Technology and its Employability in English Language Instruction and Learning

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Abstract: Coming of age in an environment saturated by technology, where the digital world interacts more and more seamlessly with the "real" world, the current cohort of college students is a fundamentally different type of learner and has been identified in the literature as the Net Generation (Barnes, Maratete, & Ferris 2007; Hendricks 2004). It means that these students represent the first generation of virtual learners—or those accustomed to seeking and building knowledge in a technology-enhanced environment. The emergence and proliferation of the technologies play a double role in educational change in that they pose both new demands and new possibilities. As Thorne and Reinhardt (2008) point out, emerging literacy’s associated with digital media are highly relevant to their current and future lives as language users”. Kenning (2007) posits that the motivation for ICT integration into language education is significant because of the inherent role ICT plays in everyday communication. While a broad range of technologies support teaching, this study “Technology and its employability in English Language Instruction and Learning” will examine those technologies involved in computer and Internet use for purposes of Foreign Language instruction and learning. Mixed method research was employed for the study, which is mainly qualitative, but also uses quantitative techniques for triangulation purposes. The purpose of this study is to highlight and explicate some of the expanding roles and affordances of technology in a collegiate foreign language education program and its importance apart from advantages and disadvantages of using new technologies in the language classroom in the case of TEFL students, KSA Universities, KSA.

Keywords: Technology, English language instruction, Use of Technology, Advantages, Disadvantages

1. Introduction

Rather than dismissing IT as another corporate plot, as many critical educators have tended to do, or lamenting its perverse impact on educational priorities, we should acknowledge the fundamental changes that IT is bringing to our societies and seek ways to use its power for transformative purposes. (Cummins 2000:539).

The use of Information Technology in education has recently started to entreaty the significant advancement in language learning. It has become a foremost concern in the field of education and has been implemented from preschool through to university that could facilitate students and teacher in teaching and learning process. The Information technology play significant role in the learning process especially in learning language. The Internet is a site for language communication, as language users from around the world contribute and comments in many different languages. As Hartoyo (2008) stated in his book, a computer is a tool and medium that facilitates people in learning a language, although the effectiveness of learning depends totally on the users. One of the contributions made by a renowned scholar Aitchison in 2001 was that all languages evolve over time as they are used by a variety of speakers with different needs. The technology in this era has developed not only in quality but also in its effectiveness. The developments in Information technology during the past quarter of a century have been so reflective that they replaced other technological teaching aids. The tradition of English teaching has been drastically changed with the remarkable entry of technology. Today’s language classrooms are vastly different from that of the mid- to late- 20th century (Eaton, 2010). The advent of this epoch allocates challenges in the teaching and learning process of the English Foreign Language Classroom. Hence by, Computer-based technology has also brought various novel challenges for the teachers who are pursuing to decide as what is to be offered and how to convey. The purpose of this study is to emphasize and enlighten some of the expanding roles and affordances of technology in a collegiate foreign language education and its usage and importance apart from advantages and disadvantages of integration of technology in the language classroom in the case of EFL students, of Saudi Arabian Universities, KSA.

