The untapped potential of affective forecasting skill in language education

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ABSTRACT

Affective forecasting was originally proposed during 1990s. It was defined as the ability of predicting one's emotional states as a reaction to future actions. The skill of affective forecasting can be particularly significant in language education settings as it includes many challenges. This skill can immeasurably affect language learners' academic success as it can influence their motivation and their learning. Such an anticipation may hinder getting into challenges and seems to be a crucial factor for educators in language who wish to provide an environment which encourages resilience and motivation. Reviewing the literature presents the essential components and constructs of this skill. The sub skills of emotional awareness and empathy can both contribute to affective forecasting skill. Also, understanding the context plays a significant role which also entails the interpersonal communication skills. Furthermore, self-regulation as well as reflective practices further support language educators in addressing the emotional complexities that may arise in language learning classrooms. Thus, a combination of these skills can contribute to better understanding of the emotional states. In language classrooms the dynamic nature of individuals' emotions influenced by cultural context or individual experiences is undeniable. This requires the anticipation of emotions and emotional needs of language learners. Thus, affective forecasting skill stands as a critical construct within language education to create responsive classes catering for diverse language learners with different needs.

Keywords: *Affective forecasting, Contextual assessment, Emotional awareness, Empathy, Interpersonal communication, Reflective practice, Self-regulation.*

Highlights of this paper

- The affective forecasting skill is particularly significant in language education settings as it includes many challenges. Affective forecasting skill stands as a critical construct within language education to create responsive classes catering for diverse language learners with different needs. Based on the literature affective forecasting entails contextual assessment, emotional awareness, empathy, interpersonal communication, reflective practice, and self-regulation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Affective forecasting as a psychological concept entails individuals' predictions related to their emotional states in the future in different life events. These emotional states are in response to specific situations and they were first introduced by Gilbert and Wilson during 1990s (Gilbert & Wilson, 2004). The psychological concept of affective forecasting can have critical implications for different fields and education is not an exclusion. In fact, within educational settings, its role becomes even more substantial as it can shape motivation, learning, and in general the academic success.

Affective forecasting can have considerable effects on such matters like decision-making which can in turn significantly impact one's behavior (Gilbert & Wilson, 2007). In the progressively globalized world, while language education goes beyond absolute linguistic know ledge and while it also encompasses cultural as well as emotional engagement, it is paramount to understand affective forecasting. As it can affect individuals' behavior (Ellis et al., 2018) it can develop language educators' teaching practices to yield enhanced learning outcomes.

As far as learners are concerned, research has suggested that anticipations of achievements may result in long-term feelings (Miller, 2014). However, if misinterpretations happen, they may lead to learners' either avoiding challenging tasks or approaching tasks without preparation (Schneider & Preckel, 2017). Much of the research on affective forecasting has focused on learners while it can also have implications for teachers.

Language education can involve the challenge of creating meaningful learning practices for learners who might belong to diverse cultural backgrounds. Also, language learners may come with different linguistic abilities (Ojong & Addo, 2024). Thus, it is principal to anticipate their emotional responses through the employment of affective forecasting in response to the various pedagogical approaches or learning materials and environments (Schwarz, 2012). The emotional aspect in language learning is of significant importance as it does not only seek cognitive involvement but also it is interwoven with emotions (Koohestanian & Zamani Bahabadi, 2024). For example, concerning anxiety, it is well believed that it can hinder learners' performance as well as willingness to communicate (Peng & Wang, 2024). As such, teachers must employ affective forecasting skill which can help them to create a supportive atmosphere that decreases anxiety.

2. CONSTRUCTS OF AFFECTIVE FORECASTING SKILL

Affective forecasting has largely been focused on in the literature as a prediction of one's feelings. However, as a skill in educational contexts, affective forecasting skill seems to be a crucial factor for educators in language who wish to provide an environment which encourages resilience and motivation for students. The area of education has increasingly recognized the significance of emotional aspects of learning and language education is not an exception. Anticipating students' reactions and emotional states is a fundamental skill that language educators need to have in this regard. The shift from the traditional views toward learning that emphasize emotions has compelled educators to look for pedagogical strategies that can lead to higher student engagement and improved learning outcomes.

