Distance learning in developing EFL students' attitudes during post-pandemic: Effectiveness and barriers

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to investigate what the students thought about the effectiveness of distance learning in developing attitudes and the barriers that came after the pandemic. This research was conducted using the qualitative research method. Forty EFL students from a senior high school in Medan took part in this study. Twelve statements on questionnaires with the options strongly agreed, agreed, neutral, disagreed, and strongly disagree, as well as a semi-structured interview with four students who volunteered to participate, were used to gather the data. The findings indicated that the students have a positive attitude toward the effectiveness of distance learning in ELT classrooms. Besides the effectiveness, it was found that there were some barriers to the utilization of distance learning in the case of attitudes, such as students' lack of preparation (doing other activities during learning), lack of concentration (asleep), and lack of dress etiquette (not neat).
Keywords: Barriers; Developing attitudes; Distance learning; Effectiveness; Post-pandemic

INTRODUCTION

From its initial appearance, the COVID-19 epidemic spread swiftly and became a genuinely global phenomenon (Murphy, 2020). The COVID-19 epidemic has profoundly impacted the global economy, educational schemes, and social structures. The consequences of the infection and the measures employed to manage it have generated questions about the preparedness for the epidemic as well as, more broadly, regarding past, present, and future development. (Leach et al., 2021). Making sure that schooling continues uninterrupted has been one of the top priorities for all the nations where the COVID-19 pandemic is being felt (Akalin & Gümüş, 2020). In this process, it has been noted that nations typically make an effort to utilize the distance learning opportunities already available, supported by various technology infrastructures (Pusporini et al., 2021) since it is impossible to have face-to-face learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Yulia & Paseleng, 2021). Due to the epidemic, distance communication solutions were quickly implemented, allowing for real-time connections between students and teachers even when they are not in the same physical location (Estelami & Bezzone, 2022). Parents and students must always be prepared to utilize online media that is constantly connected to the Internet (Sebrina & Putri, 2021). Students, professors, and lecturers all have the flexibility of time with distance learning (Abidin et al., 2020). The new virtual classroom model was made

available through distance learning solutions like Zoom, Google Hangouts, Adobe Connect, and comparable video conferencing services (Rippé et al., 2021; Sharma & Bumb, 2021).

Countries have used distance education as a protective move in the struggle against the 2019 new Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), replacing traditional intimate education with it (Al Lily et al., 2020). The introduction of distance learning has offered to ascend to real expectations for democratization and standards of excellence. In light of the difficulty, speed, flexibility, and existence of a competitive industry for goods and services, its proportion in the pandemic is unflattering (Gomes et al., 2021). A variety of studies has been done addressing the Use of distance learning during the COVID-19 epidemic (Akalin & Gümüş, 2020; Al Lily et al., 2020; Panskyi et al., 2022). There are several problems that students confront when using distance learning. Thus it is desired that teachers better prepare for distance learning as much as they can to make learning flow more smoothly (Akalin & Gümüş, 2020; Asher, 2021; Süt, 2022). However, other than that, the teachers claim that they have set up the best learning environment to accommodate distance learning (Fauzan et al., 2022; Julie et al., 2022; Roff, 2021; Sudrajat & Saefi, 2021).

In the Internet age, distance learning plays a crucial role across various fields (Khalid et al., 2018). Due to the fact that students and educators cannot physically attend classes during situations, urgent distance learning is employed to maintain learning and teaching through the use of virtual classrooms and internet platforms (Aladsani et al., 2022). Although the interaction between them or among peers is not always ensured, communication between the teachers and students may occur in distance learning (Nikiforos, 2020). The major components of distance learning, sometimes referred to as online learning, distance learning, and e-learning, entail the physical barrier between instructors and students during teaching and the Use of a variety of technologies to promote communication between learners, educators, and other pupils (Berg & Simonson, 2002).

In fact, after the Corona infection abated, communication and information technology in our educational environment no longer stammer. Since distance learning makes the learning process more flexible and conducive to student learning, it is thought that its Use, when done correctly and strategically, can help the learning process. Distance learning is still very well-liked due to its convenience. Distance learning appears likely to keep expanding (Barsotti & Shepherd, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Gpal Iyer & Chapman, 2021; Korkmaz & Toraman, 2020). Several institutions have tried to take advantage of what they've studied from the change to distance learning by broadening their online program services, despite the fact that many institutions have found it difficult with the quick rise in online learning and decided to seek to recover to face-to-face classes as pretty shortly as conditions permit (Clary et al., 2022).

