La Ilaha Illallah: Understanding Tawhid and Its Practice in English for Islamic Studies

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Abstract. *This study explores the multidimensional meaning of La Ilaha Illallah ("There is no god but Allah") through an analysis of its theological significance, linguistic structure, and pedagogical application within the discipline of English for Islamic Studies (EIS). Using a qualitative descriptive approach based on library research, the study synthesizes insights from classical tafsir, modern linguistic theory, and Islamic educational thought to uncover the epistemological and ethical dimensions of Tawhid. The findings reveal that La Ilaha Illallah functions simultaneously as a theological declaration, a linguistic construct, and an educational framework. Linguistically, it unites negation and affirmation to form a coherent structure of truth that mirrors divine logic. Theologically, it encapsulates the essence of Tawhid, defining the relationship between belief, knowledge, and moral responsibility. Pedagogically, it serves as a faith-based model for integrating theology into language learning, allowing students to engage critically and spiritually with English as a medium of understanding revelation. By introducing La Ilaha Illallah as an epistemological foundation for EIS, this study proposes that language instruction rooted in Tawhid can enhance students' linguistic precision, intercultural competence, and spiritual consciousness. Ultimately, it redefines language learning as a sacred act of intellectual worship, bridging revelation and reason within the holistic framework of Islamic education.*

Keyword: *Tawhid, Linguistics, English for Islamic Studies, Faith-Based Pedagogy.*

INTRODUCTION

The articulation of La Ilaha Illallah (There is no deity worthy of worship except Allah) serves as the indispensable theological bedrock of Islam, asserting the absolute monotheism (Tawhid) upon which all aspects of the Islamic intellectual tradition are built(Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). This concept is not confined to creedal theology but functions as the metaphysical principle governing all epistemological and practical engagements of the believer(Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2008a). Within

contemporary higher education, the discipline of English for Islamic Studies (EIS) has been established to bridge proficiency in a global language (English) with the precise conveyance of Islamic scholarship. However, a critical methodological challenge prevails: EIS curricula often assimilate secular linguistic theories that operate under an implicit separation of language from theological worldview. This detachment risks producing a learning outcome that is fragmented, wherein linguistic competence is achieved at the expense of spiritual and intellectual integration.

The imperative to integrate the Tawhidic worldview into education has been advanced extensively through the discourse on the Islamization of Knowledge (Al-Faruqi, 1982b). This body of work underscores that all learning must reflect divine unity. While numerous studies have affirmed the broad relevance of Tawhid as a moral and educational foundation (Abdullah, 2019), there is a demonstrable and specific lacuna in the literature regarding its application in applied linguistics. Previous research has neglected to conduct a systematic and integrated examination of La Ilaha Illallah as a comprehensive linguistic, theological, and pedagogical framework for EIS. This gap indicates an underdeveloped area in Islamic pedagogy where the tool of language (English) has yet to be fully unified with the subject of faith (Tawhid).

To mitigate this deficiency, this study proposes a novel framework centered on the structural and semantic analysis of the Shahadah. The statement, characterized by the logical sequence of negation followed by affirmation, provides a ready-made model for conceptual clarity and intellectual discipline, thereby integrating faith and linguistic learning. The motivation driving this research is the necessity to transform EIS from a merely functional language skill into a discipline that contributes to the holistic development (Tarbiyah Al-insan Al-kamil) of the student. Thus, the main aim of this research is to develop and validate a Tawhid-based pedagogical model using La Ilaha Illallah as the central, unifying construct for English for Islamic Studies (EIS). The specific objectives are to: (1) analyze the linguistic and semantic architecture of La Ilaha Illallah; (2) delineate its theological dimensions as prescribed in primary Islamic sources; and (3) establish its practical pedagogical utility within the EIS context. The resulting contribution is threefold: it provides a theoretical bridge between Islamic theology and applied linguistics; it offers a concrete, faith-rooted pedagogical solution for curriculum design; and ultimately, it furthers the epistemological project of the Islamization of Knowledge by ensuring that the pursuit of language proficiency is aligned with the divine purpose (Al-Faruqi, 1989). The novelty of this work resides in its integrated approach, which elevates the Shahadah beyond mere creed to a comprehensive educational philosophy that harmonizes Iman (faith), Ilm (knowledge), and amal (action).

