



# Teaching English in an Inclusive Setting: An Investigation of Facilitating and Hindering Factors at Primary School

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## Abstract

Inclusive education seeks to ensure equal learning opportunities for all students, including those with special needs, yet teaching English in inclusive classrooms presents specific pedagogical challenges. This study investigates the supporting and inhibiting factors in English teaching at SD N 2 Bengkala, North Bali, a school that integrates students with hearing impairments into regular classrooms. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected through classroom observations and in-depth interviews with the English teacher. The findings indicate that effective English instruction in this inclusive setting is supported by teacher adaptability, the use of visual media and concrete learning materials, assistance from special needs support teachers, peer support from regular students, and a positive classroom climate. However, several challenges persist, including communication barriers with deaf students, differences in learning abilities, emotional fluctuations, and environmental distractions. More complex English skills, such as listening, speaking, and writing, were found to be more difficult to teach than vocabulary. Overall, the study underscores the importance of adaptive teaching strategies and collaborative support in addressing learner diversity, while also highlighting ongoing challenges that require continuous adjustment to achieve inclusive English learning.

**Keywords:** English Language Teaching; Inclusive Education; Inhibiting Factors; Supporting Factors

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## 1. Introduction

Teaching English as a second language in inclusive classrooms presents significant challenges, particularly for students who experience communication difficulties such as deaf or mute learners. Teachers in these settings must not only understand the subject matter but also design learning tools, strategies, and instructional approaches that respond to diverse student needs. Inclusive elementary classrooms often consist of learners with hearing, visual, autistic, and intellectual impairments, which require teachers to be flexible and adaptive in their instruction. Padmadewi et al., (2024) explain that teachers in inclusive settings frequently struggle with limited specialized training, a lack of accessible learning media, and communication barriers that affect the teaching and learning process.



Inclusive education (IE) in English language teaching has gained increasing attention as classrooms become more diverse and include students with varying abilities and special needs. Recent research emphasizes that inclusive practices are essential not only for ensuring equal access to learning but also for improving student engagement and participation in English learning, which heavily depends on interaction and communication (Ghajarieh et al., 2025). Inclusive English instruction therefore requires flexible pedagogical strategies, multimodal learning materials, and supportive classroom environments that accommodate different learning styles and abilities. Florian and Spratt (2013) propose four key principles of inclusive education—accessibility, diversity, participation, and student support—which serve as important guidelines for inclusive classroom practices. However, recent studies report a persistent gap between these principles and their implementation in real classroom contexts, particularly in English language teaching, where teachers often face difficulties in adapting materials, managing mixed-ability classrooms, and supporting students with special needs due to limited training and resources (Dewi et al., 2025; Wijayanti et al., 2025). In Indonesia, although inclusive education is supported by the National Education System Law and Law Number 8 of 2016 on Persons with Disabilities, many elementary schools still encounter challenges such as inadequate facilities, a lack of professional support staff, and insufficient teacher preparedness to implement inclusive English instruction effectively.

Inclusive education has been increasingly implemented in Indonesia following national policies that promote equal educational access for students with disabilities, including at the elementary school level. In Bali, several public schools have adopted inclusive practices to accommodate students with diverse learning needs, particularly in areas where children with disabilities are educated alongside regular students in mainstream classrooms. Within this context, SD Negeri 2 Bengkala in North Bali represents a distinctive example of inclusive education, as it integrates students with hearing impairments and is widely known as a *Kolok* school. English teachers at SD Negeri 2 Bengkala face challenges such as variations in students' abilities, limited access to appropriate learning materials, and insufficient training in inclusive English instruction. At the same time, the school benefits from strong leadership support, well-established collaboration among teachers, and students who show high learning motivation. These contextual characteristics make SD Negeri 2 Bengkala a relevant and meaningful site for examining the implementation of inclusive English teaching and the factors that support or hinder its success.

