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# An Investigation of Prospective Teachers' Use of the Turkish Language in Social Media

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## Abstract

**Purpose:** Not only in daily conversations, official correspondence, and educational settings but also on social media platforms, the correct usage of language by prospective teachers has become a necessity of the age. Twitter, which is used by many people to express their feelings, opinions, etc., is used actively by prospective teachers as well. The present study aimed to investigate the grammatical errors in prospective classroom teachers' tweets. **Method:** The study employed the case study method, one of the qualitative research methods. The data were analyzed through the document analysis method. A total of three hundred tweets posted by 30 prospective teachers were analyzed. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The grammatical errors to look for in the tweets were determined based on the learning outcomes related to grammar rules specified in the Turkish Language Curriculum designed for primary schools (2019). **Findings:** Considering the overall results, the vast majority of tweets contained grammatical errors. It was also determined that the grammatical errors were similar in terms of their types. Punctuation errors, inverted sentences, spelling errors, and capitalization errors were some common grammatical errors. On the other hand, misspelled numbers, incorrect abbreviations, and the use of 'reinforced words' (words with a prefix to add emphasis) were rare grammatical errors. When the results were analyzed according to genders, it was found that males' tweets contained more grammatical errors than those of females. In both genders, punctuation errors, inverted sentences, misspellings, and incorrect capitalization were common grammatical errors. On the other hand, misspelled numbers, incorrect abbreviations, and the use of 'reinforced words' (words with a prefix to add emphasis) were rare grammatical errors. In conclusion, it can be said that a majority of tweets posted by prospective teachers contained grammatical errors and these grammatical errors were similar in terms of their types. **Implications for Research and Practice:** Also, similar studies can be carried out on the use of written language on other social media platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, which also have millions of users.

**Keywords:** Grammatical Errors, Primary School Turkish Language Curriculum, Social media, Twitter, Prospective Teachers

## Introduction

The widespread use of mass media has affected our lives in many ways. With the increase in the availability and use of the Internet, mass media have increased interaction among people. People have become able to express themselves, shop, obtain information, and interact via the Internet (Firth et al., 2019; Kaya-Erdem and Gül-Ünlü, 2018). Considering that approximately 4.5 billion people worldwide use the Internet, 5.2 billion people use

phones, and 3.8 billion people actively use social media, the potential of mass media can be clearly seen (Datareportal, 2020). With the widespread use of smartphones, access to the Internet has become easier, which, in turn, increased the use of social networking sites (Tutgun-Ünal and Deniz, 2019). Significant changes have occurred in people's daily lives, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Farooq, Laato, Islam, 2020), and people have started to use social media platforms more actively (Göker and Turan, 2020). With the pandemic, a variety of public services related to education, economy, and health, as well as official procedures, have been taken to digital media (Sezgin and Fırat, 2020).

Social media platforms include social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, video sharing networks such as YouTube, Dailymotion, Google Videos, and information sharing sites such as Wikipedia (Karahisar, 2013). These platforms can be used for various purposes such as watching videos, obtaining information, socializing, having fun, shopping, and communicating (Durak and Seferoğlu, 2016). It can be said that social media platforms have become one of the most basic tools used by people for communication (Lee, Chen, Li, and Lin, 2015). Communication on social media platforms can be done in various ways such as voice-chats and video conferences, but mostly written communication is used. Written communication on social media is, on the other hand, established through chat channels, written images, and text messages (Veytia-Bucheli, Gómez-Galán, and Vergara, 2020). Since access to social media is easy, these platforms can be used by people from all segments of society and from all age groups (Tutgun, Ünal, and Deniz, 2019).

Twitter is one of the social media platforms where the written language is used most effectively. With 340 million users worldwide, Twitter is among the top five most popular social media platforms in Turkey (Datareportal, 2020). Twitter is a "micro-blogging" service where users post texts that are too short to be blog posts, about their feelings, their personal lives, etc. (Soydaş and Yılmaz, 2016). The messages Twitter users post are called "tweets." Users can "tweet" photos, videos, links, and texts. Tweets are posted on users' profiles, can be seen by people who follow the user, and can be searched as a Twitter search. Tweets are limited to a maximum of 280 characters. Users are, therefore, required to express themselves with a limited number of characters. Due to the limited number of words to be included in tweets, messages need to be short and clear (www.twitter.com, 2020). This, in turn, makes it important to use the written language effectively.