METHOD

Research Method

The design and procedure of this study were executed to systematically address the core objectives of analyzing La Ilaha Illallah as an integrated pedagogical model. The following subsections detail the methodology employed.

Research Design and Approach

This research adopts a Qualitative Descriptive Design utilizing Library Research (Desk Research) as its primary approach. This methodology is strategically chosen because the subject matter, specifically the theological and linguistic analysis of Tawhid and La Ilaha Illallah, is inherently conceptual and textual. The descriptive design facilitates in-depth interpretation of meanings and relationships between linguistic, theological, and pedagogical elements within the framework of English for Islamic Studies (EIS). The aim is not to measure variables but to comprehensively describe the conceptual framework proposed, ensuring that the study is reproducible and verifiable through reference to its foundational texts.

Research Subject

Given the conceptual nature of the library research design, the study does not involve a specific population or sample of individuals. The Research Subject is defined as Classical and Contemporary Islamic, Linguistic, and Educational Literature concerning Tawhid and its application in pedagogy. The focus is on the textual and conceptual data embedded within these sources.

Data Collection Techniques and Sources

The research employs a qualitative descriptive design centered on Documentation and Content Sourcing from highly authoritative textual sources. The data for this study were systematically collected and classified into two essential categories to ensure comprehensive analysis: Primary Sources (Textual Authorities) and Secondary Sources (Scholarly Interpretation and Application).

The Primary Sources form the core textual foundation, providing the ultimate dalil naqli. These include the Quran and authentic Hadith collections, specifically Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim, which are essential for establishing the theological and ethical mandates. Furthermore, Classical Quranic Exegeses (Tafsir), such as Tafsir Ibn Kathir and Tafsir al-Tabari, were utilized for critical linguistic and theological interpretation of La Ilaha Illallah within its original context.

The Secondary Sources consist of authoritative contemporary and foundational scholarly works in Islamic theology, linguistics, and education. This body of literature provides the analytical

framework and contextual application necessary for the study. Key references utilized include seminal works by Al-Attas (Al-Attas, 2014a), Al-Faruqi (Al-Faruqi, 1982b), Ibn Taymiyyah (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995), Ibn Qayyim (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2008a), Kamali (Kamali, 2016), and Zarkasyi (H. Zarkasyi, 2017). These documents provide diverse yet complementary analytical perspectives on how the concept of Tawhid influences knowledge transmission, curriculum development, and communication ethics in modern educational contexts, ensuring the theoretical robustness of the pedagogical model proposed.

Research Instrument and Quality Instrument

The methodical rigor of this study relies on two components: the research instrument itself and the quality assurance procedures. The primary research instrument utilized for this textual analysis is the Researcher (Human Instrument), as the interpretation and synthesis of nuanced textual data require critical human expertise and domain knowledge (Kamali, 2016). This instrument is augmented by a structured Data Classification Sheet, which serves as the methodological tool to systematically categorize extracted textual data. The sheet specifically organizes findings based on the three sequential analytical phases: linguistic structure, comprehensive theological interpretation, and practical pedagogical relevance.

The quality of the research data and findings is rigorously ensured through both Validity and Reliability. Validity (Internal Consistency) is maintained by implementing a strict Textual Triangulation process. Interpretations drawn from the data are not accepted unless confirmed by cross-referencing between the Primary Sources (*Qur'an Al-Karim*, n.d.), (Al-Bukhari & ibn Isma'il, n.d.), and (Muslim, n.d.) and established authoritative classical commentaries, specifically Tafsir Ibn Kathir(Ibn Kathir, 2000) and Tafsir al-Tabari (Al-Tabari, n.d.). This deep, multi-source verification ensures that the derived semantic and theological meanings are authentic and doctrinally sound. Reliability (Credibility) is ensured by a meticulous selection strategy of data sources. The study relies only on texts acknowledged as highly authoritative within Islamic scholarship (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995); (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2008a) and relies on high-impact, widely-cited foundational works in the field of Islamic Education and the Islamization of Knowledge (Al-Attas, 2014a); (Al-Faruqi, 1989); (H. F. Zarkasyi, 2017)). This meticulous selection process ensures that the research operates on stable, verifiable, and repeatable textual data that reflect scholarly consensus (Ijma).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data were analyzed through a structured, multi-dimensional process involving three distinct and sequential phases. This systematic approach is designed to move logically from the micro-

analysis of form to the macro-application of concept, thereby building a comprehensive model for EIS pedagogy:

The first phase is Semantic and Syntactic Analysis, utilizing Exegetical and Lexical Analysis techniques. This phase focuses on the detailed examination of the lexical content and the unique syntactic structure of La Ilaha Illallah. The analysis specifically isolates and examines the particle of absolute negation (La Nafiyah li Al-jins), the indefinite noun (Ilaha), and the exception clause (Illallah). The goal is to uncover the linguistic depth and the logical order inherent in its structure (negation followed by affirmation), which is shown to function as a non-time-bound nominal sentence (Jumlah Ismiyyah) (Ibn Kathir, 2000, pp. 104–106). This detailed linguistic interpretation provides the empirical basis for the subsequent theological understanding.

The second phase is Theological Interpretation, applying the technique of Comparative Hermeneutics. This involves interpreting the precise doctrinal meanings of the phrase based on the Qur'an (n.d.), the Sunnah (n.d.), and the classical commentaries of renowned scholars (Al-Qurtubi, 2006, pp. 312–315). This process involves comparing multiple tafsir methodologies to confirm the authoritative theological dimension and ensure the creed encompasses the three inseparable dimensions of Tawhid (Rububiyyah, Uluhiyyah, and Asma Wa Al-Sifat). The interpretation here validates the phrase as the ontological formula defining human purpose and moral responsibility.

The final phase is Pedagogical Reflection and Synthesis, employing Conceptual Application and Curriculum Synthesis techniques. The focus here is on applying the integrated and validated results from the linguistic and theological analyses to the practical teaching context of English for Islamic Studies (EIS). This involves synthesizing the three dimensions of Tawhid with the three core elements of EIS (linguistic competence, spiritual awareness, and ethical communication). This final phase identifies precisely how the faith-based understanding derived from La Ilaha Illallah enhances both language acquisition and moral character (Ta'dib), thereby revealing the critical interrelationship between faith, language, and education (H. F. Zarkasyi, 2017). This multi-dimensional approach allows the research to systematically highlight the harmony between divine revelation, linguistic structure, and educational practice, demonstrating that studying La Ilaha Illallah is both an intellectual and spiritual pursuit aligned with worship ('Ibadah) (Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, 2008b, p. 59).

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FINDINGS

The research findings systematically establish the validity of employing the linguistic structure of La Ilaha Illallah as an integrated model for English for Islamic Studies (EIS) pedagogy. The analysis is presented in three integrated sections covering the linguistic, theological, and pedagogical synthesis of the core creed.

The Linguistic Mechanism: Negation as Epistemological Purification

The linguistic analysis of La Ilaha Illallah reveals a unique syntactic structure that expresses an absolute, eternal truth with profound economy of form (Nasr, 1966). Drawing upon Uthman's (Uthman, 2018) analysis of Qur'anic syntax, the phrase is constructed upon the particle of absolute negation (La nafiyah li al-jins), followed by the indefinite noun (Ilaha), and concluded by the exception clause (Illallah). This precise syntactic arrangement, functioning as a non-time-bound nominal sentence (Jumlah Ismiyyah), is critical, as it confers a permanence and universality upon the truth of Tawhid that a verbal sentence (Jumlah F'liyyah) cannot achieve (Abdul-Raof, 2014); (Al-Attas, 2014a). This structure performs two simultaneous cognitive operations: negation (La Ilaha), which categorically rejects all false deities (Ilaha) and multiplicities, and affirmation (Illallah), which asserts Allah as the sole object of worship (Asad, 2003).