Previous studies have suggested several instructional approaches that support inclusive English learning. Shahzad and Qayyum (2024) emphasize the usefulness of thematic learning, which links English instruction to real life contexts. Differentiated instruction is also essential, as it enables teachers to adjust materials and tasks according to students' abilities and learning preferences. The use of assistive technologies, such as screen readers, translation tools, and multimedia resources, can further help students who experience reading or writing difficulties. However, schools still encounter obstacles such as limited textbooks for diverse learners, restricted access to learning technologies, heavy teacher workload, and a lack of professional training for inclusive practice (Zakariyah, 2024). adds that successful inclusive English teaching depends on teacher competence, supportive school policies, and adequate learning resources (Padmadewi et al., 2025; Yekti et al., 2019).



Initial observations and interviews conducted with the principal of SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu show that English learning at the school remains inconsistent due to the presence of both supporting and inhibiting factors involving teachers, students, and the school environment. These findings indicate the importance of conducting a detailed investigation of the real conditions experienced by the teachers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the supporting factors that assist teachers in teaching English within an inclusive education setting and the inhibiting factors that limit the teaching and learning process in SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu. The significance of this study lies in its potential theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, the study enriches the literature on inclusive English teaching, which remains limited in Indonesia. By identifying both supporting and inhibiting factors, this research offers a more complete understanding of how inclusive practices are carried out in English classrooms. Practically, the results of this study will benefit English teachers by providing insights that can help them design more adaptive and effective instructional methods. Schools may also use the findings to strengthen internal support systems, improve collaboration between teachers, and enhance facilities that support inclusive learning. Furthermore, the study offers a foundation for future researchers who wish to explore inclusive English instruction through deeper qualitative studies, classroom-based interventions, or the development of innovative instructional models. Based on these considerations, this study is important for understanding how English teachers at SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu navigate the opportunities and challenges of inclusive education, and how schools, teachers, families, and policymakers can improve the quality of inclusive English learning for all students.

The research questions proposed in this study are:

1. What factors facilitate the teaching of English in an inclusive primary classroom?
2. What factors hinder the teaching of English in an inclusive primary classroom?

## **2. Method**

This study uses a case study design to explore the teaching of English in an inclusive setting. A case study allows researchers to investigate a phenomenon in depth within its real context. Yin (2017) states that this method is appropriate when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are unclear. Data in a case study can be collected through interviews, observations, and documents, allowing researchers to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the situation. Although case studies may face challenges related to subjectivity and limited generalization, validity can be strengthened through triangulation, confirmation of findings with informants, and clear presentation of evidence.

This research was conducted at SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu, located in Buleleng, North Bali. The school is known for implementing inclusive education, especially for students with hearing impairments. Its unique context makes it relevant for examining the supporting and inhibiting factors that influence English teaching in inclusive classrooms. The main subject in this study was an English teacher at SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu. The teacher was chosen because of their teaching experience, relevance to the research focus, and willingness to participate in the data collection process. The object of this study was the English teaching process in inclusive classrooms at SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu. The research focused on identifying supporting and



inhibiting factors that affect the teaching content, process, product, and learning environment for both regular students and students with disabilities.

Two data collection methods were used: observation and interviews. Observations were conducted to obtain information about how English learning takes place in inclusive classrooms. The researcher acted as a passive observer. An observation checklist was used, based on indicators from the Universal Design for Learning and learning differentiation. The checklist covered teacher preparation, instructional strategies, use of media, teacher interaction with students, and the use of facilities. Semi structured interviews were conducted with the English teacher to explore experiences, challenges, and strategies used in inclusive classrooms. Guiding questions were developed based on indicators of inclusive learning, including human resources, learning materials, media, and infrastructure.

This study used thematic analysis to interpret the data. The analysis followed the six phases introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006). First, the researcher familiarized with the data by reading all interview transcripts and observation notes carefully and transcribing audio recordings. Second, initial codes were generated by identifying meaningful segments that were relevant to the research focus. Third, the researcher searched for themes by grouping related codes into broader categories. Fourth, the themes were reviewed to ensure that they reflected the data accurately, and any unclear or overlapping themes were revised. Fifth, the researcher defined and named the themes, giving each one a clear description that captured its central idea. Finally, the report was produced by presenting the themes

### **3. Findings**

#### **Factors supported the teaching of English in an inclusive primary classroom**

The findings from the observation revealed several factors that support English language teaching in the context of inclusive education, including the adjustment of teaching methods by teachers, the use of visual media and real objects, support from special education assistant teachers, the active role of regular students in assisting their peers, and the availability of adequate school facilities and infrastructure. The results are presented in the following table:

