connection, and lack of motivation. Furthermore, the teachers had to enhance their skills to find more methods for online assessment. The researcher suggests that future researchers examine further how to solve the teachers' challenges during online assessments.

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