1.1 Theoretical history

The advent of technology goes back to 15th Century, with the invention of printing press, through which awareness of various genre of wisdom was reached to the masses over the globe. The Use of modern technology into education may be traced back to 1921 with the issuance of first educational radio license to Pennsylvania State College for broadcasting courses. The last two decades has been a spectator to a marvelous revolution with the onset of technology, which has changed the dynamics of various trades. The sixties with the pioneering of the most effective technology ‘the computers’ witnessed a uprising in the TEFL classroom in various educational institutions. The language laboratory was a positive step in linking technology. In the 1960s and 1970s many educational institutions used English language learning laboratories with the main purpose of practicing speaking and listening. Computers were introduced to foreign language learning 1960s (Al-Mahroogi and Troudi 2014: 1). Intellecs like Dawson, Cavanaugh, and Ritzhaupt (2008) and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2014) emphasized that using technology can create a learning atmosphere centered on the learner rather than the teacher that in turn creates positive changes. They emphasized that by using computer technology, language class becomes an active place full of meaningful tasks where the learners are responsible for their learning. 1970s and 80s observed significant alteration in language learning and teaching with the prologue of
computer-based technologies for communication. When IBM launched its first personal computer in 1981, the educational world knew that it was on the threshold of prominence. *Time* magazine named The Computer its “Man of the Year” in 1982, and aptly so: the foundation of immediate learning capabilities had been laid. In 1990, the introduction of internet (World Wide Web) was recognized when a British researcher developed Hyper Text Markup Language, or HTML, the world explode into newfound research and communication methods. The internet into education brought a tremendous change in the field of language education and it transformed the textbooks into e-books, face-to-face to blended learning, paper-based exam to online exam, etc. minimizing the constraints of time and space. A half a decade ago, Bush (1997) assessed the then current use of technology in foreign language education and stated convincingly, "Ready or not, it appears that technology will play an ever-increasing role in each of our institutions". The progression in technology no doubt have initiated a paradigm shift from the development of information-based competencies to communicative competence By 2009, Instructors stated that 40% of students used computers often in their educational methods, in addition to interactive whiteboards and digital cameras. College students nowadays are rarely without their own form of computer technology: 83% own a laptop, and over 50% have a Smartphone. The internet has changed the way the education is imparted enabling the students to attain new learning experience which was not possible through traditional approaches (Farooq, 2011).

1.2 Perspective of Saudi Arabia

The emergence in the field of technology and communication has generated an interest amongst Saudi education professionals and policy makers for considering the potential of technology for English language learning demand to concentrate on the intended technological usage among Saudi EFL learners. According to Mahdi (2013), the Saudi government is committed to providing most educational institutions with computers and networking for Computer Assisted Language Learning within the Saudi context, there is a rapid growth of using new digital media technologies; there are also local needs of Arabic youth with regard to English learning (Al-Ahayedib 1986; Al-Fahad 2009). Due to the growing interest in technology universities have realized the benefits of adapting e-learning solutions, and making teaching and learning accessible anywhere anytime. At universities, technology integration is also gaining recognition and undergoing revolutionary development (Mirza, 2007). Within the persistent use of technology, English language in the Saudi context has become more ubiquitous, especially among young generations who exploit these new technologies in their daily lives for learning purposes. Dockstader (2008) defined technology integration as the use of technology to improve the educational environment. It supports the classroom teaching through creating opportunities for learners to complete assignments on the computer rather than the normal pencil and paper. Every sphere of life has been changed with computer technology. Recently, the use of technology for teaching is an integral part of successful teaching (Almekhlafi & Almeqdadi, 2010). In a recent study, Saglam and Sert (2012) found that despite the lack of proper training English language teachers were willing to use technology for teaching. Although many studies have revealed that the existence of technology does not provide an assurance to its effective amalgamation in education. However the accesses to technology are prerequisites for its integration into classroom activities. Zaíd (2011) and Oyaid (2009) stated that provision of resources, motivation and training issues are among the key challenges still faced by introducing CALL in Saudi Arabia. The use of technology in language learning is widespread. Modern technologies have provided new ways of teaching foreign languages. However, according to the previous studies, they can cause diverse issues. While a broad range of technologies support teaching, this study “Technology and its employability in English Language Instruction and Learning” will examine those technologies involved in computer and Internet use for purposes of Foreign Language instruction and learning in the language classroom in the case of EFL students, of Saudi Arabian Universities.

2. Research Questions

1) How is technology employed in the TEFL classroom and which devices are used?
2) What are the advantages and disadvantages of integration of technology in the language classroom in the case of TEFL students?

3. Methodology and Sample

Mixed method research was employed for the study, which is mainly qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach which has in-depth semi structured interview, of small samples of participants, but also a quantitative technique for validating purposes were considered. Five English teachers were interviewed for this study three from the senior level and two teaching the PYP classes. The semi structured interview questions were constructed not only to learn about all the different technological devices these teachers employ in their teaching, but also their experiences and opinions of the advantages and disadvantages of these devices have on their teaching. To quantify the data a question form was distributed to random samples of students conducted on a cohort group at the department of English, college of Administration and Humanities, Qassim Pvt University.

4. Result and Data Analysis

The data collected through the semi structured interview were analyzed qualitatively following a phenomenological approach, whereas data through questionnaire was obtained for quantifying and validating purposes. As Technologies have always had much to offer to the field of language teaching and learning.