To be able to successfully anticipate students' reactions, it is crucial to understand their emotions. One reason for this is that literature informs us of the considerable effects of emotions on the cognitive processes involved in learning including attention and memory (Brosch, Scherer, Grandjean, & Sander, 2013; Vistorte et al., 2024; Yin et

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al., 2023). If emotionally involved, either negatively or positively, hindering or enhancing learning may happen. Positive emotional states can bring about not only curiosity but also enthusiasm which can lead to better retention through stronger attention (Zhang & Fathi, 2024). On the other hand, negative emotions including anxiety or frustration can delay cognitive processes involved in learning leading to distractions or a lack of focus (Yeung et al., 2024).

Language education involves inherent complexities and there is demand for approaches toward teaching which can acknowledge these nuances. Maher and King (2022) state that language learners often have to handle complexities such as self-doubt as well as fear of making mistakes in attempting to communicate. Thus, strategies must be deployed by language educators in promoting a safe as well as supportive environment through creating activities which can evoke positive emotions (Li, Gow, & Zhou, 2020; Wilson & Conyers, 2016). These activities include but are not limited to collaborative tasks (Järvenoja & Järvelä, 2013; Richards, 2022; Zhang, Liu, & Lee, 2021) interactive games (Chen & Yin, 2024; Kosmas & Zaphiris, 2019) or real-life scenarios (Mengyu, 2024; Shadiev, Hwang, & Liu, 2018).

Furthermore, anticipation of reactions must be extended beyond individual emotional reactions. It has to encompass group dynamics as well (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Classrooms must be considered as social ecosystems having students from varied backgrounds, numerous experiences, and diverse emotions (Borge & Xia, 2023; Rani, Mahapatra, & Bahri, 2023). The idea may seem even more complex when considering that teachers must understand the fact that every student might react inversely to similar stimuli. One simple example could be the variety of reactions students might have when required to perform in front of peers. Some learners might be exhilarated; whereas, others might feel totally anxious. The recognition of such diverse reactions and the implementation of different measures for understanding them is principal for language teachers. This can offer a variety of strategies to teachers to suggest different modes of students' participation based on the reactions.

Another important factor in this regard entails feedback in the context of language education. Anticipating how students might respond to given feedbacks requires teachers to act as astute observers in classes (Wolff, Jarodzka, & Boshuizen, 2021). While effective feedback can encourage learning, its poor delivery might initiate demotivation as well as embarrassment (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Öztürk, 2021). Consequently, a language educator who has awareness of such emotional reactions can provide constructive criticisms leading to effort and improvement of voice (Fong & Schallert, 2023). The consideration of affective reactions can make feedback an influential tool to develop learning rather than making it a source of fear. Besides these components, there are several skills required of language teachers in this regard to be influential affective forecasters which are presented in the following sections.

2.1. Emotional Awareness

Emotional awareness entails the ability of recognizing and understanding one's own as well as others' emotions. It also includes understanding of how emotions may affect individuals' interactions (Zohoorian & Kamali, 2023). This recognition plays a key part in various occupations and education is not an exception. In fact as emotions can impact teaching and its outcomes, emotional awareness is one of the crucial aspects of efficient teaching (Chen & Guo, 2020). Emotional awareness is closely connected to the framework of social-emotional learning. This framework considers emotional intelligence as a key component of success in education (Yexin Wang & Zhang, 2023).

While scrutinizing language learners' emotional states, the complexity of the skills to be able to forecast their affections becomes more evident. In language learning contexts understating emotional states becomes more significant in terms of one's own as an educator and also in terms of a peer and a learner (Richards, 2022). Accordingly, in language learning contexts, there needs to be a heightened level of emotional awareness which contributes in the

recognition and interpretation of language learners while working on various learning activities. This also applies to the understating of the environments of language learning (Wang, Ganushchak, Welie, & van Steensel, 2024).

