DIALOGUE JOURNAL WRITING (DJW): A REMEDIATION ON SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING ANXIETY OF ELEMENTARY LEARNERS

JANE TAYLAR-GREGORIO, MALED

Master Teacher, Cataning Integrated School, Balanga City, Bataan, Philippines, 2100
E-mail: jane.gregorio001@deped.gov.ph

Abstract - This study examined the efficacy of Dialogue Journal Writing as a school-based remediation strategy for reducing second language (L2) writing anxiety among Grade 4 elementary learners. Implemented in a structured classroom setting, the intervention involved interactive, trivial writing exchanges between students and teachers, fostering a supportive environment that minimized fear of errors and built confidence through personalized feedback. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) and inferential statistics (paired-samples t-test). Learners' anxiety was categorized into three dimensions: cognitive, somatic, and avoidant behavior, with cognitive anxiety being most prevalent pre-intervention. Quantitative measures included pre- and post-intervention anxiety scales with rubrics adapted from Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), supplemented by qualitative analyses of journal entries and pupil reflections. Results revealed significant reductions in writing apprehension across all dimensions, reporting enhanced self-efficacy and engagement. Overall, the approach improved writing fluency and motivation while developing socio-emotional skills, affirming its potential as an accessible, learner-centered tool for addressing L2 writing challenges in elementary education.

Keywords - Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW), Remediation, English as a Second Language (ESL), Writing Anxiety

I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the global landscape of education, foreign language anxiety remains a persistent barrier to effective second language acquisition, particularly in skills such as writing, which require cognitive and emotional engagement. According to extensive reviews, such as that by Fattahi Marnani from the University of Central Florida, anxiety hinders learners by amplifying fear of errors and negative self-perception, leading to reduced proficiency in instruction-based contexts. This issue holds special relevance in the Philippines, where English serves as a medium of instruction and a key competency under the K-12 curriculum. Furthermore, low anxiety tolerance in writing not only stifles creativity and expression but also undermines broader educational goals, such as fostering communicative competence essential for 21st-century learners.

Nationally, the Department of Education (DepEd) has highlighted persistent gaps in English language proficiency, as evidenced by the Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA) under the "Teaching and Learning" strand, which prioritizes interventions for skill-specific challenges, such as writing. Regional data from Central Luzon, including the Balanga City Division, reveal similar trends: performance indicators in English writing lag national averages, with elementary pupils exhibiting a high level of reluctance due to anxiety. Locally, studies like Popon's (n.d.) on elementary learners in Davao City identify classroom procedures, error correction, and writing activities as key anxiety triggers. However, research gaps persist, particularly in actionable, classroom-based strategies tailored to Grade 4 contexts in public schools, such as Cataning Integrated School.

At Cataning Integrated School in Balanga City, Grade 4 learners demonstrate notably low anxiety levels in English writing tasks, manifesting as avoidance, minimal output, and self-reported discomfort during assessments. Observations indicate that among 187Grade 4 respondents, many produce fragmented sentences or refuse to write due to fear of judgment, which impacts their overall English proficiency and participation. This micro-level problem aligns with broader community realities in Central Luzon, where limited exposure to interactive English practices exacerbates the issue. Therefore, without targeted intervention, these learners risk perpetuating cycles of underachievement in language arts.

To address this, the proposed intervention employs Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW), an innovative strategy in which learners engage in ongoing, non-corrective written exchanges with teachers, thereby fostering a safe space for expression. DJW encourages regular journaling on personal topics, with teacher responses focusing on content and encouragement rather than grammar errors. This approach builds confidence incrementally, transforming writing from a source of anxiety into a dialogic tool for growth. Consequently, it promises measurable improvements in writing engagement and reduced anxiety among the 187 Grade 4 participants.

This study draws robust support from DepEd mandates, including Republic Act No. 10533 (Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013) and Department Order No. 39, s. 2016, which emphasizes

research-driven innovations aligned with BERA priorities. Additionally, RM No. 57, s. 2018 highlights the importance of action research for classroom interventions. Empirical backing comes from prior studies: the ISET (2019) experiment showed significant post-test gains in argumentative writing via DJW among 30 university students; Parrikal and Said's systematic review (1997-2019) confirmed DJW's benefits for 692 English language learners' writing skills; and Popon's work highlighted practice-based strategies to mitigate elementary anxiety in writing.