A. Result from the Interview

The data obtained through the semi structured interview from the teachers for the Research questions 1 and 2 are as follows

Question 1. How is technology employed in the TEFL classroom and which devices are used?

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1. Utilization of Technology in TEFL Classroom and the uses of these devices:
The first research question concerns on the technological devices that are used in Teaching English foreign language in the classroom. Following questions were asked to the interviewee

a) Do they use technological devices in the classroom while teaching the EFL students?
All the five teachers gave nearly the identical replies, which is comprehended as they all do the teaching and learning process using the technological devices. As one of the teachers T2 said “the Internet-based language learning provides learners opportunities to practice with confidence, so to motivate and make the learning experiential she uses the modern methodological method” Whereas another teacher T4, said that “multimedia technology combined with appropriate instructional design creates a good learning environment that not only leads to effective language learning but also is highly motivational and especially You tube is highly influential in helping language students improve their listening and speaking skills when its second language learners”. Over the past several decades, studies analyzing the association between technology and foreign language learning have tended to focus on several key issues, including motivation, listening, reading and writing, research, computer assisted language learning etc, significantly, all of this erudition refers to the intrinsic performance in technological communication that allows students to express themselves liberally and ingeniously in learning a second language. Adina Levine, Orna Ferenz, Thea Reves in (2000) identified that in order to develop critical literacy skills for foreign language learners, computer-based technologies were more useful than the conventional method. According to teacher T1 “The development of technology has altered our technique of teaching. Computers, tablets and Smartphone’s have become an essential part of our teaching fraternity. However, it is a challenge for us to provide students with meaningful ways of using the devices for learning in the classrooms as well as outside the classroom, so that the technology can be a useful tool”. The research conducted by Liu et al. (2010) goes on to outline that factors such as user interface, visual attractiveness, and ease of navigation all contribute to students’ perceived usefulness of technology.

b) What Kind of technologies is used in foreign language classrooms?
Technology provides modern and innovative prospective for language teaching. However, learners may not be aware of the ways technology can be used in language learning and therefore educators are challenged to illustrate their students the potential that technology provides for them. To get a corroborated response to the second part of question 1, kind of technologies used in the foreign language classrooms. All the five teachers indeed use these technologies to keep themselves updated but some of the senior teachers use it regularly as a classroom methodical practice while few were just trying to implement these technologies as not so frequently. Teachers have a key role in students’ e-functioning, which means, for instance, guiding them in the use of multiple new modalities (Dooly 2015: 14). All the Five teachers agreed to the fact that and the usage of these technologies that guide in essential structural changes that are important to achieve considerable progress in teaching / learning output. Supporting to the teaching learning classrooms with digital learning tools, such as computers / laptop/ I pad / I pod/tablets etc.; expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials; supports learning, increases student engagement and motivation; and accelerates learning. It has the power to transform teaching by leading in a new world of connected teaching. Which links teachers to their students and to professional content, resources, and systems to help them improve their own instruction and personalize learning?

Teaching and learning process through the most modern visual aid Computer or laptop in the form of new methods presentation is still not left the platform it’s a very useful way to reach the class, providing the most useful information because they present the language in a new way that keeps students’ interests engaged. Something that is not commonly thought of that computers successfully bring to a language classroom setting is the ability to set up a lesson using different colors, text sizes, presentation methods, and so on to feature a new grammatical structure (Lam 2000). Although different technologies can change the ways our students learn and mediate the learning differently said one of the PYP teachers. She also emphasized on the fact that, technology is not only useful for us, but also useful for our students’, as technologies are integral to the whole language learning process and a not a replacement for teaching. For example A SMART or Interactive whiteboard (IWB) board is not blackboard. It’s a white board with touch detection technology. A projector displays what’s displayed on a computer screen. According to the experience of teacher T5 who teaches practicum and projects said that advantages of IWB Boards are their ability to be interactive. It makes differentiated learning much easier because teachers are able to have different learning styles. Visual learners are able to observe the whiteboard, while tactile learners can learn by touching the board. Student’s learning skill is enhanced because of its ability to view videos, diagrams, charts, right on the huge screen in front of them. Hence by, SMART technology offering learners easy access to online resources. IWBs in particular are very much beneficial with the contemporary course books and emerge to have a significant impact on English language teaching. One aspect that Dudeney et al. (2013:538) suggest in their article is that IWBs are likely to help ICT become a normal, integrated part of English teaching. Therefore facilitators must employ technology that’s intentional and purposeful regardless of how they use these devices, when scheduling tools to use in foreign language classrooms, teachers should make sure they’re meeting an educational objective. In his study, Khan (2001) found that the lecturers and trainers’ competency could be enhanced on technology when they made use of various ICT-based hardware and software.