Even when the pandemic is over, many students, particularly those in higher education, wish to continue their distance learning courses (Clary et al., 2022; Goldman & Karam, 2020). Others who are made to take distance learning courses may realize that they are more at ease with the online environment and change their desires to distance learning as a result. Some students indicated that distance learning may still be employed in a sophisticated way to create better or even more useful learning processes (Alghamdi et al., 2021; Ashour et al., 2021; Estelami & Bezzone, 2022). Distance learning is also frequently employed in English language instruction, and numerous academics have examined a number of topics relating to distance learning in the English language teaching classroom (Başal, 2013; Irawan et al., 2021; Irwandi, 2020; Nashruddin et al., 2020). Some form of distance learning feature, they claimed, could be implemented in an ELT classroom.

Since distance learning has been around for a while, Bušelić (2012), King et al. (2001), Moore et al. (2011); Traxler (2018), and many other researchers are interested in revisiting the discussion of distance learning. The flexibility of distance learning allows for on-the-go learning at any time and from anywhere (Al-Arimi, 2014; Erihovna, 2016; Mirkholikovna, 2020; O'Lawrence, 2005; Sadeghi, 2019), conserves time and money for the learner money (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Belousova et al., 2022; Erihovna, 2016; Oliveira et al., 2018; Xalmuratova M. T., 2021), provides an individual a particular set of skills and knowledge (Lamanauskas & Makarskaitė-Petkevičienė, 2021; Mirkholikovna, 2020; Vlasenko & Bozhok, 2014), and many others.

Along with its many advantages, distance learning has its disadvantages as well. For example, because students are frequently studying alone, they may feel lonely and miss out on social interaction (Arkorful & Abaidoo, 2015; Sadeghi, 2019; Vlasenko & Bozhok, 2014; Xalmuratova M. T., 2021), equipment, technology, or connection problems (Al-Arimi, 2014; Erihovna, 2016; Kotrikadze & Zharkova, 2021; Sadeghi, 2019; Vlasenko & Bozhok, 2014), the possibility that a student won't have the self-control and attitude to follow the learning process (Bušelić, 2012; Erihovna, 2016; Keshavarz, 2020; O'Lawrence, 2005; Valentine, 2002), lack of Feedback (Belousova et al., 2022; Bušelić, 2012; Lamanauskas & Makarskaitė-Petkevičienė, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2018), and some other drawbacks.

Furthermore, generally, attitudes are defined as feelings or opinions about a certain subject (Ayub, 2017; Binder & Niederle, 2006), and they can be either positive, negative, or neutral (Tzafilkou et al., 2021). Language learning attitude relates to a person's dispositions regarding their efforts in learning languages (Zulfikar et al., 2019). According to the majority of studies, attitudes have three components: cognitive, affective, and behavioral (Guillén-Gámez et al., 2020). We must turn to teachers and their attitudes regarding teaching in a distance-learning context as the main probability hurdle to affordable distance learning, notwithstanding hardware issues that might or might not be resolved with new advancements in technology (Valentine, 2002). Claims that support the idea that distance learning is preferable to traditional instruction because of its advantages—it is free of time and place, at the learner's speed and learning style, student-focused, etc.—could be categorized as having a positive attitude regarding distance learning (Çelik & Uzunboylu, 2022). Students' attitudes regarding distance learning are positive, so they should have no trouble embracing this new teaching method (Fidalgo et al., 2020). However, disliking distance learning among students may result in decreased success rates (Çelik & Uzunboylu, 2022). There may be various causes for this unfavorable attitude. Several of these are negative views of educational quality, doubts about the legitimacy of distance education certifications and credentials, and unfavorable perceptions of social presence (Atabek, 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant shift in Indonesia's educational system from in-person instruction to distance learning at home (Shofiyuddin et al., 2022). Since the development of good COVID-19 patient instances in Indonesia, the government has enacted a program starting in mid-March 2020, learning and working away from home through the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Nadeak, 2020). Although the government has said that the COVID-19 outbreak is no longer a serious threat, numerous institutions continue to use distance learning in their educational programs. This study expands on earlier studies examining students' attitudes about online learning during the coronavirus pandemic (Wijaya et al., 2020); this study also describes that topic but is done during the post-pandemic period. Few research from the past have addressed the effectiveness and barriers of distance learning in developing students' attitudes. This study connects distance learning, effectiveness, and barriers students face as they develop their