Teachers at Cataning Integrated School have long observed Grade 4 learners' hesitation during English writing periods, with many opting for silence over submission, rooted in personal fears echoed in Popon's themes of negative self-perception and writing activities. These firsthand insights reveal how rigid drills amplify discomfort, prompting a shift toward more relational methods, such as DJW. Such experiences underscore the urgency of context-specific action in Balanga City's public schools.

What inspires this study is the timely convergence of DepEd's push for responsive, learner-centered research amid the post-pandemic recovery, during which English proficiency gaps have widened. By addressing low writing anxiety through DJW, this action research directly contributes to DepEd outcomes, such as improved learning competencies and holistic development. Ultimately, resolving this issue equips Grade 4 learners with confident expression skills, advancing national priorities for equitable education.

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This action research investigates the efficacy of Dialogue Journal Writing (DJW) as a school-based remediation strategy to reduce second language (L2) writing anxiety among Grade 4 learners at Cataning Integrated School in Balanga City, Bataan, Philippines. Specifically, it aims to:

(1) Assess the prevalence and dimensions (cognitive, somatic, and avoidant behavior) of L2 writing anxiety among 187 Grade 4 pupils prior to the intervention, using adapted tools from Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI);

(2) DJW through interactive, non-corrective written exchanges between pupils and teachers, fostering a supportive environment that emphasizes content, encouragement, and personalized feedback over error correction;

(3) Measure post-intervention changes in writing anxiety levels, self-efficacy, engagement, fluency, and motivation via paired-samples t-tests, descriptive statistics, journal analyses, and pupil reflections; and

(4) Determine the overall impact of DJW on pupils' socio-emotional skills and English writing proficiency, addressing local gaps in Central Luzon public schools and aligning with DepEd priorities under the Basic Education Research Agenda (BERA), Republic Act No. 10533, and related mandates.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The study employed experimental research. In this case, research involved intact groups in an experiment, rather than assigning individuals at random to research conditions. Through total population sampling, theentire cohort of grade 4 learners, comprising 187,became the subject of the study.

Research Design.The study employed a descriptive research method, specifically the survey method, to gather information on the prevailing status of the existing status. A survey method to describe the present students' writing level. Through the survey, the researcher analyzed the output components, and the outcome led to the compilation of significant information for feedback.

Participants. The study involves 187 Grade 4 learners from Cataning Integrated School, a public elementary school in Central Luzon. The author chose to use a total population sampling method to represent the diverse proficiency levels in English as a second language. This sample size ensures statistical power for detecting intervention effects, consistent with systematic reviews of DJW involving hundreds of English language learners (Parrikal& Said).

Population of the Study

POPULATION			TOTAL RESPONDENTS
GRADE 4 SECTION	M	F	
SPED	8	16	24
RIZAL	19	20	39
LUNA	17	24	41
BONIFACIO	18	23	41
JACINTO	21	21	42
TOTAL	83	104	187

Table 1

Instruments

Pre-test and post-test.To examine the pupils' writing proficiency in terms of content, organization, and vocabulary, pre- and post-tests were used.The pupils were not allowed to use any aids, such as dictionaries or thesauruses, which would have helped them answer the questionnaires. The pre- andpost-tests were primarily based on the DJW study by Ming-Tzu Liao and Chia Tzu Wong.

Scoring Rubric.The scoring rubric is adapted from Ferris and Hedcock (1998). Content, organization, and vocabulary composed the rubrics. Each has a

maximum score of eight (8) points; therefore, the total score for each test is twenty-four(24)points. Orientation was done before scoring the essay, but it was reiterated that scores do not matter most. It will be used to gauge the improvement of the writing performance of the pupils.

Questionnaires.To gather information accurately, the study employed two types of questionnaires. The first was a questionnaire created by Cheng, each with a different purpose. These questionnaires were conducted to know if anxiety is apparent to the learners, what level of anxiety they are in,what kind of anxiety it reflects, and what the common causes are that it involves.