According to teacher T2, “By using smart phones all the new language learning applications, e-dictionaries and e-books offer continuous prospects for learning and are easily assessed with the easy availability of wireless network. Open-access resources allow the teachers, and also the students, to easily share material in online platforms”. She also added that some course books having
given an extended link for external recourses it becomes a necessity for the learning and teaching community to have smart phones with them as to get the ease of access anytime anywhere to refer to certain links and glossaries where each term is followed by one or more explanatory (encyclopedia-style) definitions. In order to explain jargon for Wikipedia's broad audience, each of its glossaries contains a working vocabulary and definitions such as https://www.dictionary.com/browse/glossary or https://steinhardt.nyu.edu/metrocenter/resources/glossaries.

Due to advances in technology in mobile phones, they have become portable computers and this increases the chance to use them as a study tool. This provides the student with a chance to use the mobile as a connection to the internet and as a source of knowledge, through online dictionaries, pronunciations, google translations and internet searches (Samih, 2013).

Another teacher T3 responded and said that “We all recognize technology as a powerful teaching tool” and we do use as per the requirement in the classroom as technology can not only be beneficial but sometimes obstruct, or distract, depending on its application. Some synchronous collaborative tools such as Google Documents and blogs are really useful if we are not using smart boards, these can stimulate interaction and keep students focused on a specific learning goal. Mobile blogging is practically a new language acquisition tool. Its objective is for those with smart phones to revise their blog where ever they are classroom or outside class. As a teacher, i too have witnessed that with the mobile blogging the students writing skills have improved a lot apart from their critical thinking. Social and cultural factors can impact how digital media is utilized in education and this is particularly evident in Saudi educational systems (Al-Adhaydib 1986; Al-Saggaf 2004; Al-shehri 2012).

Another teacher T1 said she uses “Twitter Hash tags to take Questions as its really very beneficial for introverts, who may not be comfortable asking questions in front of the class.” With the hash tag in Twitter’s search bar, one can display the feed on a screen during class or check it periodically on the device. And can choose to answer the questions.

As per the experience of teacher T2, IPod also allow students to record in class reading sessions so they can review the teacher’s pronunciation, explanation, comments and assessments outside the classroom. The teacher asks students to record themselves at home reading a passage, or having a conversation with a native speaker. This helps students in improving the listening and speaking skills. Playing relevant POD Cast too can not only supplement your lessons, but engage auditory learners and act as a learning station.

Further T5 teacher said that she uses EDmodo for most of her courses, which is a free social learning platform for students, teachers and parents. It has shared contemporaneous events as a homepage where the teacher and students can interact. Both teachers and students have a library where they can store documents and share. The teacher can set assignments and quizzes where as the students can submit their responses and get teachers feedback on the work. It also has a in built grade book that stores your teacher-assessed grades and quiz results for each student. In Saudi Arabia, the use of technology is being used as an effective tool for improving productivity and an economic growth (Al-Daweesh, 2011, p. 9)

Twenty years ago, the teacher was basically limited to providing traditional method of teaching giving notes, showing a video, and using a limited variety of other tools to make learning innovative and interactive. Today with the growth of technology in the classroom the teacher has become more proactive about providing individual guidance without obstructing other students in the classroom that are quite advance in the learning process. With the numerous tech tools such as whiteboards, tablet PCs, Internet resources, apps, virtual reality devices and other tools that allow the teachers to accomplish the mission regardless of learning style.

B. Results from the questionnaire form distributed to students:
To assess how English language classroom students can be benefitted by using technology in their learning process, a questionnaire form was used for this purpose. The form was given to cohort samples of students at the department of English language, Qassim Private colleges. The responses received are discussed here.