Writing skill is used from the beginning of literacy education, at all levels of education, and throughout life. Through writing, people have expressed themselves and conveyed their feelings and thoughts to their contemporaries or future generations throughout history (Tiryaki and Demir, 2016). To this day, written language has preserved its importance and has found a place in digital media. Therefore, the correct use of written language is necessary for effective communication and to convey the message to the recipient correctly (Sakallı and Bahadioğlu, 2018). The Turkish Language Curriculum (2019) designed by the Turkish Ministry of National Education (MoNE) includes many writing-related learning outcomes. Among the special objectives of the curriculum are the skills to use Turkish in accordance with the rules of writing and to effectively convey feelings and thoughts through writing (Uyğun and Çetin, 2019). Writing-related learning outcomes include the correct use of punctuation marks and conjunctions, correct spelling of words, and capitalization rules. These learning outcomes are repeated continuously in basic education from primary school 1st grade to 4th grade. In addition, the skill of "participating in common networks and establishing communication through the Internet" in the "Digital competencies" section under the heading "Competencies" included in all curricula can be seen as an indicator of the importance given to digital communication in education (MoNE, 2019). Based on this, it can be said that it is aimed to ensure that students acquire digital writing skills as well as classical writing skills.

Given the fact that teachers, one of the most important components of education, are role models for children in every field (Demir and Köse, 2016; Dilmaç, 2002), it can be said that teachers should be careful about the way they use the written language on digital media. This is because, thanks to social media, students can observe their teachers, follow school announcements, and try to get to know their teachers better (Şad and Demir, 2019). Therefore, teachers are normally expected to have digital writing skills, which they expect their students to gain, and be careful about their written messages on social media. In particular, classroom teachers who lay the foundations for literacy in children are expected to use Turkish effectively and write by following grammar rules

(Öztürk and Ertem, 2017). Considering the fact that teachers and students are in constant interaction on digital media today (Şad and Demir, 2019), it can be said that teachers should be careful about how they use the language on digital media as well as in the classroom environment.

In education, determining the writing skills of prospective teachers is as important as determining those of currently working teachers. This is because some prospective teachers will teach students reading and writing after completing their undergraduate education (Yamaç, Çeliktürk, and Kocaarslan, 2016). In undergraduate education, prospective teachers are expected to acquire the professional knowledge and skills that they will use in their later professional life. In classroom teaching departments in universities, it is aimed to train teachers to work at private and public schools affiliated with the MoNE (Benli, 2020). Prospective classroom teachers take various courses on grammar rules and digital literacy during their undergraduate education. In these courses, they receive training on many subjects such as spelling rules, grammar rules, and effective communication (Turkish Council of Higher Education, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that the training on writing skills is important for prospective teachers to use the written language correctly and effectively and to be a good role model in their professional life.

The present study aimed to examine the posts of prospective classroom teachers on Twitter, one of the most popular social media platforms, in terms of grammatical errors. Considering the fact that the distinction between written and spoken language is becoming more and more obscure on digital media, as well as the importance of grammar rules (Kaya-Erdem and Gül-Ünlü, 2018), it is important to determine how prospective classroom teachers use the written language in social media.

## **Method**

### *Research Design*

The study employed the case study method, one of the qualitative research methods. The case study method is a widely-used method in qualitative research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). In a case study, the investigator studies a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time using detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 99-101). The present study examined prospective classroom teachers' use of written Turkish in their tweets and tried to determine the grammatical errors in the tweets.

### *Study Group*

The study group consisted of 30 prospective classroom teachers (15 females and 15 males). A total of 300 tweets, with 10 tweets of each participant, were analyzed.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The data consisted of the tweets of university students, who are known to be studying at the department of classroom teaching. These tweets were visible to everyone. The last ten tweets posted in prospective teachers' Twitter accounts were included in the study.