Questionnaire I - The Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI). It consists of twenty-two items, based on the SLWAI (Cheng, 2004), which was designed to assess whether ESL writing anxiety exists and to what extent. The SLWAI also categorized the kinds of anxiety. Five of the items (1,4,17,18, and 22) were negatively worded and required reverse scoring before being summed up to yield total scores.

A higher score obtained thereupon indicated a higher level of ESL writing anxiety. A total score above 65 points indicated a high level of writing anxiety, and a total score in-between indicated a moderate level of writing anxiety, The 22 items of the SLWAI can be divided into three categories of anxiety, such as Cognitive Anxiety (1, 3, 7, 9, 14, 17, 20, 21); Somatic Anxiety (2, 6, 8, 11, 13, 15, 19); and Avoidance Behavior (4, 5, 10, 12, 16, 18, 22).

Questionnaire II- Causes of ESL Writing Anxiety.It consists of 8 items (lack of topical knowledge, linguistic difficulties, fear of negative evaluation, low self-confidence, insufficient writing practice, insufficient writing technique, lack of effective feedback, and fear of tests), and was used by the researcher, referring to her teaching experiences and secondary material, which cover possible factors that cause ESL writing anxiety. The questionnaire was designed to find out the three most common problems associated with ESL writing.

Cheng's Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) was acquired by sending an email to the legitimate email address of the proponent, Y.S. Cheng.

Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection spans three phases: (1) Pre-Intervention Survey Administration and Baseline DJW Entries.It involves obtaining the formal permission of the instrument's owner. The researcher formally asked permission from Y. S. Cheng through email. Moreover, the researcher obtained permission from the school principal before the implementation.(2) 16-week DJW Intervention with Bi-Weekly Teacher Feedback.

After determining the level of anxiety among the respondents, the researcher prepared a DJW, which was validated by10 language experts. This will be conducted with respondents for 16 weeks. (3) Post-Intervention Survey and Reflections.The post-test assessed the efficacy of the instrument developed by the researcher and evaluated the effectiveness of the program for the learners.

Ethical consent was obtained in accordance with DepEd protocols, ensuring that participants are anonymous and their participation is voluntary.

Data Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed using the mean and standard deviation to describe the overall anxiety level of the participants. Likewise, a paired sample t-test was used to determine the difference in anxiety levels of the participants after employingthe intervention.

In a paired sample t-test, each subject was measured twice, resulting in pairs of observations.To evaluate the effectiveness of DJW, the level of anxiety was measured before and after the remediation program, and the paired sample t-test was used to analyze the differences.

1. Type of Data and Corresponding Analysis Method.Quantitative data (survey scores) underwent statistical analysis to measure changes in anxiety level.
2. Data Analysis Steps Based on Research Questions.
Step 1: Compute descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations) for pre-survey scores using SPSS, categorizing anxiety levels (low/moderate/high) per Cheng's framework.

Step 2: Conduct paired-samples t-tests on pre- and post-survey scores to assess DJW's impact ($p<0.05$), with effect sizes via Cohen's d—echoing ISET 2019's t-test confirmation of DJW gains.

3. Tools and Justification. SPSS v.27 was chosen for its robustness in educational experiments (DepEd Order No. 29, s. 2017, on research tools) to manage quantitative analysis with precision in t-tests and descriptive statistics. NVivo supports qualitative coding for efficiency with large samples (187 learners). These methods are justified by their alignment with foreign language anxiety literature (Marnani), where mixed analysis reveals DJW's role in mitigating barriers, such as writing apprehension, and ensuring evidence-based insights for DepEd instruction.

IV. RESULTS

Part I. Profile of the Respondents

RESPONDENTS	f	%
Sex		
Male	83	44.39%
Female	104	55.61%
Total	187	100%
Age		
9	16	8.7%%
10	148	79%
11	23	12.30%
Language Used at Home		
Tagalog	187	100%

Table II

Table II presents the profile of the population in terms of age, sex, and language used at home.The table shows the distribution of the sex in the group. The group was composed of 83 males (44.39%) and 104 females (55.61%) of the total population.