Table 1. Supporting Factors

<b>Code (Initial Codes)</b>	<b>Category (Categories)</b>	<b>Themes</b>
The teacher separates regular students and deaf students when dealing with complex material.	Adjustment of learning strategies.	Adjustment of teaching methods by teachers
The teacher uses flashcards, pictures, PowerPoint slides, and gestures.	Visual and realia media.	Use of visual media and real objects.
The Special Education Assistant accompanies the English teacher in teaching deaf students to provide additional explanations.	Support from special assistant teachers.	Support from special education assistant teachers.
Regular students assist their deaf peers during group work.	Peer support.	-



Projector, vocabulary cards, well-organized classroom.	Adequate facilities and infrastructure.	Provision of adequate school facilities and infrastructure.
Positive and Inclusive Emotional Climate.	Supportive teacher-student interaction.	Teacher provides emotional support to deaf and regular students.

Classroom observations and interviews revealed several supporting factors that contribute to the successful implementation of English teaching in inclusive classrooms at SD N 2 Bengkala. One key factor is the teacher's ability to adjust instructional methods for students with different needs, especially those with hearing impairments. The teacher explained, *"In adapting the English teaching method, I use PowerPoint presentations and picture cards with vocabulary because students with hearing impairments have different abilities."* This indicates that the teacher shifts information from auditory to visual modes to ensure accessibility. Such adaptation reflects the principles of Universal Design for Learning, which emphasize presenting material through multiple representations, and supports the idea of Differentiated Instruction where teachers adjust strategies to suit each learner. Another important factor is the consistent use of visual media during instruction. Observations showed frequent use of images, vocabulary cards, and PowerPoint slides to support comprehension. The teacher stated, *"When teaching English, I use pictures as teaching aids and usually also display images in PowerPoint so students can imagine the vocabulary related to them."* This demonstrates how visualisation strengthens vocabulary mastery and supports students who rely primarily on visual input, particularly deaf learners. This approach aligns with Dual Coding Theory, which explains that combining visual and verbal information enhances understanding and memory.

Support from special education assistant teachers also plays a significant role. These assistants help clarify instructions, provide sign language support, and guide deaf students through classroom tasks. The English teacher noted, *"The inclusion assistant teacher helps translate or simplify instructions using sign language and sometimes explains the material or organizes the classroom to make it more conducive."* Their involvement helps bridge communication barriers and is consistent with the Co Teaching Model, which highlights collaboration as a way to improve access and participation for students with special needs. Regular students additionally contribute to a supportive classroom environment. Observations showed that they frequently assisted their peers with special needs by repeating vocabulary, demonstrating pronunciation, or explaining meanings using gestures. The teacher described this dynamic by saying, *"Regular students sometimes teach their friends with special needs by modelling English pronunciation, helping them read instructions, and explaining the meaning of vocabulary using gestures or pictures."* This peer assistance not only supports academic learning but also strengthens inclusion, empathy, and social interaction.

The availability of adequate school facilities further supports inclusive English teaching. Classrooms are equipped with projectors, visual media, and seating arrangements that ensure deaf students can clearly see the teacher's facial expressions. The teacher noted, *"Facilities such as PowerPoint and image-based media are the most suitable for inclusive*

students because they cannot hear videos but can understand information through images and text.” These resources help ensure equitable access to learning in accordance with inclusive education guidelines. Finally, the creation of a positive emotional climate in the classroom was found to be an essential supporting factor. Teachers actively maintain a warm and encouraging environment to help students, especially those with special needs, remain engaged. As the teacher explained, *“If students are in a good mood I start with simple activities or play so they feel comfortable, and I always try to create a conducive learning environment.”* This shows that emotional well-being is treated as an integral part of learning success, reflecting the principles of Social Emotional Learning.

### Factors inhibited the teaching of English in an inclusive primary classroom

The findings from the observations revealed several factors that hindered the process of teaching English in the context of inclusive education, such as differences in ability between regular and inclusive students, communication barriers with deaf students, unpredictable changes in students’ moods, and concentration difficulties caused by the learning environment. The results are presented through excerpts from the researcher’s interviews with the research subject, namely the English teacher at SD N 2 Bengkala. The results are presented in the Table 2.