attitudes in the post-pandemic era. In the current period, where COVID 19 has finished, this research is expected to be able to give educators an overview of the utilization of distance learning. Therefore, this research aims to determine the effectiveness and barriers of distance learning in developing students' attitudes during the post-pandemic period.

METHODS

This research was conducted using the qualitative research method. Specifically, it employs a case study design, which is often used throughout most domains, just as an assessment when the researcher thoroughly analyzes a specific situation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This study examines the effectiveness and barriers of distance learning in developing students' attitudes during the post-pandemic. Forty eleventh-grade students from a senior high school in North Sumatra, Indonesia, were invited to take part in this study. The author has asked the teacher about the utilization of distance learning for the students this semester. Based on the preliminary data regarding the participants' demographic, all of the students had experience in the utilization of distance learning in their English language learning process.

For data collection, two instruments—questionnaires and interviews—were employed to gather the data per the research questions. Using a Likert Scale, the questionnaire consists of twelve questions with optional responses: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Each student may only select one answer option per question. The Likert scale provided spans from highly positive to very negative. The questionnaire was distributed to all students following the effectiveness and barriers of distance learning in developing students' attitudes. The interview was then conducted with a subset of participants (n = 4) selected to elicit further information regarding their questionnaire responses. The interview aims to collect more specific and accurate data, supplement previous findings, learn more about the student's barriers to distance learning, and obtain direct information pertaining to the overall objectives and specific research questions. With the participants' consent, the researcher audio-recorded the interview using a cell phone. The audio recording was subsequently transcribed verbatim prior to data analysis.

The data collected using the two instruments were afterward analyzed simultaneously using two techniques: frequency count for the questionnaire data and content analysis for the interview data. Each researcher separately and manually coded the interview transcripts using open and axial coding procedures (Saldaña, 2018). The two different sets of coding were then integrated and sorted by broad topical groups and participation. Independent coding and group sorting were performed iteratively before identifying emerging themes and selected illustrative data vignettes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study's first intention is to determine the effectiveness of distance learning in developing learners' attitudes. The data was gathered to find out their perception of the attitudes by distributing a questionnaire consisting of 12 statements covering different aspects related to the app. The result of the data analysis reveals that, in general, the students positively perceived the effectiveness of distance learning in developing attitudes toward learning English and found it works very well in helping them improve their English mastery. The students' responses to each statement are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. The Effectiveness of the Use of Distance Learning in Developing Attitude

No.	Questions	SA	A	N	DA	SDA
1.	I like to study English by using distance learning	95%	5%	-	-	-
2.	Learning English through distance learning is better than face-to-face	85%	10%	5%	-	-
3.	I always join the distance learning process on time	87%	8%	5%	-	-
4.	I am keen to invest time during distance learning to solve English subject problems	97%	3%	-	-	-
5.	I am keen to participate in English classes during distance learning	92%	8%	-	-	-
6.	I actively participate in the class	82%	8%	10%	-	-
7.	I share an English task with my peers within the group to reach the appropriate solution	95%	5%	-	-	-
8.	I listen when the teacher explains the English concepts and materials	86%	7%	7%	-	-
9.	I avoid side talks during English class	97%	3%	-	-	-
10.	Learning English by using distance learning helps me understand the lesson more	80%	15%	5%	-	-
11.	I am excited to do the homework after utilizing distance learning	87%	10%	3%	-	-
12.	I appreciate the importance of English in life while utilizing distance learning	85%	5%	10%	-	-
	Average	89%	7,25%	3,75%	-	-

From the average number shown in the Table 1 (SA= 89%, A=7,25%, N= 3,75%, DA=0%, and SDA=0%), it can be concluded that the responses to the questionnaire are positive. The stu-dents gave positive attitude responses in utilizing distance learning in developing attitudes through learning English. The table shows that for each statement, the majority of students selected strongly agree. Additionally, some students selected agree and neutral, and no students selected disagree or strongly disagree. A closer look at the data displayed in the table shows the detailed result of each statement as perceived by the students. Regarding the first statement, "I like to study English by using distance learning," 38 of the students (95%) chose to strongly agree, and two students (5%) chose to agree. It is clear from the first statement that nearly all students like learning distantly. If students already like the lesson, they will be interested in it and find it enjoyable. Students will also have no trouble understanding it.