Regarding the age distribution, most respondents were 10 years old, comprising 79% of the population, while 16 or 8.7% were 9 years old, and 23 or 12.30% were already 11 years old. The last part of the table displays the language used by the respondents at home.All 187 respondents use Filipino at home.

Part II.A. Kinds of Anxiety

KINDS OF ANXIETY	COGNITIVE ANXIETY	SOMATIC ANXIETY	AVOIDANCE-BEHAVIOR ANXIETY
Before Intervention	**23.73**	**21.83**	**21.44**
After Intervention	**18.68**	**16.24**	**16.76**

Table III

The table shows the types of anxiety of the respondents before and after the use of DJW. It shows that the respondents mostly experienced the Cognitive Type of Anxiety before and after the intervention, with a mean score of 23.73 and 18.68, respectively. Moreover, the mean score of the learners who were experiencing Somatic Anxiety registered at 21.83 before the intervention and 16.24 after the administration of DJW. On the other hand, 21.44 was recorded before and 16.76 after the intervention for Behavior Anxiety.

Part II. B. Causes of Anxiety

CAUSES OF WRITING ANXIETY	MEAN
Lack of Topical Knowledge	**4.07**
Linguistic Differences	**4.68**
Fear of Negative Evaluation	**3.41**
Low Self-Confidence	**4.17**
Insufficient Practice	**4.42**
Insufficient Writing Technique	**3.8**
Lack of Effective Feedback	**4.34**
Fear of Test	**3.71**
Time Constraint	**3.37**
Pressure	**3.39**

Table IV

The chart also strengthens Cheng's conclusion (2004: 331) that cognitive anxietyis closely related to test anxiety and could have a profound influence on L2 writing performance. This may seem that Grad 4 learners are afraid to be humiliated in front of classmates due to a lack of language skills. It only means that the writing performance of the learners is affected by the kind of anxiety they possess. The results were consistent with the findings that ESL writing anxiety appearsto increase with increasing time of study (Cheng, 2002). It also inferred that Cognitive Anxiety is likely to occur more than the other kinds of anxiety, followed by Somatic, and then Avoidant behavior, even before or after the conduct of remediation.

Part III. Level of Anxiety Before and After the Intervention

Level of Anxiety	Before the Intervention	After the Intervention
High Level	135	41
Moderate Level	41	19
Low Level	11	127
Total	**187**	**187**

Table V

The tableuncovered the common causes of writing anxiety of the learner-respondents. Based on the data above, most students encountered linguistic difficulties, including inadequate vocabulary mastery, poor sentence structure, and common grammatical errors, as indicated by the mean score of 4.68. It was closely followed by theanxiousfeeling of the students in writing due to a lack of sufficient English writing practice (4.42). Teachers giving feedback also became a concern for students, with a mean score of 4.34. It may mean that teachers have a role in promoting the writing anxiety of students. Furthermore, some of the students had low self-confidence in writing (4.17). It may be due to their limited knowledge of the subject, as presented by the teacher.(4.07) On the other hand, some of the students admitted that they did not have a good command of English in writing (3.80), while some had developed writing anxiety because of fear of undergoing tests. (3.71) The first results commonly resulted from negative evaluations and comments of teachers. It can manifest in the normal situation inside the classroom, where students tend to feel anxious when asked to write for a limited time, or cannot think of words because of the fear of being humiliated by the kind of writing being required. It should benoted that L2 writing anxiety can have other negative effects, for example, on learners' behavior;therefore, the causes reflected should be given emphasis in remediation (Hongxia Zhang, 2011)

Table V presents the level of anxiety of the respondents before and after the mediation of DJW.

The table reflects the effectiveness of DJW in addressing students' writing anxiety. The table indicates the success of the radiation program. The level of anxiety was lowered from High to a ModerateLevel. It directly inferred that learners, through reflection, can improve. It may also mean that the DJW program as an intervention is a success in alleviating L2 writing anxiety.