Table 1. Supporting Factors

Code (Initial Codes)	Category (Categories)	Themes
Significant differences in abilities between regular and deaf students.	Academic Gap.	Differences in ability between regular and inclusive students.
Deaf students have difficulty understanding verbal instructions.	Communication barrier.	Communication barriers with deaf students.
Students get bored easily and lose focus when in a bad mood.	Emotional fluctuations.	Unpredictable changes in student mood
Student are distracted by outside Noice /activities.	Learning environment disturbances.	Concentration Disturbances due to the learning environment.

### Differences in Ability Between Regular and Inclusive Students

A major obstacle in inclusive English learning is the wide gap between the abilities of regular students and deaf students. While both groups can follow simple vocabulary lessons together, difficulties arise when lessons involve speaking, listening, and writing, which require oral comprehension and verbal expression. The teacher explained, *“Because the abilities of regular students and students with special needs are certainly different, this becomes an obstacle. If I ask regular students to create a product such as drawing, writing, or speaking, for students with special needs I only give simple movements and writing.”* This shows the need for differentiated instruction, where tasks are adjusted to students’ abilities. Although these adaptations help maintain participation, the significant difference in cognitive and communication skills remains a challenge that slows the overall learning process.



### **Communication Barriers with Deaf Students**

Communication difficulties also hinder effective English teaching, as verbal explanations are often inaccessible to deaf students. Even though the teacher frequently uses visual media, oral instructions still limit student comprehension, especially during activities that rely on listening or spoken interaction. The teacher shared, *“When teaching English, I use images and PowerPoint so students can imagine the vocabulary related to the picture. When combining inclusive students and students with special needs, I am accompanied by a special teacher so they can understand the material more easily.”* This reflects the essential role of visual media and assistant teachers, yet communication barriers persist because English relies heavily on sound-based input. As a result, deaf students participate less in discussions, and teachers must constantly adjust instruction to support understanding.

### **Unpredictable Mood Swings**

Emotional instability among inclusive students also disrupts the learning process. When students are in a good mood, they participate actively and respond well to visual activities or games. However, when their mood declines, they lose focus and prefer to play rather than engage with the lesson. As the teacher explained, *“Primary school children’s moods change very easily, especially inclusive children. When their mood is good, we play games and learn vocabulary from pictures. But when they are not in the mood, they focus only on playing, and I cannot force them.”* These mood swings make learning inconsistent and require the teacher to take a flexible, patient approach. Although engaging activities help maintain motivation, emotional shifts remain an obstacle that affects continuity and depth of learning.

### **Concentration Disturbances in the Learning Environment**

Environmental distractions also hinder learning, particularly for deaf students who are more sensitive to visual stimuli. Movement outside the classroom or noises from nearby areas easily divert their attention, disrupting the flow of instruction. The teacher noted, *“When he is studying, other students may be wandering around outside the window, distracting him and causing him to lose focus.”* This demonstrates how external disturbances can reduce engagement, requiring repeated redirection from the teacher. Although the school provides adequate facilities, controlling the learning environment is challenging, and distractions often interfere with the focus needed for language learning.

The findings indicate that the teaching of English in an inclusive primary classroom at SD N 2 Bengkulu is shaped by both supporting and inhibiting factors. On the supporting side, effective instruction is facilitated by teachers’ ability to adjust teaching methods to students’ diverse abilities, particularly through the use of visual media and real objects that shift learning from auditory to visual modes. Support from special education assistant teachers helps bridge communication gaps with deaf students, while peer assistance from regular students fosters academic support and social inclusion. Adequate school facilities, such as projectors and visual learning materials, along with a positive and emotionally supportive classroom climate, further contribute to successful inclusive English teaching. However, several challenges remain. Significant differences in ability between regular and deaf students make it difficult to deliver



the same level of instruction, especially for complex skills such as listening, speaking, and writing. Communication barriers persist due to the sound-based nature of English, despite the use of visual aids and assistant teachers. In addition, unpredictable mood changes among students and environmental distractions negatively affect concentration and learning continuity. Overall, the findings suggest that while inclusive English teaching is strengthened by adaptive strategies, collaboration, and supportive environments, it continues to face challenges related to ability gaps, communication limitations, emotional factors, and classroom distractions.