The skill of emotional awareness as a component of affective forecasting becomes essential more specifically in language learning contexts for a variety of reasons. Emotional awareness can maintain providing a supportive learning environment (Dey, 2021). This can happen through better recognition of language learners' emotional struggles because of anxiety of speaking a new language or frustration of learning and using complex structural rules of a new language (Dryden, Tankosić, & Dovchin, 2021; Fenyvesi, 2024; Marnani & Cuocci, 2022). Thus, a language teacher needs to make adjustments for the instructional strategies to provide guidance and support (Smith, 2023). Another reason entails improving students' engagement. Being in agreement with and understanding language learners' emotional states, language teachers will create more appealing lessons that may reverberate learners' feelings. For instance, the inclusion of such classroom activities that are in alignment with students' interests and feelings will inevitably provide a more pleasant emotional experience which will in turn increase their participation as well as motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). A further reason for the essentiality of emotional awareness entails the facilitation of peer interactions. The nature of language learning encompasses collaboration (Poehner & Leontjev, 2023; Tamimy, Rashidi, & Koh, 2023) and purposeful interactions with peers to receive productive reactions. Peer interactions can improve the social dynamics of a language classroom if language teachers can be sensitive to learners' feeling (Huang & Lajoie, 2023).

Thus, it seems that emotional awareness can improve language teachers' skills in affective forecasting as they can have an enhanced understanding of language learners' emotional responses (Rathi, Hiran, & Sakhare, 2023). This will contribute in making better and more informed predictions on how learners with different abilities or styles of learning may react to specific activities, challenges, or tasks. Moreover, as language learning may have feelings of anxiety with it and the anxiety may hinder students' performance, teachers need to implement the required strategies (Huang, Al-Rashidi, & Bayat, 2024). For instance, having small group discussions rather than individual oral presentations in a speaking class may alleviate the fear of presenting. Moreover, a teacher having affective forecasting skills through emotional awareness can predict the anxiety levels of learners. This will help in understating and anticipating the motivational shifts through recognizing excitements of students to tailor teaching toward ignition of students' interest (Bowen & Harrington, 2023). Especially at times when the students' feelings of disappointment are understood, teachers can employ the skill of affective forecasting to provide timely interventions through offering resources or individual support.

2.2. Empathy

Empathy can be another component of affective forecasting in language teaching contexts. Empathy is defined by Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan, and Adler (1998) as the recognition as well as understanding of others' feelings as well as experiences. Empathy can connect teachers with students based on an emotional level and will in turn lead to higher levels of motivation, learning, and engagement (Aldrup, Carstensen, & Klusmann, 2022).

Empathetic teachers are capable of assessing the emotional climate in the classroom context (Martinsone & Žydžiūnaite, 2023). The assessment entails understanding facial expressions, body language, or even nonverbal cues that are displayed by the students when having feelings of anxiety, confusion, or disengagement (Cooper, 2016; Kucuk, 2023; Sprenger, 2020). For instance, when a student is struggling with the complexities of the language, an empathetic teacher can predict the frustrations and can make adjustments for the required teaching approach in line with the situation (Oxford, 2016). Like emotionally aware teachers, empathetic teachers can also anticipate students'

reactions through projecting themselves into the situations. This will lead to using practical strategies to prevent students' frustrations that are a result of complexities of language learning or their own assessments (Karimian, 2022).

Affective forecasting that is grounded in empathy also allows language teachers to tailor their interventions to meet varied emotional needs of the students (Napolitano, 2023). For instance, an empathetic teacher who recognizes that an activity might include anxiety will start with a less anxiety provoking activities (Richards, 2015). Empathy will also help teachers in building trust as well as rapport which will improve class dynamics and which will stimulate students to openly express their emotions (Pranjić, 2021; Xie & Derakhshan, 2021). If the students can trust, they may also take risks that are required while they are learning or acquiring a language (Seven, 2020). In the same vein, empathy can lead to higher student participation levels as teachers will ponder upon to predict and respond to the fluctuations regarding students' emotions (Rajaram, 2023). Therefore, based on such considerations, teachers can design plans in accordance with students' emotional states and their interests. Overall, empathy as a building block for affective forecasting skill can enhance teaching and teachers' effectiveness.

2.3. Classroom Environment and Contextual Assessment

Classroom environment assessment is one of the most essential factors contributing to affective forecasting skill of a language teacher. Classroom environment assessment encompasses a systematic evaluation related to all the different aspects of a classroom which can reflect the experiences of students. It entails the components of physical environment, psychological climate, as well as the social dynamics (Goagoses et al., 2024; Li & Xue, 2023; Wang, Degol, Amemiya, Parr, & Guo, 2020).