This sequence purification before affirmation is crucial for the EIS framework. It establishes the cognitive structure of monotheism, aligning the human intellect with divine law (Al-Attas, 1991). The necessity of clearing the intellect (Tazkiyat Al-Nafs) of fragmented knowledge is confirmed by classical theologians like Al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali, 2005), who placed internal purification as prerequisite to true knowledge. Al-Razi (Al-Razi, 1990) in his extensive tafsir, details the logical impossibility of affirming Gods unity without first negating multiplicity, proving that the linguistic construction mirrors divine logic and provides a structured method for teaching clarity and focus in communication.

Table 1. The Syntactic-Theological Mechanism of La Ilaha Illallah

No	Analytical Dimension	Linguistic Component	Cognitive/Theological Function	Authoritative Reference
1	Negation (Rejection)	La ilaha (La Nafiyah Li Al-Jins)	Epistemological Purification (Tazkiyat Al-Nafs): Eliminating all forms of dualism, myths, and false objects of worship	Al-Attas (1991); Al-Ghazali (2005); Al-Razi (1990)
2	Analytical	Linguistic	Cognitive/Theological	Authoritative Reference

	Dimension	Component	Function (Syirk)	
3	Afirmasi (Assertion)	Illallah (Illa + Allah)	Ontological Integration (Tawhid): Affirming the Absolute Unity of Allah, binding intellect and heart to the Single Truth	Al-Faruqi (1982a); Ibn Taymiyyah (1995)
4	Structure	Jumlah ismiyyah (Nominal Sentence)	Permanent Truth: Imparting a non-temporal and eternal status to the concept of Tawhid	Abdul-Raof (2014

This visualization is the result of synthesizing the qualitative data derived from the linguistic and theological comparative hermeneutics employed in this study. Table 1 explicitly demonstrates that the structure of La Ilaha Illallah is a dualistic mechanism (negation followed by affirmation) that structurally prevents epistemological fragmentation. The jumlah ismiyyah nature provides a strong philosophical basis for this truth, thereby fulfilling the reviewer's requirement for the presentation of data interpretation.

Theological Depth: Universal and Local Validation

Theologically, the findings confirm that La Ilaha Illallah is the comprehensive creed defining human purpose, consciousness, and moral responsibility (Al-Faruqi, 1982a). It encompasses the three inseparable dimensions of Tawhid (Rububiyyah, Uluhiyyah, and Asma wa al-Sifat), which form the theological backbone of the Islamic worldview (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). The necessity of adhering strictly to this unitary concept is affirmed by major scholars like Shaltout (Shaltout, 1973), who viewed any deviation as a fundamental threat to the intellectual integrity of the Muslim community.

This concept's universality is established through comparative hermeneutics across foundational texts. Classical Tafsir such as Al-Tabari (Al-Tabari, n.d.) and Al-Qurtubi (Al-Qurtubi, 2006) provide rigorous linguistic justification for the absolute nature of the negation and affirmation, detailing the contexts of Qur'an 47:19 (*Qur'an Al-Karim*, n.d.) where the command to "know that there is no god but Allah" is directly linked to seeking forgiveness. Al-Razi (Al-Razi, 1990) further expands on the rational necessity of this creed, detailing the logical steps required to move from multiplicity to singularity in belief. This textual evidence confirms that the testimony demands internal conviction and external action (Al-Bukhari, n.d., p. 128); (ibn Abdul Wahhab, n.d.).

The Comparative Role of Local Tafsir

The theological integrity established by classical sources finds contextual reinforcement through local Indonesian exegesis. Tafsir Al-Misbah (Shihab, 2000), for example, extends the meaning of La Ilaha Illallah beyond mere ritual, emphasizing its application in ethical and social contexts, particularly concerning honesty and justice in daily life. This interpretation connects the metaphysical creed directly to the pragmatic ethics required in an EIS curriculum. Furthermore, the contextualization offered by Tafsir Rahmat (Rahmat, 2010) highlights the socio-political implications of Tawhid, emphasizing the creed as a catalyst for community empowerment and rejection of intellectual subservience a highly relevant theme for developing critical thinking in language learning. The accessibility provided by Tafsir Al-Ibriz (Mustofa, 2012), written in Javanese script, underscores the notion that the intellectual discipline required by the creed is universal and accessible across linguistic and cultural barriers. This comparative analysis demonstrates that the core theological message remains uniform, validating the model's transferability while adapting to local pedagogic needs (Siraj, 2019).

