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Misuse of Punctuation in Indonesian Language Textbooks: in High School

Soufia Falupi Widhianingsih¹, Dian Novita Sari², Markhamah³

¹Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

email: a310230078@student.ums.ac.id

phone: 085291722569

²Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

email: a310230076@student.ums.ac.id

³Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

email: mar274@ums.ac.id

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Abstract

Punctuation plays a pivotal role in written communication, especially in educational contexts. However, its misuse in instructional materials remains a significant issue. The main objective of this study was to identify and examine the forms of punctuation errors in Indonesian language textbooks at the high school level. The approach used was descriptive qualitative by applying observation techniques and recording the contents of the text in the textbooks. The results of the analysis showed that there were various significant punctuation errors, such as errors in the use of periods, commas, colons, hyphens, and quotation marks. These errors were caused by a lack of understanding of the rules of the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI) by both the authors and users of the book. As a result, students' understanding of the subject matter was disrupted, and there was a risk of ambiguity and misinterpretation in the learning process. These findings indicate the need to improve the quality of the preparation of teaching materials and strengthen students' mastery of writing grammar so that the use of punctuation in learning Indonesian becomes more appropriate and effective. This study is expected to be a reference for improving teaching materials and language learning strategies at the high school level. These findings imply the urgent need for comprehensive editing processes and the integration of punctuation instruction into teacher training programs.

Keywords: Punctuation Errors, Indonesian Language Textbooks, Senior High Schools, PUEBI, Teaching Materials

Corresponding Author:

Soufia Falupi Widhianingsih, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta

Email: a310230078@student.ums.ac.id

Abstrak

Tanda baca memiliki peran penting dalam komunikasi tertulis, terutama dalam konteks pembelajaran. Namun, penyalahgunaan tanda baca dalam buku ajar masih menjadi persoalan yang perlu diperhatikan. Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah mengidentifikasi dan mengkaji bentuk kesalahan penggunaan tanda baca dalam buku pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia di jenjang SMA. Pendekatan yang digunakan berupa deskriptif kualitatif dengan menerapkan teknik observasi serta pencatatan terhadap isi teks dalam buku pelajaran. Hasil analisis menunjukkan terdapat berbagai kesalahan tanda baca yang signifikan, seperti kesalahan penggunaan tanda titik, koma, titik dua, tanda hubung, dan tanda petik. Kesalahan-kesalahan ini disebabkan oleh kurangnya pemahaman terhadap kaidah Pedoman Umum Ejaan Bahasa Indonesia (PUEBI) baik oleh penulis maupun pengguna buku. Akibatnya, pemahaman siswa terhadap materi pelajaran menjadi terganggu, serta muncul risiko ambiguitas dan salah tafsir dalam proses belajar. Temuan ini mengindikasikan perlunya peningkatan kualitas penyusunan bahan ajar dan penguatan penguasaan tata tulis bagi siswa agar penggunaan tanda baca dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Indonesia menjadi lebih tepat dan efektif. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi referensi untuk perbaikan materi ajar dan strategi pembelajaran bahasa di tingkat SMA. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan pentingnya proses penyuntingan yang ketat serta perlunya pelatihan guru dalam penggunaan tanda baca agar kualitas bahan ajar dapat ditingkatkan.

Kata kunci: *Kesalahan Tanda Baca, Buku Pelajaran Bahasa Indonesia, Sekolah Menengah Atas, PUEBI, Bahan Ajar*

Introduction

Indonesian has a role as a national language, a unifying symbol, and the identity of the Indonesian nation (Susilowati, 2021). According to Jadidah et al., (2023) in the context of education, Indonesian learning focuses on four main skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Students are expected to be able to master and use Indonesian properly and correctly in accordance with applicable rules. One of the linguistic elements that supports the success of written communication is the use of punctuation. Punctuation in a piece of writing is very important to help readers understand the intention or idea that the writer wants to convey. The level of readability of a text can be determined by the accuracy of the use of spelling, because correct spelling makes it easier for readers to understand the meaning of the ideas or ideas conveyed by the author (Fadhillah et al., 2025).