1) Which of the following technological items do you have?

![Figure 1: Technological Devises you have](image)

From the given responses of the students in histogram Figure 1 it clearly states that the students are technology savvy. Almost all of them have the modern technological devises to use in day to day life. Therefore, if they have these tools they can use them to develop the English Language skills. Moreover, more than half of the students expressed that they do have a laptop, smart phones and iPod’s.

2) Use of technology in the language classroom

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Here we can see that the focus on language education in the 21st century is no longer on grammar, memorization, and learning from rote, but rather using language and cultural knowledge as a means to communicate and connect to others around the globe (Eaton, 2010). The responses of the items in Figure 2 are stated as. Do the teachers encourage to use technology to learn language skills. 90% of the respondents strongly agreed and Do Smartphone’s help learning in the classrooms here too the response was 90% strongly agreed. This clearly indicates and coincides with question no 1’s responses that 90% students have smart phones and are well versed with using the technology for learning language. The items were using technology will help to develop the language skills like writing, reading, listening, and speaking, it can be seen from the response all had high score above 60% and strongly agreed, listening and speaking had the highest of 75% strongly agreed, this shows that the technology has great influence in improving students listening and speaking skills. Whereas 15% responses strongly disagreed that use of technology in writing and reading is beneficial for them. They expressed that they do not use some of these types of resources to perform the activities given. In addition, social networking enhances a student’s sense of community, sharing and collaboration brings an additional responsibility and workload, which some students find inflexible and

3) Use of social networking sites to develop your English language skills

The responses of the items in figure 3 below states that Watts app, Gmail’s and Facebook are widely used by the students (98%) share information about the topic studied in their English class, to get information from the teacher as well as communicate with their teacher and peers. Awake (2011) defends this point by noting that “social networking has become hugely popular. Similarly, it took 38 years for radio to reach 50 million users, 13 years for television to attract the same number and 4 years for the Internet to do so, but it took Facebook 12-month only to gain 200 million users. Social networking sites provide various interactive platforms based on the intentions of their founders Whereas from the findings we can see that there are 2% of students who also use Blog and Twitter, as they are just getting to know this app and its use these are those students who already are aware with the techno world and its uses to connect to the global enterprise. Meanwhile, a small percentage expressed that they do not use any of those resources to perform the activities given. In addition, social networking enhances a student’s sense of community, sharing and collaboration brings an additional responsibility and workload, which some students find inflexible and
Researchers apprehended the need to integrate technology into the educational facility, as a resource to sustain the educational communications between student and faculties.

**Question 2:** What are the advantages and disadvantages of integration of technology in the language classroom in the case of TEFL students? (Compiled analysis from the interview of teachers and Results from the questionnaire)

### Advantages: Responses withdrawn from the questionnaire and interview, the advantage of technology in English classroom

![Figure 4: The benefits of technology tool / social networking sites](image)

The outcomes in the above Figure show how most of the items provided as benefits are also considered for the majority of students as advantages obtained from using technological tools to improve their English language. A higher percentage of the student’s analysis strongly agrees, indicating that technological tools allow them to practice online to develop language skills.

Developments in communication technology have increased the demand for online language learning that involves autonomous learning as well as an increased connection between learners.

Therefore of the greatest benefits of technology integration in education is the ability it offers for autonomous learning. Although technology cannot replace an effective teacher, it does give students access to some of the supports that a teacher would provide.

Whereas if we see the response of the teachers to the benefits of using technology T3 teacher responded that *She gives students research work related to different language skills, to individually and collaboratively find solution by using the latest technological sites*. In this study with respect to research question two, it was revealed that one of the benefits of using social networking sites is that it helps in research and developing language skills, supporting peer and collaborative learning. In Line with the above, Ito (2008) opined that social networking sites enable the teenagers to get connected and also provide opportunities to learn from one another. It enables them to extend friendship from various places such as schools, religious places, organizations and so on. Social networking sites enhance learning opportunities among the youths. *Second higher percentage of response almost 65% agrees that* it helps in strengthening interpersonal relationships. Language learning takes place through interaction. Substantial interaction between students is necessary for conversational competence. This is seconded by Idumange (2012) who described social networking sites as “online environment in which one can connect, share and interact with other users who are typically known to you offline”. It provides opportunities for people to build personal web-pages and then connect with friends to share content and communication.