The data were analyzed through the document analysis method. Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. The criteria used in the analysis of the data were determined based on the learning outcomes related to grammar rules specified in the Turkish Language Curriculum designed by the Ministry of National Education for primary schools (2019). The tweets were analyzed by three experts, taking into account the determined criteria. A separate table for each prospective teacher was created, and the frequency and percentage of grammatical errors in the tweets were calculated.

## Results

The total number of tweets with grammatical errors is given in Chart 1.

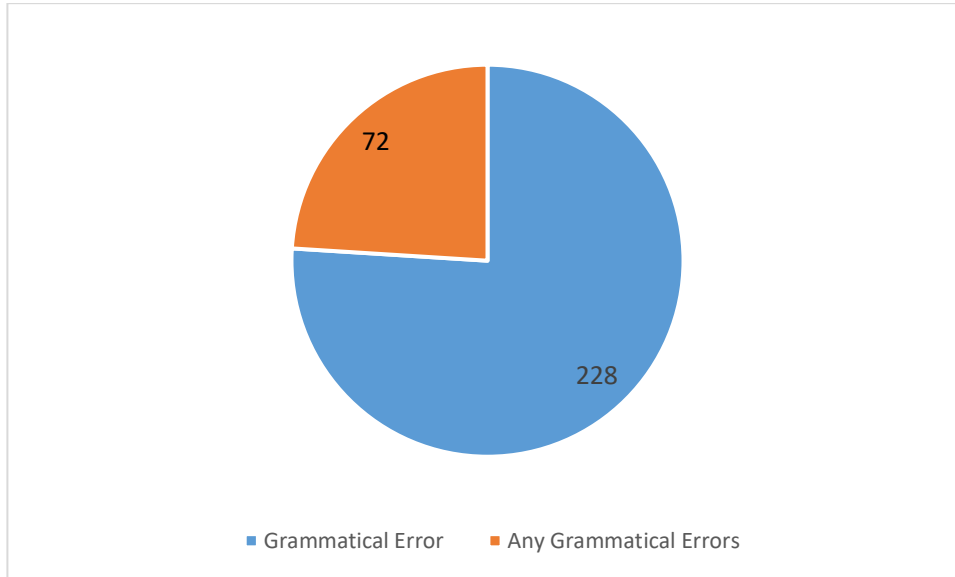


Chart 1: Distribution of Tweets with and without Grammatical Errors

Chart 1 demonstrates the total number of tweets with and without grammatical errors. Accordingly, there are 228 tweets with at least one grammatical error and 72 tweets without any grammatical errors. Therefore, 76% of the tweets contain at least one grammatical error. Some of the grammatically erroneous tweets and the grammatical errors in these tweets are given below:

-“ *Neredekaldi disiplinlerarası öğrenme. (What happened to interdisciplinary learning?)*” (**Punctuation errors, no space between words**)

-“*15 temmuzda atacağım twit budur (This is the twit I will post on July 15)*” (**Punctuation errors, use of foreign words, capitalization errors**)

-“*Bugünde tarih için ağlayayım (I will cry for history today)*” 🥲 ” (**Punctuation errors, incorrect use of conjunctions**)

-“ *Giderlerimin her ay gelirimden fazla olması rezaleti (The ridicule of my expenses being more than my income every month)*” ( **Punctuation errors, inverted sentence**)

- “*Yine gözümüz yükseklerde, hayat geçiyor perde perdeee (Stars in our eyes again, life is passing by sceness)*” (**Punctuation errors, spelling errors**)

-“*En güzel rota olmuş 🇹🇷 (This has become the most beautiful route)*” (**Punctuation errors**)

- “*Hakkaten çıkamıyorum videodan (I really can't leave this video)*” 😂 ” (**Punctuation errors, spelling errors, inverted sentence**)

- “*Az kaldı mahalledeki çocukların toplarını kesicem (In a very short time I'll pop those children's ball)*” 🗡️🗡️ ”(**Punctuation errors, spelling errors**)

Chart 2 demonstrates the types and numbers of grammatical errors in the tweets of female prospective teachers.