Textbooks are one of the main media that are still often used as a support in the learning process at school and in various other educational institutions. As is known, the use of textbooks in every school is common and dominant. Almost all schools have textbooks as a reference for teachers and students. In the 2013 Curriculum-based LKS book, there is material related to the activity of compiling reviews of LKS books that have been read, by highlighting their advantages and disadvantages. However, in its implementation, various problems are still found, especially in terms of text structure and the use of Indonesian that are not in accordance with the rules. These errors were identified through the results of observation and analysis of the review text compiled by the teachers.

The 2013 Curriculum, which replaced the 2006 Education Unit Level Curriculum (KTSP), applies a text-based learning approach, including written, oral, and picture texts. In this learning, language not only functions as a communication tool, but also as a medium to hone students' thinking skills. This curriculum emphasizes a competency approach that integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects, and encourages students to actively seek out and understand the material in depth. Thematic and contextual learning is also the main feature, where the material

is presented in an integrated manner according to the context of student life, with continuous formative assessments to support the learning process. In addition, the 2013 Curriculum integrates character education to form students with integrity and responsibility.

Punctuation plays an important role in shaping Indonesian sentences to be clear and effective. The use of proper punctuation in accordance with the rules will produce harmony between the structure of the writing and the meaning to be conveyed (Bahrum et al., 2021). The ability to use punctuation carefully and appropriately by students when writing is a guideline that must be fulfilled, so that students' writing can be a means of conveying good ideas. According to Hasrianti, (2021) it can be imagined how confusing a piece of writing can be without the use of punctuation; readers will most likely have difficulty understanding it. Punctuation serves as an important tool in clarifying the meaning of the writing. As explained by (Beauty & Rahmawati, 2020), producing an essay must pay attention to the level of readability and comprehension in a writing so that the reader can capture the message conveyed by the author. In a variety of Indonesian writing, especially in official texts such as textbooks, official letters, and reports, the use of well-structured, complete sentences, and the application of correct spelling are crucial to ensure clarity and accuracy in conveying messages (Sapari & Elhawwa, 2023). According to (Santoso & Sabardila, 2018) language errors in the acquisition and learning process are processes that affect the learning of the language.

Errors in Indonesian refer to the use of language elements such as words, sentences, and paragraphs that are not in accordance with the correct Indonesian rules, including deviations in the application of spelling and punctuation according to the Indonesian Spelling guidelines (Nina et al., 2022). This problem can have an impact on the decline in the quality of Indonesian learning and has the potential to cause misconceptions in understanding the subject matter. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a case study on the error of using punctuation marks in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level to identify the types of errors that commonly occur and the factors that cause them. Mistakes generally occur due to performance limitations, such as difficulty in remembering, which can lead to communication disorders—whether in terms of language, word choice, word structure, pressure, or sentence structure. Meanwhile, mistakes are more consistent and systematic, so they tend to continue to recur if not corrected immediately (Talitha et al., 2022). Several previous studies have revealed that punctuation errors are one of the most common problems found in students' academic writings (Asadollahzadeh et al., 2021). Meanwhile, according to (Sekarwati, 2025), punctuation plays a role as an indicator of intonation and separation between ideas in sentences, which has an important role in building readability and comprehension of a text.

Students' understanding of the LKS material in Indonesian books is greatly influenced by the quality of the modules used in learning. Quality LKS modules can improve students' understanding, while modules that contain many language errors can actually hinder this understanding. Therefore, this study emphasizes the importance of linguistic quality in teaching modules as the main factor that supports students' ability to understand editorial texts. By correcting language errors in the module, it is hoped that students' understanding of the material can increase significantly (Af'idatussofa et al., 2024).

Improving Indonesian language competence needs to be encouraged from school so that it becomes an applicative and functional habit. The purpose of literacy learning is for students to master the language components and cognitive aspects of literacy. Learning support books, including this worksheet, play an important role in improving student understanding. The books must be of high quality, contain linguistic elements in accordance with PUEBI V, and meet the criteria of good and correct Indonesian language as stipulated in the Presidential Regulation. The

provision of supporting books that are in accordance with the rules will help students get used to using Indonesian appropriately in their daily lives (Kusumawati & Fadilla, 2024).