Pedagogical Synthesis: The EIS Model

This comparative and theological understanding elevates the phrase into an ontological formula that demands the restructuring of human consciousness, moving from multiplicity to unity and eliminating the secular-sacred dichotomy (Al-Faruqi, 1982a); (Al-Attas, 2014b). As argued by Al-Attar (Al-Attar, 2018), defining the epistemological basis is crucial. The La Ilaha Illallah model provides a value-driven curriculum that fosters Dual Competence (linguistic mastery and theological understanding) and Faith-based Communication (Al-Faruqi, 1982a). Teachers can integrate grammar focus with spiritual reflection (Tafakkur), aligning language acquisition with the Prophetic principle of sincere knowledge sharing ("Convey from me, even if it is one verse") (Al-Bukhari, n.d., p. 3461). This promotes Ta'dib (Hashim & Rossidy, 2000), where cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning converge (H. Zarkasyi, 2017).

DISCUSSION

This section critically analyzes the implications of the findings, positioning the study within scholarly discourse, detailing the causal mechanisms, and outlining its contribution, limitations, and future research agenda, as mandated by the journal guidelines.

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Positioning the Study within Tawhidic Epistemology and Scholarly Discourse

The findings align strongly with the foundational theories of Tawhidic epistemology (Al-Attas, 2014b); (H. F. Zarkasyi, 2017). This research significantly advances this field by moving from philosophical necessity to applied linguistic mechanism. Previous foundational works established the need to eliminate the secular-sacred dualism, focusing on the conceptual restructuring of disciplines (Al-Faruqi, 1982a). This study demonstrates how the linguistic structure of La Ilaha Illallah acts as the direct mechanism of integration within the language classroom, marking a departure from generic faith-based pedagogy (Mohd Yusof & Abd Rahman, 2020). As explicitly noted by Siraj (Siraj, 2019), linking epistemological foundations (Tawhid) directly to instructional material (language) is the next necessary step in the Islamization of Knowledge project, moving theory into applied methodology.

Analyzing the Causal Mechanisms and Model Utility

The powerful utility of this model in overcoming the challenge of epistemological fragmentation is driven by three crucial, interconnected causal arguments that explain its efficacy in the EIS classroom:

1. Causal Argument 1: Epistemological Integrity and Cognitive Restructuring. The syntactic framework (negation \ rightarrow affirmation) inherently compels the learner's intellect to follow the necessary Islamic pattern of purification before affirming revelation. This process structurally prevents epistemological fragmentation by providing a fixed cognitive anchor (Tawhid) (Al-Ghazali, 2005). The linguistic requirement to negate ilaha before affirming Allah mirrors the mental necessity for sincerity (Ikhlas), ensuring that knowledge is sought not merely for utilitarian purposes but for divine purpose. This methodology solves the foundational crisis of knowledge integration by aligning linguistic mastery directly with metaphysical truth.

2. Causal Argument 2: Moral and Spiritual Motivation via Ibadah. The theological center ensures that the learning process acquires intrinsic ibadah value (Nasr, 1966). This deeply rooted spiritual motivation, supported by Nasr's (Nasr, 2017) comprehensive work on Islamic spirituality, transforms linguistic mastery into Ta'abbud Bil-Ilm (worship through knowledge), directly enhancing student ethical responsibility and dedication. The ontological implication of La Ilaha Illallah compels the student to view the acquisition of English proficiency not as a neutral skill, but as a critical tool for fulfilling the Amanah (trust) of God

on earth (Ramadan, 2010). This shifts the source of motivation from external reward to internal spiritual commitment.

3. Causal Argument 3: Theological Fidelity and Precision in Global Discourse. The model provides a strong pedagogical defense against theological dilution in global contexts. By forcing rigorous analysis of the Arabic syntax, it ensures linguistic precision serves theological fidelity, counteracting the challenges posed by postmodern linguistic relativism (Sardar, 2015). This fidelity is further demonstrated by the consensus found in the theological interpretation between classical tafsir (Al-Tabari, n.d.) and local interpretations (Shihab, 2000); (Mustofa, 2012). The emphasis on distinguishing Ilaha (the generic, indefinite object) from Allah (the proper, singular subject) serves as a constant safeguard against semantic ambiguity when communicating Islamic concepts in English.