To assess the classroom environment a teacher needs an awareness of how the desks need to be arranged. Also, the teacher must be aware of all the classroom aesthetics and teaching materials. The physical environment of a class promotes not only a sense of belonging but also a sense of safety (Giuliana, 2021). Another component of the awareness toward the classroom environment relates to the psychological climate. This entails the overall relationships that are formed interpersonally which can lead to a positive learning environment. This can be provided through teamwork activities to make the students feel more connected.

Language teachers who are equipped with this form of awareness can also gain the awareness of enhancing emotions. Having this awareness, teachers can spot the variety of emotional barriers that may hinder students' learning in different contexts. Furthermore, the teachers may choose to offer assistance or reassurance. This awareness also empowers teachers to cater for individualized and personalized learning experiences.

2.4. Self-Regulation

Self-regulation plays a focal role in language teachers' efficacy as it aids them in their ability to forecast affective states of the students. Self-regulation as a multifaceted notion incorporates several aspects including cognition, emotion, behavior, and self-control (Malanchini, Engelhardt, Grotzinger, Harden, & Tucker-Drob, 2019; Masaki, 2023). The process of self-regulation also entails self-observation, self-reaction, and self-evaluation (Schunk, 2003). Operative self-regulation prepares educators to be able to manage own emotions as well as the related behaviors (Pekrun, 2021).

In language teaching contexts where anxiety is prevalent, self-regulation of the teachers, which is the understanding of how one's feelings or actions impact learners, plays an indispensable role. For instance, when a teacher is able to manage own anxiety, a peaceful learning environment will be created in which students have lower levels of stress. Additionally, teachers with high levels of self-regulation are more probable to model adaptive emotional reactions which can be emulated by students (Kamboj & Garg, 2021). It is believed that emotional

awareness is closely related to self-regulation and it helps teachers in finding emotional cues. For instance, when a teacher has awareness of their own frustrations, there is a higher potential for them to notice similar frustration in students. This will allow them to regulate their own teaching strategies consequently (Brackett, Bailey, & Katulak, 2019).

Teachers with high self-regulation are also expected to develop empathy as well as perspective-taking practices (Berti & Cigala, 2022). It enables teachers to comprehend how specific lessons may evoke different feelings in their students. Thus, self-regulatory mechanisms require reflective practices (Evans, 2015). Moreover, feedback mechanisms are important in self-regulation. This introspective monitoring lets the teachers collect data related to the emotional responses to later rely on the data to have associated adjustments. Finally, it is argued that self-regulation as a component of affective forecasting provides the teachers with the ability to implement adaptive strategies for coping in case of facing challenges. This adaptability augments their affective forecasting skills and makes them responsive to students' needs (Takano & Ehring, 2024). For instance, during teaching if a self-regulated teacher find out that the lesson is not moving smoothly, they will swiftly examine the conditions and detect emotional influences of the students and think of modifying their approach.

2.5. Interpersonal Communication

This sort of communication entails both verbal and nonverbal interactions among individuals. In the context of language teaching, interpersonal communication includes the dialogues and their interpretations and responses to emotional cues (Karman & Nurchalis, 2024). There are several elements inherent in interpersonal communication including empathy, feedback, and active listening (Ahmad & Chowdhury, 2022) which strengthen the ability of the teacher in forecasting emotional states of learners (Moreno, 2023).

Several reasons make interpersonal communication an important component of affective forecasting. Besides building trust and rapport, teachers' ability in understanding students' needs plays a key role. Teachers need to focus on students' needs, challenges, as well as preferences to be able to adapt instructional strategies. Another reason is that conflicts need to be resolved. Language classrooms are vulnerable to conflicts and misunderstandings. Teachers need to employ their interpersonal skills to resolve the conflict with an aim of providing a sense of community and belonging among the students (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020; Raczynski & Horne, 2014). Active Listening, as another component, is also fundamental to the process of affective forecasting (Stalnikowicz & Brezis, 2020). This skill lets teachers clarify the points by questioning and helps them anticipate students' reactions. Active listening gives way to a cooperative dialogue in which students can freely express thoughts or feelings and this will provide teachers with the required crucial information to predict the experiments they may face (Fitzgerald, 2024).