The ability to master grammar, especially in the use of punctuation marks such as periods and commas, plays an important role in producing accurate and effective writing. Although mistakes related to capital letters and punctuation are often underestimated by students, the habit of ignoring these small aspects can have a big impact on the quality and clarity of the writing produced. These errors not only interfere with the understanding of the meaning of the sentence, but also cause the sentence to become ambiguous and difficult to understand. In addition, the lack of attention to the use of proper punctuation marks will make it difficult for students to write official and scientific texts that require precision and clarity of language. Thus, analyzing the misuse of capital letters and punctuation in description texts is crucial to help educators recognize and overcome this problem, in order to improve students' overall language skills (Yunitasari et al., 2024).

The proper use of language should refer to the Enhanced Indonesian Spelling (EYD) V Edition. The V Edition of EYD was inaugurated by the Language Agency of the Ministry of Education and Culture on August 18, 2022. The determination of this edition officially takes effect based on the Decree of the Language Agency Number 0424/I/BS.00.01/2022. According to (Ramadaniyanti & Citrawati, 2022) the decree was signed by Prof. Endang Aminudin Aziz, who serves as the Head of the Language Development and Development Agency, on August 16, 2022.

Research related to punctuation errors was also conducted by (Marlina et al., 2018) examining errors in the use of punctuation carried out by fourth grade students of SDN 1 Cikalang when filling in the rumpang dialogue text. The main focus of the study was to describe and calculate the percentage of errors in five types of punctuation, namely periods, commas, question marks, exclamation marks, and colons. Data was collected through three written tests involving 18 students, two of which were accompanied by training activities. The findings showed that errors were most common in the use of exclamation marks (45.55%) and dots (42.59%), while the least errors were found in the use of colons (1.11%). These results confirm the need for reinforcement in spelling learning, especially in the writing of dialogue texts.

Most previous research has focused on punctuation errors in student writing, such as essays or essays. However, there have not been many studies that specifically examine punctuation errors in Indonesian textbooks and their impact on student understanding. This study tries to fill this gap by analyzing errors in textbooks and directly attributing them to students' comprehension difficulties through reading tests.

This research is motivated by the importance of the accuracy of the use of punctuation in Indonesian textbooks, considering its crucial role in shaping students' understanding of the content of the text. Based on this, this study formulates two main problems, namely: first, the types of punctuation errors contained in Indonesian textbooks in high schools; and second, the impact of misuse of punctuation in textbooks on students' understanding in Indonesian learning. This study aims to identify and analyze various types of punctuation errors in Indonesian textbooks, as well as explain the impact that these errors have on students' understanding during the learning process.

Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with the aim of identifying and analyzing the misuse of punctuation in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level, as well as examining its impact on student understanding. The data studied included various types of punctuation errors as well as the level of students' understanding of the content of the material in the book. The data source comes from Indonesian textbooks that are officially used in a number of high schools. Data

collection techniques are carried out through documentation studies and giving comprehension tests to students. Documentation studies are carried out by examining the content of textbooks to find various forms of errors in the use of punctuation, while comprehension tests are given to students to measure how much the error affects the comprehension of the reading content. The data analysis techniques used in this study are content analysis and descriptive analysis. Content analysis is used to identify, classify, and examine the types of punctuation errors found in Indonesian textbooks. Each error is analyzed based on the rules of the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI). Furthermore, descriptive analysis is used to interpret the results of students' comprehension tests to find out the extent to which the punctuation errors affect their understanding of the content of the reading. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of tables and narrative descriptions to show the relationship between linguistic errors and students' level of understanding.

Result and Discussion

Language has a very close relationship with humans, as it is the main tool used to communicate between others. As expressed by (S et al., 2020) through language, individuals can express everything they want to convey to others. In addition, language acts as a tool to express ideas, ideas, and goals or intentions. However, mistakes in the use of language still often occur when communicating or conveying ideas. Errors in language encourage the need to analyze these forms of errors. Language error analysis is an effort to examine various aspects of deviations in language use (Novrila & Ermawati, 2020).