#### **4. Discussion**

The teaching process observed in this study is systematically organized into three phases: pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity. Although this structure aligns with common instructional models in EFL teaching, its implementation at SDN 2 Bengkala reveals unique adaptations shaped by the needs of deaf and mute learners. In the pre-activity phase, routines such as greetings, prayer, and attendance not only establish classroom order but also serve as foundational socialization moments that reinforce a sense of belonging for students with hearing impairments. The early collaboration between the English teacher and the sign language teacher is especially significant. Rather than simply functioning as translation support, this collaboration reflects a co-teaching dynamic that supports multimodal meaning-making, consistent with inclusive pedagogy principles emphasizing shared expertise and distributed responsibility.

One of the strongest supporting factors in inclusive English teaching at SD N 2 Bengkala was the teacher's ability to adapt instructional methods. The teacher differentiated learning by teaching basic vocabulary to regular and deaf students together, while modifying or separating activities for more complex skills such as speaking, listening, and writing. This approach reflects the principles of Differentiated Instruction, which emphasize adjusting content, process, and outcomes according to students' readiness levels (Tomlinson, 2011). Similar findings were reported by Yusuf and Pranata (2020), who highlighted the value of instructional differentiation in inclusive classrooms. The teacher's strategies, such as the use of PowerPoint slides, picture cards, modelling, chunking, and scaffolding, are supported by previous studies (Fichten et al., 2019; Padmadewi et al., 2023). These practices follow the Universal Design for Learning framework, which encourages multiple forms of presentation, expression, and engagement (Qu & Cross, 2024). In addition, digital media further expand learning access for students with communication difficulties (Ok & Rao, 2019).

The use of visual media and real objects also served as an important supporting factor. Flashcards, realia, and PowerPoint slides helped students understand vocabulary more effectively, and these tools were particularly essential for deaf students who depend on visual input. This approach aligns with the Universal Design for Learning principle of providing multiple means of representation (CAST, 2018). Padmadewi, Sukadana, et al., (2024) also found that visual scaffolding improves vocabulary mastery among deaf students. Teachers



applied various visual strategies such as displaying large images, adding labels, using simple animations, combining text and images, and supporting learning with sign language (Suwastini, 2021).

Support from special education assistant teachers was another significant factor. These assistants clarified instructions, translated information into sign language, and provided individual guidance. Their role reflects the collaborative teaching approach described by Florian and Linklater (2010) who emphasized that collaboration is essential in inclusive practice. Assistant teachers mediated communication, adapted materials (Poikola et al., 2024), provided individual scaffolding (Tika & Dewi, 2022), and facilitated interaction among students (Hennessy et al., 2025), ensuring that deaf students could participate actively (Navas-Bonilla et al., 2025). Peer support from regular students also strengthened inclusive learning.

Observations showed that regular students frequently helped their deaf classmates by modelling pronunciation, explaining vocabulary with gestures, and assisting during group tasks. This finding supports Sari and Hendriani (2021), who reported that peer assistance improves participation and emotional comfort in inclusive classrooms. Similar conclusions were presented by Montanero et al., (2024), who noted that peer mediated activities benefit both inclusive students and their regular peers academically and socially. Adequate school facilities also contributed to the success of inclusive English teaching. The availability of projectors, screens, and well-arranged seating supported the use of visual media for deaf students. This finding aligns with Ainscow (2020), who stated that adequate resources are essential for inclusive education, and with Kriswanto et al., (2023) who emphasized the importance of infrastructure in primary schools. Teachers used facilities to present image-based content, avoiding video materials that rely on sound, and arranged seats to support clear visibility of the teacher's face and media (Wijayanti et al., 2025). These practices reflect the Universal Design for Learning emphasis on accessible representation. A positive emotional climate also supported learning. Teachers began lessons with enjoyable activities, used personalised approaches, and provided encouragement to maintain students' motivation.