2.6. Reflective Practice

Reflective practice is known as the course of constantly analyzing one's professional experiences in order to be able to inform future actions (Moghaddam, Davoudi, Adel, & Amirian, 2020; Riyanti, 2020). This allows educators to reflect on their own teaching methodologies as well as classroom interactions to understand the emotional climates. It involves a cautious observation which enables teachers to have effective decision-making in the classroom (Slade, Burnham, Catalana, & Waters, 2019). Having reflective practice teachers can be more attuned concerning the diversity of emotions their students may have. This applies perfectly to a language teaching context where students may experience a variety of feelings including anxiety, frustration or excitement in relation to how much they progress or how well they can actively take part in social interactions (Namaziandost, Heydarnejad, & Azizi, 2023).

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Reflective practice as a component of affective forecasting empowers teachers to have emotionally responsive classrooms (Freeman, 2021).

Through engaging in reflective practice, language teachers can expand their visions toward the students' socio-cultural backgrounds, norms, and expectations (Kim, 2020). Reflective practice also requires appropriate feedback mechanisms. For instance, teachers have to use students' previous responses to adjust forecasts and also to adapt appropriate teaching strategies for providing a more dynamic learning setting (Bardach et al., 2021; Vantieghem et al., 2020). Thus, scholars maintain that reflective practice provides a more supportive relationship and students feel that they are more understood and their emotional needs are recognized (Rogers, 1995).

3. DISCUSSION

Teachers must be aware of the pitfalls associated with affective forecasting. Individuals are often prone to cognitive biases that can distort their ability to accurately predict emotional outcomes (Gilbert & Wilson, 2004). For instance, teachers might overestimate the positive impact of a particular lesson plan while ignoring potential frustrations or challenges that students might encounter. To mitigate this risk, language teachers should actively seek feedback from their students and reflect on their emotional responses to various instructional methods. This practice not only enhances their predictive accuracy but also establishes a feedback loop which can improve instructional quality.

Incorporating concepts of affective forecasting into teacher training programs is essential. Educators should be equipped with tools and strategies to enhance their predictive capabilities regarding students' emotional responses. Workshops, peer observations, and reflective practice can facilitate this growth (Schutz & Pekrun, 2007). This training can foster emotional intelligence that aligns teaching practices with students' needs and perceptions.

Emotional dimensions significantly impact students' cognitive processes while learning. Scholars (Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Richards, 2022; Yunsong Wang, Xin, & Chen, 2024) have maintained that educators have to incorporate insights related to emotional aspects into their teaching practices. The present paper sought to delineate the constructs that can comprise affective forecasting skill and also explored its implication in the field of language education.

Reviewing the literature on affective forecasting informs us that it extends far beyond simple prediction and anticipation of one's own emotions. Affective forecasting can also be viewed as a skill to predict students' emotional states. While affective forecasting skill can inevitably affect the educational environment and in turn students' success, it can also shape the teaching dynamics and the teaching practices of language teachers.

Affective forecasting skill can allow language educators to anticipate students' feelings in relation to both the learning environments as well as the tasks and practices. This skill contributes to the teachers' tailoring their instructional approaches toward higher engagement of the language learners. For example, this can be done through anticipating the anxiety level and emotional states of learners who have to be involved in individual presentations. As such, the teacher will be able to choose other strategies such as a small group discussion as an activity to prepare the students. By addressing the potential sources that may cause anxiety through implementing interpersonal communication patterns, teachers may create opportunities in the learning process where learners can meaningfully engage not only with their peers but also with the content.

One of the foundational factors in affective forecasting is emotional awareness. This awareness entails the identification as well as comprehension of emotions of self and others which can help educators recognize when anxiety or frustration may be experienced. While such emotional states can hinder cognitive processes inherent in learning, they can also affect attention as well as memory (Brosch et al., 2013; Yeung et al., 2024). Thus, teachers who

are more emotionally aware can tailor their teaching to instructional strategies which are in line with learners' emotional states to produce higher learning and engagement (Zhao, 2024).