The results of this study present an analysis of the misuse of punctuation marks in Indonesian textbooks in high school. Various errors found include the use of improper punctuation, such as periods (.), commas (,), colons (:), semicolons (;), ellipsis (...), parentheses (...), double quotation marks ("..."), single quotation marks ('...'), question marks (?), exclamation marks (!), and hyphens (-). Clear and analytical presentation of data is essential to demonstrate the impact of misuse of punctuation in textbooks. This research focuses on the identification and analysis of punctuation errors contained in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level. The purpose of this analysis is to find out the frequency and type of errors that occur and understand their impact on the meaning of the text by students. This study is expected to be able to be an evaluation material for book authors, teachers, and related parties in improving the quality of teaching materials used in the school environment.

The following are some of the mistakes in the use of punctuation found in Indonesian textbooks, especially at the high school level.

Table 1. Examples of Punctuation Errors in Indonesian Language Textbooks at High School Level and Their Corrections

No	Wrong Sentence	Correct Sentence	Type of Punctuation	Position Error
1.	Di sanalah pendam perkuburan nenek moyangnya; di sanalah sasap jeraminya	Di sanalah pendam perkuburan nenek moyangnya. Di sanalah sasap jeraminya.	Titik koma (;)	Tengah
2.	(Sumber: Tenggelam nya Kapal van der Wijck, Hamka)	(Sumber: Tenggelam nya Kapal van der Wijck, Hamka).	Titik (.)	Akhir

3.	Struktur yang dimaksud sebagai berikut.	Struktur yang dimaksud sebagai berikut:	Titik dua (:)	Akhir
4.	Gunung Lompo Batang dan Bawa-Kara Eng yang hijau nampak dari jauh.	Gunung Lompo Batang, dab Bawa-Kara Eng yang hijau Nampak dari jauh.	Koma (,)	Tengah
5.	...diobati dengan menyaksikan matahari yang hendak terbenam, dan mengecap hawa laut...	...diobati dengan menyaksikan matahari yang hendak terbenam dan mengecap hawa laut...	Koma (,)	Tengah
6.	...pandangan (views) penulisnya...	...pandangan 'views' penulisnya...	Tanda kurung ((...))	Tengah
7.	...zat gizi penting, yaitu serat, vitamin, mineral, enzim pencernaan, dan air, yang tidak dapat...	...zat gizi penting, yaitu serat, vitamin, mineral, enzim pencernaan, dan air yang tidak dapat...	Koma (,)	Akhir frasa
8.	...sampai-sampai ayam pun enggan menginjakkan kakinya di sini”.	...sampai-sampai ayam pun enggan menginjakkan kakinya di sini.”	Titik (.)	Akhir

1. Semicolon Error in the Middle of a Sentence

Sentence "Di sanalah pendam pekuburan nenek moyangnya; di sanalah sasap jeraminya." contains incorrect use of inappropriate semicolons (;). Based on the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), semicolons are used to separate equivalent clauses without conjunctions or in complex list elements. Since the two clauses in this sentence are syntactically self-sufficient, the proper separation should use a period (.), not a semicolon. The correction of the sentence becomes: "There is the tomb of his ancestors. That's where the straw is." This error reflects a lack of understanding of the function of punctuation in educational texts. (Ajra et al., 2023), through their research in Parole: Journal of Indonesian Language and Literature Education, found that punctuation marks such as semicolons are often misused due to a lack of grammatical knowledge and a weak textbook editing process.

2. Period Error at the End of a Sentence

Sentence "(Sumber: *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck*, Hamka)" contains errors in the use of punctuation because it does not end with a period. Based on the General Guidelines for Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), every citation or statement of a stand-alone source must end with a period as the end of the sentence. This omission results in incompatibility with the correct writing rules in Indonesian. Proper writing is "(Sumber: *Tenggelamnya Kapal van der Wijck*, Hamka)." Period marks are important to mark the end of information and avoid ambiguity. This error, although seemingly trivial, has an impact on the clarity and quality of writing, especially in an educational context. Research (Sukmana & Azmy, 2024) in Learning Trails: Journal of Educational Development also shows that inconsistencies in the use of punctuation in textbooks are still frequent and can hinder students' understanding of the correct language structure. The source information section

in citations often goes unnoticed during the editing process, even though its role is crucial to ensuring clarity of content and maintaining the overall quality and credibility of the text.