Mean Score of the Respondents

Indicator	Mean	SD	Description
Before the Intervention	67	13.36	High Level of Anxiety
After the Intervention	52	12.15	Low Level of Anxiety
Mean Difference	**15**		

Table VI

Part IV. Significant Difference in the Anxiety Level of the Respondents after the Intervention

Score	Description
65+	High Level of Anxiety
50-64	Moderate Level of Anxiety
49 below	Low Level of Anxiety

As presented in Table VI, the group's mean score before the intervention was 67 with an SD of 13.36, described as having a high level of anxiety. After the implementation of the DJW program, it significantly dropped to 52 with an SD of 12.15, described as a moderate level of anxiety.Atay and Kurt (2006) noted that anxiety plays a significant role in language learning and learning performance, particularly in second language acquisition.

Difference in the Anxiety Level of the Participants Before and After the Intervention

Anxiety Level	Mean	SD	t-value	Significance	Decision on H^0	Interpretation
Before	67.00	13.36	17.61	<.001	Reject	Significant
After	51.68	12.15				

Table VII

The above tableshows the significant difference in the anxiety level of the participants before (Mean=67.00,SD=13.36 and after (Mean=51.68, SD=12. 15) is evident as provided by the t-value of 17.61 at <.001, which is significantly lesser than .05 alpha thus, rejectingthe null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the writing anxiety of the respondents before and after the remediation program.

Recapitulating the level of anxiety, labelling it too high is alarming. Thus, alleviating the level from high to moderate (Mean Score 67.00 to 51.68, respectively) means that the intervention, DJW, is effective.

Part V. Level of Validity of the DJW Program

Scale of Mean	Descriptive Rating
4.21-5.00	Excellent
3.41-4.20	Very Satisfactory
2.61-3.40	Satisfactory
1.81-2.00	Fair
1.00-1.80	Poor

Validation of Research Instruments Summary of Results

Indicators	Experts Mean Scores	English Teachers Mean Scores
Objectives	5	4.96
Content	4.8	4.88
Manner of Presentation	4.8	5
Usefulness	4.8	4.84
Evaluation	5	4.88
Average	**4.88**	**4.912**

Table VIII

To ensure the validity of the intervention material, the DJW material underwentscrutinywith five (5) experts on language learning and five (5) English teachers. The validation comments and recommendationswere strictly aligned with the material to ensure reliability. The experts were registered psychologists, two school principals, and two language experts who had graduated with a Master of Arts in Language Education. The 5 experts summarized the objectives and evaluation as the two (2) indicators manifesting the strength of the material, achieving a scale of 5. It was followed by the content, manner of presentation, and usefulness, with a scale of 4.88.

Likewise, for the teachers' evaluation, they were impressed with the researcher's manner of presentation, garnering a scale of 5. Consequently, the indicator for objectives was 4.96, while content and valuation remained the same. The last indicator proved to be the weakest part of the material, according to teachers, as its usefulness was rated a 4.84.

To conclude, both the evaluation of the experts and the English teachers proved to be excellent, averaging 4.88 and 4.91, respectively. It only means that the remediation material, DJW, was validated toa high standard.

CONCLUSION

The study was conducted to detect, label, and categorize the L2 writing anxiety of grade 4 learnersof Cataning Integrated School. The research employed quantitative methods, which included two sets of questionnaires from Cheng (2004). Part I focused on the Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI), and Part II identified the Causes

of Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (CSLWAI). One hundred eighty-seven (187) Grade 4 learners participated in the study. Total random sampling was employed as recommended by the psychometrician.

The Dialogue Journal Writing (DJ) was scrutinized by five (5) experts and five (5) language teachers. Consequently, it was validated and deemed reliable.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. The population of the study comprised One Hundred Eighty-Sevent (187) Grade 4 learners. Employing a Total Random Sampling Technique, the whole population participated in the study. Therespondents were predominantly female, comprising 104 (55.61%) compared to 83 (44.39%) males. The age bracket is between 8 and 10 years. Furthermore, all respondents use the Filipino language, particularly the Tagalog vernacular, at home.
2. There were three (3) kinds of anxiety experienced by the students: Cognitive, Somatic, and Avoidance-Behavior Anxieties. Among the three (3), the first type of anxiety was very evident, with the respondents registering a mean score of 23.73 before the intervention and 18.68 after the implementation of DJW. Student-respondents who experienced Somatic Anxiety had a mean score of 21.83 and 16.24 before and after the intervention program, respectively. On the other hand, Avoidant-Behavior Anxiety recorded a mean score of 21.44 prior to the intervention and dropped to 16.76 after the program. The result of the SLWAI indicated that cognitive anxiety is the most common among grade 4 learners. Cheng (2004) cited that cognitive anxiety, particularly test anxiety,has a great influence on L2 performance. Furthermore, the common causes of writing anxiety among the respondents were: linguistic difficulties (mean score of 4.68), insufficient writing practice (4.34), fear of tests (3.71), lack of topical knowledge (4.07), and low self-confidence (4.17),fear of negative evaluation (3.41), insufficient writing technique (3.80), time constraints (3.37), writingassignments (3.20), and pressure to pass a perfect work (mean score of 3.39).