In terms of inhibiting factors, differences in ability between regular and deaf students created challenges in balancing learning needs. Teachers often simplified tasks for deaf students while assigning more complex tasks to regular students, consistent with strategies described by Hapsari et al., (2023) Communication barriers were also a major obstacle. Despite the use of visual media and support from assistant teachers, deaf students still struggled with oral information, a challenge noted by Nurkhamidah et al., (2024) and addressed through Universal Design for Learning principles (Priyadharsini & Mary, 2024). Mood fluctuations also hindered learning. Teachers used flexible, game based strategies to maintain engagement, consistent with Salgarayeva et al., (2021). Environmental distractions further affected concentration, especially for visually sensitive deaf students, supporting the conclusions of Muhtadi et al., (2024) regarding the importance of structured learning environments.

The findings of this study offer several important implications for inclusive English language teaching at the primary school level. First, the strong role of teacher adaptability



suggests that English teachers in inclusive classrooms need systematic training in differentiated instruction and Universal Design for Learning (UDL). Teacher education programs and professional development initiatives should therefore emphasize practical strategies such as visual scaffolding, task modification, chunking, and multimodal instruction to help teachers respond effectively to diverse learner needs, particularly students with hearing impairments. Second, the effective use of visual media and real objects highlights the need for schools to prioritize the provision of accessible learning resources. Educational institutions should ensure the availability of projectors, visual teaching aids, and flexible classroom arrangements that support visual access and interaction. These resources are not merely supplementary but essential for equitable English learning in inclusive settings. Third, the significant contribution of special education assistant teachers and peer support underscores the importance of collaboration in inclusive education. Schools should strengthen co-teaching practices by clearly defining the roles of assistant teachers and encouraging structured peer-assisted learning activities. Such collaboration can reduce communication barriers, enhance participation, and promote positive social interaction among students. Finally, the identified inhibiting factors—such as ability gaps, communication challenges, emotional fluctuations, and environmental distractions—indicate that inclusive English teaching requires continuous classroom adjustment and emotional support. Teachers should be supported in creating flexible lesson plans, emotionally supportive learning environments, and well-managed classroom settings that minimize distractions. At the policy level, sustained institutional support is needed to improve teacher readiness, provide professional assistance, and ensure that inclusive education principles are translated into effective classroom practices.

## **5. Conclusion and Suggestion**

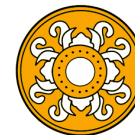
The findings from observations and interviews showed that inclusive English teaching at SD Negeri 2 Bengkala was supported by several key factors, including the teacher's adaptation of methods, the use of visual media, assistance from special needs support teachers, peer support from regular students, adequate school facilities, and a positive classroom climate. Regular students' supportive attitudes also helped create an inclusive learning environment. On the other hand, the study identified several inhibiting factors, such as differences in ability between regular and deaf students, communication barriers, frequent mood changes, and environmental distractions. Limited teacher training in inclusive education also made it difficult to fully adjust instruction for diverse learners. Complex skills such as listening, speaking, and writing were especially challenging to teach compared to vocabulary. Overall, the results show that inclusive English teaching is shaped by both supporting and inhibiting factors. While adaptive strategies and collaborative support strengthen inclusivity, ongoing teacher training, curriculum adjustment, and structured assistance are still needed. These findings align with the principles of inclusive education suggested by Ainscow (2020), Florian and Spratt (2013), and Tomlinson and Allan (2002), which emphasize accessibility, participation, and differentiation for all learners.



The findings of this study provide an initial picture of the factors that support and hinder English language teaching in inclusive primary education, particularly in the unique setting of SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu. This research deepens understanding of how teaching strategies, collaboration with special education assistants, available facilities, student diversity, and communication barriers influence the implementation of inclusive practices. However, because this study was conducted in one school with a limited number of participants and focused on a single English teacher, the findings cannot be generalized to all-inclusive schools in Indonesia. They should instead be viewed as context specific, reflecting the particular conditions of SD Negeri 2 Bengkulu. Future research is encouraged to include more schools, involve a larger number of teachers, and consider different geographical and cultural contexts. Longitudinal or action research is also recommended to better understand how supporting and inhibiting factors shape the long-term effectiveness of inclusive English teaching. A broader approach is expected to produce more generalizable insights and strengthen efforts to improve inclusive education practices in Indonesia.

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