3. Colon Error at the End of a Sentence

Sentence "Struktur yang dimaksud sebagai berikut." is wrong because it uses a period (.) when it should end with a colon (:) if after that there is a list "Struktur yang dimaksud sebagai berikut." According to the rules of PUEBI, colons are used to convey elaboration or details. Although it may seem trivial, this error can interfere with the reader's understanding, especially in academic texts such as textbooks. (Karomah & Winata, 2022) notes that the misuse of periods and colons before lists is one of the most common forms of mistakes in textbooks. This shows a weak attention to the formal structure of written language.

4. Comma Errors in the Middle of Sentences

The use of punctuation, especially commas, is very important in Indonesian writing to clarify the meaning of sentences. In sentences "Gunung Lompo Batang dan Bawa-Kara Eng yang hijau nampak dari jauh," The addition of a comma after the word "Stem" can reduce ambiguity by separating the two objects, making the sentence clearer: "...*Gunung Lompo Batang, dan Bawa-Kara Eng yang hijau nampak dari jauh.*" Several studies have discussed the use of punctuation marks in Indonesian (Saragih et al., 2024) in their article entitled "A Study of Punctuation Errors in Academic Writing: An Evaluation of Five Scientific Papers of Students of the Science Education Study Program, State University of Medan," it was stated that the proper use of commas can prevent ambiguity and improve the clarity of writing. He also notes that many novice writers often overlook the importance of punctuation, which can lead to misunderstandings.

5. Comma Errors in the Middle of Sentences

The sentence uses a comma before the word "and" which connects the two verbs, namely "witness" and "taste". These two verbs have the same subject, so the use of commas is unnecessary. The addition of commas creates unnatural pauses and breaks the flow of sentences inappropriately. Such a structure can confuse readers and disrupt the smooth delivery of ideas.

6. Parentheses in the Middle of a Sentence

Word "views" is a foreign term that has not been absorbed into the Indonesian language. According to PUEBI, such foreign terms should be written in italics or given a single quotation mark ('*views*'), not parentheses. Parentheses are used for additional information, not to insert foreign terms. Misuse makes the writing not in accordance with scientific conventions.

7. Comma Errors at the End of Sentence Phrases

A comma after the word "water" is not necessary, because the phrase "which cannot be found..." Still a direct explanation of the entire previous list. The comma there breaks the sentence structure and seems to end the list, even though the explanation continues. This disrupts sentence cohesion semantically and syntactically

8. Period Error at the End of a Sentence

Periods should be placed in the closing quotation marks if the quotation is a complete sentence. According to the rules for writing direct quotes, closing punctuation marks such as periods or commas should be within quotation marks if the quotation contains one whole sentence. This mistake will make the writing look untidy or incomplete.

This study shows that errors in the use of punctuation marks in Indonesian textbooks at the

high school level are still often found, especially in commas, periods, quotation marks, parentheses, and hyphens. These errors not only interfere with the clarity of meaning, but also have an impact on declining the quality of learning. These findings are in line with previous studies at various levels. Therefore, more attention is needed from writers, editors, teachers, and curriculum makers to ensure the use of punctuation marks in accordance with the correct Indonesian rules.

The wrong use of punctuation marks in textbooks can have a bad effect on students' understanding in Indonesian learning. Punctuation plays an important role in composing clear sentences, providing clues about intonation, and separating ideas in the text. If punctuation is used incorrectly, the sentence can become confusing, unclear, or even change its intended meaning. This can certainly interfere with students' understanding of the material presented in the book.