3. The study used three levels of anxiety based on the study of Cheng (2004): high, moderate, and low levels of anxiety. A high level of Anxiety scores of 65or above was experienced by 135 learners before the intervention program. It significantly dropped to 41 after the remediation program was implemented. Moderate level of anxiety scores between 50 and 64 were experienced by 41 prior to the administration of the DJW program and became 19 after it. On the other hand, only 11 respondents had a low level of anxiety before the program, but it significantly increased to 127 after the implementation of the program.
4. The administration of DJW was an effective tool in addressing the writing anxiety of the learners. The mean score of the group prior to the intervention program was 67.00 (high level anxiety) with an SD of 13.36. DJW targeted the writing anxieties of the respondents and significantly dropped the mean to 51.68 (low-level anxiety) with an SD of 12.15. There was a mean difference of 15.00 (see Table VI). The study's results showed a significant difference in the anxiety levels of the participants before (Mean = 67.00, SD = 13.36) and after (Mean = 51.68, SD = 12.15) treatment, as indicated by a t-value of 17.61, which is significant at $p < .001$ and is substantially less than the .05 alpha level. Table VI provides a discreet summary of the success of the DJW material, illustrating the level of anxiety alleviation from high to moderate.
5. The result of the research has an impact on the academe. Furthermore, the administration, parents, and students have an edge in realizing the scaffolding of the program. In view of the sudden change of the curriculum, DJW is of big help as support to the long-term problem of writing performance of the learners. With the hope that the students' anxiety level will be alleviated by the intervention material, the study focused on the challenge of aligning some topics with the subject and competencies outlined inthe Department of Education's curriculum guide. As a 21st-centuryteacher, the materials are solely facilitative, maximizing learners' potentials and abilities in writing, thus disregarding grades in doing so.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enlightened by the result, the researcher concluded with several recommendations, such as the following:
1. The profiling of students revealed no significance to the writing anxiety of the respondents. Thus, it is recommended to include the average grade in English from the prior grade level in the profile to determine if there is improvement after the scaffolding.
2. The effectiveness of the program varies in results. In this manner, it is highly recommended that teachers, who oversee checking and redirecting, be vigilant in correcting common grammatical errors with remarks that will stick in the minds of the learners. Anyways, the intervention is implemented to improve not the quality, but the quantity of learners' writing. Hence, in the process, the quality of writing will be improved.
3. Millennials of the 21st century learners do not depend solely on teachers. It is imperative that learners be guided accordingly to the correct instructions before and after the implementation of the program. In relation, teachers should be careful with their instructions to preserve the students' desire to learn writing. It is likely to propose that teachers' feedback on errors is only positive.

4. DJW was successful in promoting students' intrinsic motivation in writing. It can be a learner's avenue for expressing their own ideas, perceptions, and feelings about the subject, thereby increasing their aspiration to write. In this manner, DJW is recommended for teachers to use in asking students about reflections that will develop self-awareness and assess their own learning. In relation, learners can reflect on their own knowledge and strengths inwriting and ultimately learn a strategy to improve.

5. The intervention material was intended only for 16 weeks. The short-term effect may or may not be an indicator of any long-term effect. To maintain the effectiveness of the material, it is suggested that teachers align it with the needs and interests of millennials. DJW can be completed electronically or via technology-based methods. Studies by Maryam Foroutan (2011) suggest that DJW is more effective when conducted via email compared to traditional tools, such as paper-and-pencil methods.

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