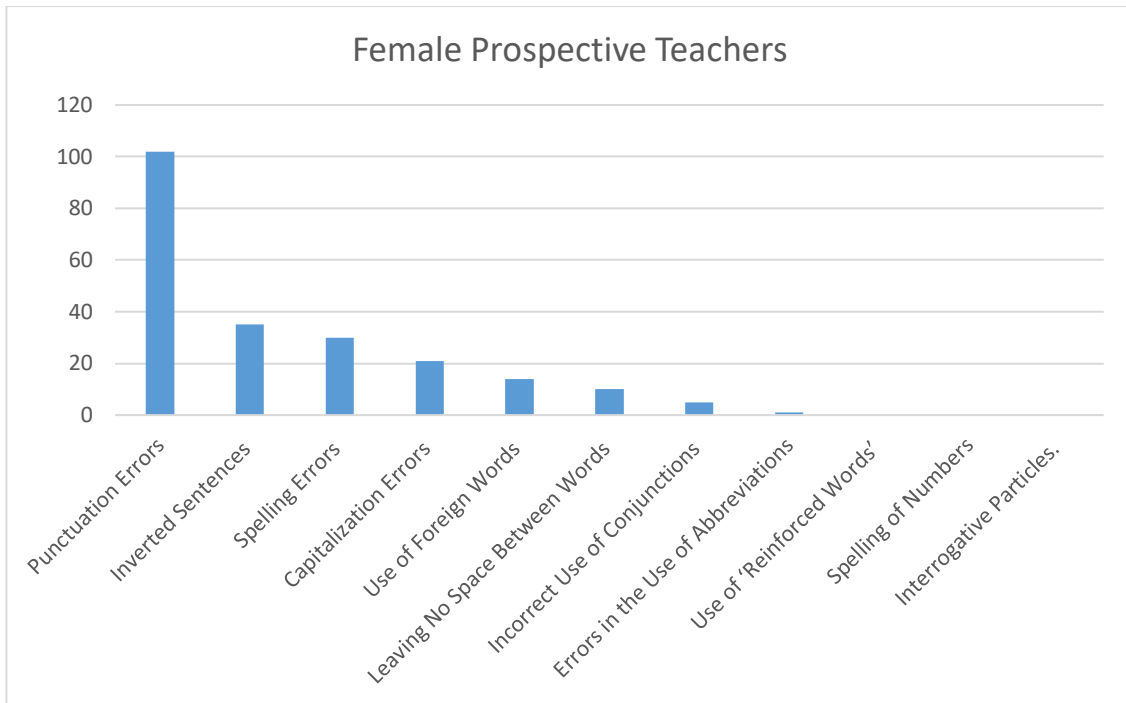


Chart 2: Grammatical Errors in the Tweets of Female Prospective Teachers

According to Chart 2, a total of 150 tweets of female prospective teachers contain 218 grammatical errors in total. The most frequent grammatical error is *punctuation errors* (102). They are followed by *inverted sentences* (35), *spelling errors* (30), *capitalization errors* (21), *use of foreign words* (14), *leaving no space between words* (10), *incorrect use of conjunctions* (5), and *errors in the use of abbreviations* (1). The tweets do not contain any errors related to the use of 'reinforced words,' spelling of numbers, or the use of interrogative particles.

Chart 3 demonstrates the types and numbers of grammatical errors in the tweets of male prospective teachers.