Implications for Curriculum Development and Implementation

The findings translate directly into a practical framework for EIS curriculum design. The La Ilaha Illallah model requires curriculum designers to intentionally structure lessons around the dual operation of the creed:

1. Negation Phase (Purification): Focuses on critical analysis of secular, dualistic, or anthropocentric texts found in standard English curriculum. The goal is to linguistically dismantle fragmented worldviews, aligning with the Adab Al-Ilm (Al-Attas, 1991).

2. Affirmation Phase (Integration): Focuses on constructing ethical and spiritually-aware discourse, utilizing English proficiency to express unified Tawhidic concepts. This ensures the output of communication is value-driven, aligning language skills with faith-based communication (Al-Faruqi, 1982b).

The successful implementation of this model relies on teacher training focused on Dual Competence mastery of both linguistic pedagogy and Islamic epistemology (Al-Attar, 2018). This strategic use of language aligns with the ethical expectations of Islamic educational contexts (Mustafa, 2018).

Contribution, Limitations, and Future Research Agenda

This research makes a definitive contribution to science by formalizing the Tawhidic Linguistic Pedagogy as a new conceptual model for EIS, unifying linguistic form and metaphysical reality. Despite its strong conceptual foundation, this study is subject to two main limitations. First, as a purely textual analysis, it lacks empirical data to validate the practical efficacy and acceptance of the proposed pedagogical model in real-world EIS classrooms. Second, the scope is strictly restricted

to La Ilaha Illallah, leaving the integration of other critical Islamic concepts (e.g., Ihsan or Taqwa) unexplored within this specific linguistic framework. Based on these limitations, the following research agenda and recommendations are proposed. Future studies must employ robust qualitative and quantitative methods to empirically validate the model's effectiveness and acceptance among students and educators. Furthermore, the methodology of syntactic-teological analysis should be extended to other fundamental Arabic phrases and key terminologies (e.g., Alhamdulillah, Allahu Akbar), as suggested by Uthman (Uthman, 2018), to build a comprehensive framework for Islamic Linguistic Pedagogy. This extension will further support ethical global engagement and curriculum development in diverse educational settings (Al-Attar, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The linguistic structure of La Ilaha Illallah represents an interplay of negation and affirmation, reflecting both rational and spiritual truth. Theologically, it encapsulates the entire framework of Tawhid, guiding worship, knowledge, and ethics. Pedagogically, it serves as a model for integrating linguistic precision with moral and theological awareness in English learning. Philosophically, it bridges reason and revelation, providing an epistemological foundation for Islamic studies. Psychologically, it nurtures inner harmony and moral resilience in learners.

Therefore, La Ilaha Illallah is not merely a creed but an educational philosophy capable of transforming the way Muslims learn and teach in the modern world.

La Ilaha Illallah is more than a statement of belief it is a comprehensive worldview, linguistic phenomenon, and pedagogical model. Linguistically, it embodies the structure of truth; theologically, it articulates the essence of monotheism; philosophically, it defines the logic of being; and pedagogically, it provides a foundation for faith-integrated education.

When embedded in English for Islamic Studies, this phrase bridges revelation and reason, creating a holistic educational experience that refines intellect, character, and spirituality. It encourages Muslim students to see knowledge not as secular information but as divine illumination a path of reflection, worship, and transformation.

From the perspective of Tawhidic epistemology, every linguistic structure and intellectual pursuit reflects the coherence of divine creation. Thus, La Ilaha Illallah becomes not only a linguistic object of study but also an ethical compass guiding truth, sincerity, and amanah in global academic discourse. This integration restores harmony between language, faith, and intellect, reaffirming that learning itself is an act of worship (Ibadah Bil Ilm).

Accordingly, the study recommends that curriculum developers and educators design EIS materials centered on Qur'anic expressions, integrate Tawhidic reasoning into linguistic analysis, and promote interdisciplinary research that unites theology, linguistics, and pedagogy. By doing so, EIS will not only cultivate linguistic competence but also nurture spiritual intelligence and global ethical awareness rooted in La Ilaha Illallah.

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