Discussion

Students' Attitude Development in the Effectiveness of Distance Learning

The transition face-to-face instruction to distance learning brought both new difficulties and consequences. Additionally, flexible, interactive, and collaborative learning opportunities can be provided by distance learning environments (Gedera et al., 2013). Regarding the second statement, "Learning English through distance learning is better than face to face", 34 students (85%) chose strongly agree, four students (10%) chose to agree, and two students chose (5%) neutral. Students chose strongly agree, agree, and neutral responses to this statement; none chose to disagree. Because of this, students prefer distance learning to face-to-face instruction because it can favor students' learning. Additionally, Bhat (2020) identified five factors that make distance learning superior to face-to-face instruction: the need for virtual elements, the need for less time investment, the monitoring of learning patterns, the good memory value, and cooperative social acquisition.

Regarding the third statement, "I always join the distance learning process on time", 35 students (87%) chose strongly agree, three students (8%) chose to agree, and two students chose (5%) neutral. On this statement, the majority of students chose strongly agree, then agreed, and then neutral. Students always arrive on time for distance learning classes, which may be related to the fact that it is accessible from anywhere at any time. The benefits of time management in education are said to be extensive, and they are often the focus of advice articles and counseling services provided to both current and at-risk students (MacCann et al., 2012). Additionally, ineffective time-effective strategies, like squeezing through exams, missing deadlines set by instructors, and failing to appropriately allocate time for work assignments, have been frequently cited as major contributors to stress and poor scientific performance (MacCann et al., 2012).

Regarding the fourth statement, "I am keen to invest time during the distance learning to solve English subject problems", 39 students (97%) chose strongly agree, and one student (3%) chose to agree. Only one student selected to agree with this remark, while the others chose to strongly agree. Therefore, students believe it is acceptable to engage in online learning because it sparks their interest in studying. It is clear from this that students see or approach spending time learning via distant learning favorably.

Regarding the fifth statement, "I am keen to participate in English class during distance learning", 37 students (92%) chose strongly agree, and three students (8%) chose to agree. These findings indicate that learners are happier and more inspired to study English because learning through distance is done in an interesting way that draws students in. This might also be brought on by students who prefer distance learning to face-to-face instruction, which necessitates extensive preparation prior to the start of class.

The learning approach is centered on student participation. It seems crucial to understand what teachers can do to encourage student engagement and learning as well as how their efforts may be constrained by factors beyond their control (Weaver & Qi, 2005). Regarding the sixth statement, "I actively participate in the class", 33 students (82%) chose strongly agree, 3 students (8%) chose to agree, and four students chose (10%) neutral. This conveys that learners have a favorable outlook on the participation they offer during online learning. Learning can proceed swiftly and favorably if the teacher can achieve complete student participation.

When working in groups, the assignment of duties can motivate each person to perform their job more effectively. This can encourage each team member to perform at their highest level because if they don't, other team members will suffer as well. Regarding the seventh statement, "I share an English task with my peers within the group to reach the appropriate solution", 38 students (95%) chose strongly agree, and two students (5%). Based on this statement, distance learning has the potential to boost the development of positive student collaboration. Students can benefit from distance learning by working on assignments in groups with peers to achieve the best results.

Regarding the eighth statement, "I listen when the teacher explains the English concepts and materials", 34 students (86%) chose strongly agree, three students (7%) chose to agree, and three students chose (7%) neutral. In several previous statements, it appears that students agree that they are able to participate in distance learning. This is reinforced by this statement, where students can closely examine how the instructor explains the topic being covered. In distance learning, students are able to decide where to study, of course, a place that they think is comfortable and away from the fuss. That is why students can focus more on listening to the teacher's explanation using distance learning than they enter the classroom.