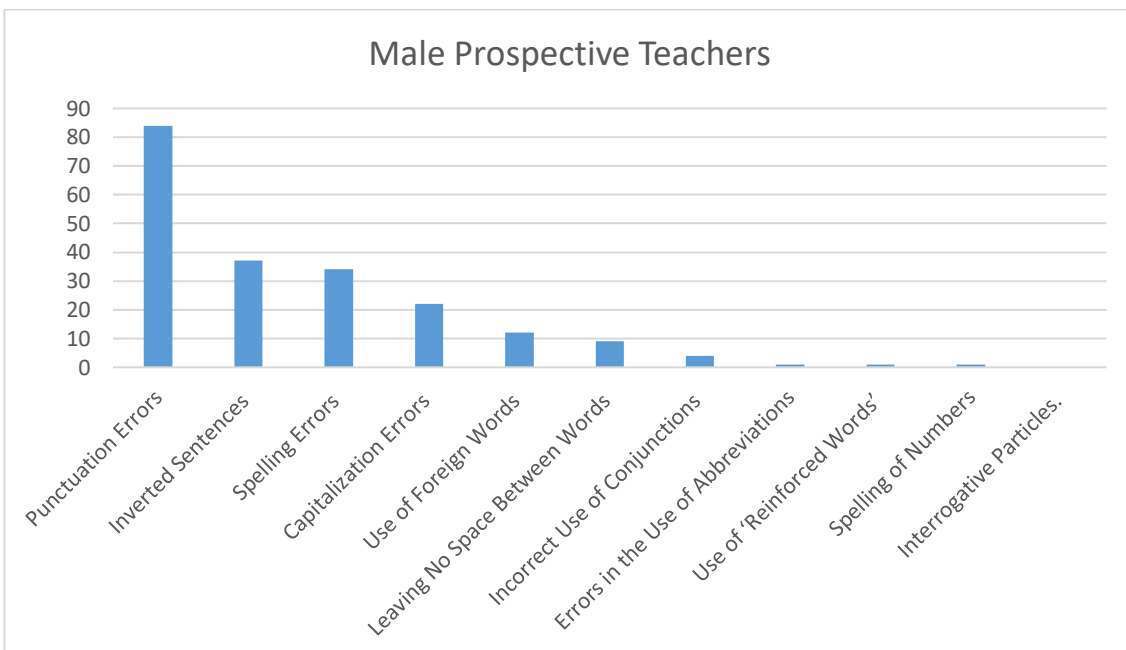


Chart 3: Grammatical Errors in the Tweets of Male Prospective Teachers

According to Chart 3, a total of 150 tweets of male prospective teachers contain 205 grammatical errors in total. The most frequent grammatical error is *punctuation errors* (84). They are followed by *inverted sentences* (37),

*spelling errors* (34), *capitalization errors* (22), *leaving no space between words* (12), *use of foreign words* (9), *incorrect use of conjunctions* (4), *errors in the use of abbreviations* (1), *use of 'reinforced words'* (1), and *spelling of numbers* (1). The tweets do not contain any errors related to the *use of interrogative particles*. From Charts 2 and 3, it can be inferred that error types and numbers in the tweets of male and female participants are similar. Furthermore, the most frequent error in both groups' tweets is punctuation errors, followed by inverted sentences, spelling errors, capitalization errors, leaving no space between words, incorrect use of conjunctions, and errors in the use of abbreviations.

### **Discussion, Conclusion, Recommendations**

After the rapid development of technology, the use of social media platforms among people has been increasing. On social media, which is used by people of almost all ages, people usually communicate through written language. Written language is a communication tool used by the individual throughout life starting from the first literacy education. For this reason, the correct learning and teaching of the written language are very important in primary schools, where the foundations for education are laid. In this regard, primary school teachers, who lay foundations in children for the correct use of the written language as well as for many other topics, are expected to use the written language correctly not only in their professional life but also on digital media. Therefore, it was deemed important to examine the Turkish language used by prospective classroom teachers on social media platforms. Taking this as a starting point, the present study investigated the tweets of prospective classroom teachers in terms of grammar rules.

The most frequent grammatical error in both female and male prospective teachers' tweets was *punctuation errors*. The finding that almost all tweets contained punctuation errors is noteworthy. As a result of the examinations, it was seen that the prospective classroom teachers mostly used visual expressions such as emojis instead of punctuation marks in their tweets. Visual expressions were used in the middle of a sentence, at the end of a sentence, when emphasizing a word, or at the end of a question. This situation can be interpreted as prospective teachers preferring to use visual expressions instead of punctuation marks in their tweets. Therefore, it can be said that visual expressions are used by prospective classroom teachers as punctuation marks on social media. Yavuz (2020) stated that people frequently used visual expressions in their tweets when sharing their feelings and thoughts. Yıldız and Oduncu (2020) stated that a majority of the posts on Turkish teachers' Facebook group contained punctuation errors. Tanrıku (2017) noted that prospective Turkish teachers made more grammatical errors in their correspondence on WhatsApp than in their written texts. Balcı and Darancık (2017) stated that university students did not use punctuation marks such as full stops, commas, exclamation marks, ellipsis, question marks, and apostrophes in their Facebook posts. In this regard, the fact that punctuation marks have not been used at the desired level throughout the history of Turkish writing (Durukoğlu and Ambelçi, 2018) can be said to be reflected on social media today. Teachers have a leading role in the emergence of changes that will add quality to the lives of both the individual and society (Şahin, 2009). Therefore, the increase in the punctuation errors made by prospective teachers in recent years needs thorough consideration. This is because teaching, one of the most rewarding professions, does not represent "what is," but rather "what should be."