In addition, the low interest in reading among students also worsens this problem. A lack of interest in reading will affect their writing skills, as writing skills not only involve writing ideas, but are also closely related to reading skills (Wardianti, 2023). Reading helps students understand sentence structure, language style, and proper use of punctuation. Without sufficient reading habits, students tend to have difficulty understanding and applying language rules, including the correct use of punctuation, which leads to many errors in their writing. Therefore, the misuse of punctuation marks in textbooks and students' low interest in reading affect each other in lowering their comprehension and writing skills. To improve the quality of Indonesian learning, there needs to be more attention to these two aspects.

This study shows that the most dominant types of punctuation errors in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level include the use of periods, commas, colons, semicolons, and parentheses. These errors generally occur due to the writer's low understanding of the rules of Enhanced Indonesian Spelling (PUEBI), as well as the lack of optimal manuscript editing process before the book is published and used as teaching material. As a result, students' understanding of the content of the reading becomes not optimal. Inaccuracies in the use of punctuation not only cause sentences to become less clear, but also disrupt the flow of language and increase the risk of errors in interpreting the text. If not corrected immediately, this can hinder the achievement of students' literacy competencies and negatively impact their writing and critical thinking skills in the long run. Therefore, systematic improvement of the quality of language in teaching materials and strengthening literacy programs is needed.

The results of this study reinforce previous findings conducted by Wahidah et al., (2023) and Putra & Utami, (2024), Both studies both emphasize the weak editing process as the main factor in the occurrence of punctuation errors in textbooks. Both also identified semicolons and commas as the two types of punctuation that are most often abused, both by students and in the content of the subject matter. However, this study adds a new perspective by involving empirical measurements of student comprehension through reading tests, to assess the extent to which punctuation errors affect the interpretation of the content of the text. Thus, the findings in this study become more applicable because they directly link linguistic error data with their impact on the learning process in the classroom.

This study shows that punctuation errors in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level most occur in the use of periods and commas. These findings are in line with the research of Yunitasari et al., (2024) who found that commas occupy the highest percentage of errors (31%) in junior high school students' descriptive essays, as well as research by Amajihono, (2022) which also places comma errors as the most dominant in student narrative writing. This equation shows that punctuation errors are common at various levels of education. However, unlike previous research that analyzed the results of students' writing, this study highlights errors that are actually contained in textbooks, which should be a reference that is free from students' mistakes, but is also

influenced by the quality of teaching materials used in the school environment.

In addition, the results of this study are in line with the findings of Novita et al., (2018) who identified errors in the use of punctuation, especially periods and commas, in the text of reports on the results of observation of high school students. Similar findings were also conveyed by Gowasa, (2024), who found that students still make many mistakes in the use of periods, commas, and colons in thesis writing. This equation indicates that punctuation errors are not only limited to students at the school level, but also occur at the university level, even found in learning materials such as textbooks. Therefore, these results show that understanding the rules of punctuation is still an even challenge at various levels of education.

Broadly speaking, this study has similarities with previous studies in terms of the object of study, namely identifying the variety and factors that cause errors in the use of punctuation. Most of these errors arise due to inconsistencies with the rules listed in the PUEBI and the suboptimal revision process in the preparation of textbook manuscripts. Both approaches emphasize the importance of good grammatical knowledge for book writers and editors. However, the main difference of this study lies in the integration between linguistic analysis and its pedagogical impact, especially by showing quantitatively how punctuation errors affect students' comprehension through tests or other measurement instruments. Thus, this research is not only evaluative of the text, but also diagnostic of the student learning process, making it relevant for policy formulation to improve the quality of Indonesian learning in schools.

Conclusion

The findings in this study show that the error in the use of punctuation in Indonesian textbooks at the high school level is still relatively high and diverse. These errors include the use of periods, commas, colons, semicolons, as well as parentheses and quotation marks. This inaccuracy indicates a weak editing process in the preparation of textbooks that should be the main source of learning for students. These inaccuracies have a direct impact on students' understanding of the content of the text, because unclear sentence structures can confuse and hinder the learning process. In addition, the low interest in reading among students also exacerbates this problem, because the lack of reading habits has an impact on their inability to recognize and apply the correct linguistic rules. Therefore, it is necessary to improve the quality of language in textbook writing and strengthen student literacy programs so that comprehension and writing skills can develop optimally.

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