Emotional encounters are an intrinsic part of any language classroom and language learners confront a variety of emotions due to the nature of language learning which can at times be discouraging (Bowen & Harrington, 2023; Huang et al., 2024). Maher and King (2022) have emphasized that directing these emotional challenges requires having a strategic approach that is supportive. Thus, for efficient affective forecasting language teachers have to first have appropriate levels of emotional awareness to be able to anticipate the emotional states.

Another important factor in affective forecasting is empathy. Empathy facilitates connections between language educators and learners (Karimian, 2022). Empathy provides an environment in which negative emotional states will be alleviated and students have a higher willingness for risk taking (Seven, 2020). According to Napolitano (2023) empathy also allows for personalized feedback to address students' needs.

Contextual and classroom environment assessment is another skill required to be able to have efficient affective forecasting of the students' emotional states. Several elements need to be considered in this regard including classroom arrangement as well as teaching resources to contribute the sense of belonging in learners (Giuliana, 2021; Goagoses et al., 2024). This assessment skill not only entails the physical elements but also includes the psychological and social dynamics. A language teacher who can not understand and recognize dynamics of relationships among peers may not be able to forecast their emotions (Borge & Xia, 2023).

Self-regulation is another vital factor related to affective forecasting. It requires managing one's own emotions as well as behaviors as a response to the environment. Teachers having high levels of self-regulation can also take more adaptive emotional reactions (Kamboj & Garg, 2021). To understand emotional states of learners and to be able to forecast their affective situations teachers need to first have self-regulatory skills. Self-regulation makes teachers improve their adaptability to provide a responsive context for students in which they can detect emotions for modifying their instructional approaches (Takano & Ehring, 2024).

One other skill of significance in being able to forecast affective situations in learners is interpersonal communication. It can facilitate the emotions expression as well as thoughts which enables educators to predict students' reactions and classroom scenarios (Karman & Nurchalis, 2024). One of the components of this skill is defined as active listening which is crucial for understanding language learners' emotional experiences (Ahmad & Chowdhury, 2022). Teachers' interpersonal communication skills allows for students' freely expressing themselves allowing for a more supportive learning environment (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020); thus, making affective forecasting easier and more tangible for teachers.

Reflective practice as the last element empowers language educators in analyzing their experiences. This will help them in making informed adjustments related to their teaching methodologies (Moghaddam et al., 2020). It inspires them to scrutinize their own emotional responses as well as their students' which in turn will contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional states. As Freeman (2021) highlights, reflective practices support the development of emotionally responsive classrooms and the students feel understood in such an environment (Bardach et al., 2021).

5. CONCLUSION

The affective forecasting skill in language education seems to be critical for developing an encouraging environment. While emotional aspects related to learning have gained recognition, it has become more essential for language educators to have the affective forecasting skill. Language educators equipped with factors such as emotional

awareness, empathy, skills in interpersonal communication, and self-regulation are more effective anticipators of the emotional dynamics and reactions of their students.

Several elements contribute to affective forecasting skill including emotional awareness, empathy, classroom environment assessment, self-regulation, interpersonal communication, and reflective practice. Together, they can provide language educators with the skill to be able to understand and anticipate the emotional complexities within language classrooms. Each of these constructs plays its own integral role in informing the educators to acknowledge or address students' emotional needs.

As educational paradigms evolve toward holistic considerations of learning to encompass both cognitive and emotional spheres, it seems imperative to prioritize the development of affective forecasting skill. Affective forecasting skill is not simply an auxiliary skill as far as language educators are concerned. It is a foundational component of effective teaching whose implications for student success are recognized. This can be applied immensely in language education settings where learners may have varying cultural backgrounds or possess diverse linguistic abilities. While emotional states can expressively affect cognitive processes, they can also affect learners' learning and engagement.

Despite the countless benefits that affective forecasting skill can have, there has been dearth of research in this regard in the field of language teaching. Language classroom is where the dynamic nature of individuals' emotions that may be influenced by cultural context or individual experiences may be observed. This necessitates anticipating and knowing the landscape of emotions and emotional needs of language learners. Thus, affective forecasting skill stands as an essential construct within language education which can create more responsive classes catering for diverse language learners' competencies, backgrounds as well as needs.

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