Regarding the ninth statement, "I avoid side talks during English class", 39 students (97%) chose to strongly agree, and one student (3%) chose to agree. Nearly all students concur with this statement, demonstrating their good attitude toward distance learning and their ability to develop attitudes through respect for other students and teachers who give presentations or explain concepts in class. Students who study remotely alone, or who are otherwise unknown, cannot share personal experiences in class. Thus, studying is the only thing that gets their attention.

Regarding the tenth statement, "Learning English by using distance learning helps me understand the lesson more", 32 students (80%) chose strongly agree, six students (15%) chose to agree, and two students chose (5%) neutral. This statement supports the earlier one, according to which students will automatically be better able to understand the English materials if they refrain from talking to their friends and instead concentrate on the teacher's explanation or presentation. This will undoubtedly have an impact on the students' ability to learn English.

Despite the fact that people's views of homework have fluctuated over the past century (Gill & Schlossman, 2004), it is nevertheless a regular pedagogical endeavor and, for the majority of school-age children, an integral component of their daily schedule (Cooper et al., 2006; Corno, 2000). Regardless of the students who consider their tasks significant and fascinating, doing homework provides several hurdles because it occurs in the midst of the draw of more alluring and competitive after-school activities (Xu, 2013). Regarding the eleventh statement, "I am excited to do the homework after utilizing distance learning", 35 students (87%) chose strongly agree, four students (10%) chose to agree, and one student chose (3%) neutral. This indicates that through online learning, students might change their attitude toward finishing their homework.

English is a recognized gateway to greater educational and employment possibilities. The English language is an essential part of how the world is connected. In almost all nations where it is not their mother tongue, English is regarded as a second language. The primary objective of acquiring a certain language is to develop basic communication skills (Ahmad, 2016). Regarding the twelfth statement, "I appreciate the importance of English in life while utilizing distance learning", 34 students (85%) chose strongly agree, two students (5%) chose to agree, and four students chose (10%) neutral. This is a very good thing because students have realized the importance of learning English as a provision in life in the future.

According to the data above, students in this study had a positive view and attitudes toward the effectiveness of distance learning in the English subject, which is consistent with outcomes from other earlier studies (Al-Ghamdy, 2013; Aljaser, 2019; Shaqer, 2014). Al-Ghamdy (2013) highlighted that students have good attitudes regarding studying the English language since it simplifies going overseas and enable them to recognize the habits, traditions, and cultures of the populations speaking in English. Shaqer (2014) proved this point. According to Aljaser (2019), students have a positive attitude about it and have improved their test scores when utilizing distance learning to study. Yang (2016) further notes that the setting of online learning has enhanced students' motivation to learn.

Barriers to Developing Students' Attitudes by Using Distance Learning

The second research question concerns the perceived barriers to using distance learning in developing students' attitudes while learning English. The researchers supplement question-naire data with information gathered through interviews to answer this research question. Four students participated voluntarily in the interview. During this phase of the interview, the researchers evaluate the students' perceptions of the barriers to developing attitudes toward

distance learning in English classrooms. The outcomes of the data analysis reveal three barriers to developing students' attitudes during the utilization of distance learning in English subjects.

Students' Lack of Preparation: Doing Other Activities During Learning

Since distance learning is flexible, it can be done anytime and anywhere. Sometimes, when taking part in distance learning, students are rushed or ill-prepared. Due to the fact that distance learning can be completed at home, a student may not always have enough time to eat, drink, or even take a shower before beginning the learning process, as seen in the following extract.

> When I'm at a Zoom meeting, I occasionally work on other things. I raised the screen just a bit. As a result, the teacher is not really aware of my activities, such as when I am drinking or eating when I am taking a distance learning course (Excerpt 1).

According to the interview's findings, pupils continue to pay attention to the lesson material even while they are engaged in other activities. This outcome confirms findings from earlier research, which stated that learning preparation is one of the most important points in learning (Lee et al., 2001; Shibukawa & Taguchi, 2019). According to Lee et al. (2001), students who are less prepared are more at risk in a distance learning setting. A key objective for higher education administration and academics will be fostering favorable attitudes in distance learning. According to Shibukawa and Taguchi (2019), although class preparation for some students was shown to be less efficient or effective for others, there was a clear and favorable association between both their class preparation time and personal results. The extract below also supports this finding.