As advantages of technology in the classroom T2 Teacher said that, she can have students’ attention through visual aids and sounds. Since students do not learn in the same way, technology allows teachers to be creative and make the learning of the language more inventive for students. She also expressed that she combines technology with various learning and teaching strategies activities in classroom. For instance, she said having a video as power point presentation, or through You-tube is not enough, because it’s just for watching and listening, it’s a teacher who has to make it more interactive by adding activities, so students can respond and give their opinions. Today’s learners are functioning in an age where technology drives almost every aspect of their lives. Technology is exciting when used considerately; it can transform even the most mundane lesson into one that is powerful and thought-provoking.

Another teacher’s, opinion was that teaching Grammar is not an easy task so she provides links for students to go to YouTube or Google and explore for interactive grammar exercises and vocabulary exercises, which ones can be presented as a Power Point presentation in class. She further mentioned that for teachers, technology can make their task simple. Meanwhile, for students it makes them well acquainted to the English language because of their familiarity with Internet technology. Oskovei (2010) also viewed internet as advantageous to both the students and teachers if used as tool with which knowledge could be created and disseminated. Therefore Being digitally literate is more than obtaining “isolated technological skills,” according to the NMC Horizon Report, 2017 Higher Education Edition. Rather, it’s about “generating a deeper understanding of the digital environment, enabling intuitive adaptation to new contexts and co-creation of content with others.” Creating presentations, learning to differentiate reliable from unreliable sources on the Internet and maintaining proper online etiquette are all vital skills that students can learn in the classroom.
5. Disadvantage

Responses gathered from the questionnaire and interview is that use of technology in English language classroom is a bane too; students are often seen glued to their devices using various networking sites, sometimes during learning process students manifested that they often get distracted by technology; consequently, they lose concentration on the content being taught. Hence it was also proved, according to Wikipedia (2011), Social Networking causes Internet addiction. Second biggest issue is students at times unconsciously fall into the temptation of plagiarism, not being aware that it’s a cyber crime. According to Techniranslan (2008), in a study conducted with Turkish students and the use of a classroom blog, found that a large portion of the participants had simply copied and pasted content found on the Internet into their blog responses. Above all the drawback is teacher’s capability to use technology in English classroom, software’s are always upgrading and if a teacher does not possess enough technical skills, it becomes complicated to implement them and enhance teaching through them.

6. Conclusion

As per the findings of the study it can be concluded that the use of Technology in Language classroom definitely is more advantageous when learning a foreign language; since, the outcomes of the instruments show that a significant number of teachers and students approved that they use technological tools to develop the language skills in teaching and learning process. Findings showed that the students expressed that they regularly use the Internet to do any type of work or research online they also said Internet provided them the opportunity to make use of social networking sites, which they often use to gather information, to share it, as well as to create and participate, not only with their teachers and peers but also with people outside their network. In addition, it can be seen that these social networking sites enhance communication between students and teachers, since they argue that these tools allow them to keep in contact at anytime and anywhere. One of the most valuable aspects of using technology in the classroom is the ability to differentiate instruction to each student’s level, but still making sure that they are achieving their goals and progressing. The practice of Technological strategy does not decline traditional methods or challenge their importance, but rather supports the entire process of teaching and learning by presenting alternative forms of dispersing the knowledge and putting it into practice. Keeping in view that teachers keep themselves updated to use innovative technologies in this technological age. With the fact, that Great teachers using digital technology with certified computing skills will be the most powerful educators in the 21st century. Technology is not meant to replace the teacher. Rather, the idea is to create a flexible learning environment that breeds innovation.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

To the authorities of the University of Qassim Private Colleges : To make available a high quality Internet service where teachers and students can acquire all types of material required in order to develop a more substantial class that will allow more participation from the students.

To the teachers of the English Department : Blend traditional teaching with more of technological, make use of variety of activities through Technologies to reinforce the four macro skills of the language. Be updated in the use of technology in language classroom for its application in their classes.

To Students of the English Department : Students must be aware of the pros and cons of using technology and also be informed that Technology in language classroom enables them to expand independence in their teaching and learning process becoming a influential aspect in developing their language competencies.

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