When the results of the study were examined, another common grammatical error in both female and male participants' tweets emerged as the use of inverted sentences. The use of inverted sentences can cause both positive and negative results. Küçük, Avcı, and Şengül (2017) stated that in the texts in which thoughts are conveyed as they are, inverted sentences were frequently used. In this context, since people mostly post about their spontaneous thoughts, it is normal that such posts contain inverted sentences. However, using inverted sentences may cause the post to fail to convey the meaning correctly.

Another common grammatical error in the tweets emerged as spelling errors. As a result of the examination, it was determined that the spelling errors were usually caused by missing vowels. An example of this is the abbreviation of the word "*merhaba* (hello)" as "*mrb.*" Similar studies have also stated that such abbreviations are frequently used by users on digital media (Akbiyık, Karadüz, and Seferoğlu, 2013; Akkoyunlu and Soylu, 2011; Kaya-Erdem and Gül-Ünlü, 2018). In addition to missing letters, unnecessary letters were also added to increase

the emphasis of some words in the participants' tweets. This finding is consistent with the results reported by Karahisar (2013) regarding grammatical errors made on social media. Using an F or a Q keyboard, short distances between keys on the board, and trying to type fast can be shown as other causes of spelling errors. According to Özezen (2010), university students do not prefer some letters that are difficult to reach on the keyboard, instead, they use some letters that are not in the Turkish alphabet. This may be attributed to the fact that the alphabet type used in smartphones and computers does not match the Turkish alphabet.

As a result of the examinations, it was seen that the prospective teachers also made capitalization errors in their tweets. This may be due to the fact that the compose box on Twitter, where users can type, does not have software that checks spelling errors. While software using written language such as Microsoft Word auto-capitalizes letters, Twitter does not have such a feature. Keyboards on smartphones can auto-capitalize letters after certain punctuation marks. However, not using punctuation marks in place, as seen in this study, prevents the software from auto-capitalizing the letters. Therefore, it can be said that some capitalization errors were a result of punctuation errors. Consistent with this finding, Yıldız and Oduncu (2020) stated that the most common grammatical error in teachers' Facebook groups was capitalization errors.

Other grammatical errors detected in the tweets were, albeit few in number, leaving no space between words, using foreign words, incorrect use of conjunctions or abbreviations, misspelling of numbers, and using 'reinforced words.' On the other hand, prospective teachers mostly avoided using foreign words in their tweets. This can be expressed as a noteworthy finding obtained in this study. Yıldız and Oduncu (2020) stated that grammatical errors such as the misspelling of numbers, leaving no space between words, and misspelling of abbreviations were quite rare. In this study, numbers, conjunctions, 'reinforced words,' and abbreviations were seen in many tweets, but they were used correctly. One of the positive findings of the study is that no errors related to the use of interrogative particles were found. Mayda (2018) detected many grammatical errors in tweets containing questions from the audience. Akkoyunlu and Soylu (2011) mentioned the incorrect use of conjunctions and interrogative particles on social media. When compared with the results of the related studies, it can be said that the prospective teachers paid attention to these grammar rules.

As teachers are the people who teach students writing skills, they are expected to act responsibly not only in their classes but also on social media, which has become a part of daily life. In particular, classroom teachers who lay foundations for reading/writing skills should not receive any criticism for their grammatical errors. This applies to prospective teachers as well as currently working teachers. The results of this study reveal the necessity of increasing the awareness of prospective teachers about the use of language on social media. Further research can be carried out to raise awareness in prospective teachers about the correct use of written language on social media. Also, similar studies can be carried out on the use of written language on other social media platforms such as YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, which also have millions of users.

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