> I usually listen to the teacher while eating during online classes. Sometimes I have breakfast or a snack (Excerpt 2).

Lack of Concentration: Asleep

Olivia (2010) claimed that the center of student learning is indeed a focus on concentration and full knowledge of the subject material being taught; Slameto's perspective (2015, referenced in Erwiza et al. (2019), according to which the emphasis is placed on the subject matter and the teacher, supports this assertion. The concentration of students is really only interested in the subject material, so the teacher definitely requires a classroom setting that encourages learning.

> Sometimes, because I was too focused on the teacher's explanation, I fell asleep. Because there is no other activity besides listening to the teacher. Sometimes in class, there is still an atmosphere that makes us relax (Excerpt 3).

In this instance, the student pays close attention to the teacher, but since he only concentrates on the explanation, he falls asleep. Distance learning only emphasizes explanations, compared to in-person instruction, allowing students to examine their surroundings and have brief conversations with friends. Teachers' effort make is to get kids to concentrate (Erwiza et al., 2019; Wang & Lieberoth, 2016). According to Wang and Lieberoth (2016), the usage of notes and sounds in Kahoot! Maintained students' attention during the session in a quantitatively different way. While neither sound nor visuals were used, the audience's attention during the lecture was noticeably lower than it was for the other scenarios. It demonstrates the value of using both visuals and sound to keep students' attention during a presentation. It's remarkable that there was no discernible difference in attention while taking the question, regardless of how the sound and/or point were used. According to Erwiza et al. (2019), teachers'

efforts to educate build strong relationships with students, which increases attention on students' education and their ability to focus on learning and critical analysis that is beneficial to education. These factors all have an effect on the learning results that students achieve.

Lack of Dress Etiquette: Not neat

Along with food and shelter, clothing is a necessity for humans. Health, modesty, orderliness, and attractiveness are all advantages of dressing. In reality, there are still plenty of uses for underwear life—just consider it from the perspective of others. The issue with the fashion industry is actually a person's right. However, this is also required to adapt to the environment or group at school, college, or in society. As future community leaders and role models, students are required to exhibit an attitude that always maintains cleanliness and orderliness.

> When I take distance classes, I hardly ever shower. Therefore, if the distance course begins at 07.30. I get out of bed at 7:25. I simply wear a jacket and a hijab. I, therefore, choose not to wear the uniform because it does not appear fully on the screen (Excerpt 4).

One of the most crucial factors is neatness, which also has to do with manners. Students' learning attitudes are positively impacted by how they dress. A person's appearance influences first impressions, and a person's attire has a bigger impact on first impressions of their sociability (Kashem, 2019). Since students, professors, and peers do not interact directly with one another during the course of learning, it is evident from the findings of the interviews that students pay less attention to their appearance.

CONCLUSION

Since its popularity during the COVID-19 epidemic, distant learning is said to have success-fully assisted the learning process. It is still frequently employed in many schools, particularly in Indonesia. There are numerous challenges and benefits associated with using it. It was dis-covered in this study that using distance learning in the classroom to teach English works well. It is thought that distance learning is successful at changing students' perspectives. It is thought that distance learning can help students change their attitudes about learning, especially English. Students are interested in using distant learning to continue learning English since they believe it to be more preferable. Additionally, students demonstrate a favorable attitude regarding the utilization of distance learning. In addition to its effectiveness, there are undoubtedly a number of obstacles to its implementation related to students' attitudes, such as students' lack of preparation prior to learning (students engage in other activities during lessons, such as eating, drinking, etc.), their lack of focus (drowsy because they only pay attention to teacher clarification), and their disregard for neatness (was not properly attired for the lesson). Finally, this study's recommendations regarding the attitudes of the students could be applied to future distance learning. The majority of comparable recommendations were that teachers make the learning process more engaging and exciting in order to lessen the obstacles that the students had to confront. Inquiring about the students' preferences for face-to-face or distance learning for their educational process is desirable.

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