

# Teachers' Awareness of Student-Centered Pedagogy and Assessment in EFL Context

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## Abstract

The academic community unanimously asserts that student-centered pedagogy and assessment (SCPA) practices are indispensable for instructional methodology and evaluation. Existing literature indicates a noticeable, possibly minimal, gap in attention, particularly within the context of Najran University, regarding English teachers' awareness of these two fundamental practices. Consequently, this study investigated English teachers' awareness regarding SCPA practices in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Additionally, the study sought to analyze participants' responses in correlation with their gender, experience, degree, and specialization. The research objectives were achieved through a survey method, employing a set of instruments comprising a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview conducted with a conveniently chosen sample of 73 faculty members. The results revealed a very high level of awareness among faculty members regarding SCPA practices in the EFL context. Furthermore, gender, experience, degree, and specialization were found to have no significant impact on the responses of the study sample. Qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interviews highlighted the connection between SCPA practices and students' language success, emphasizing factors, such as encouragement, engagement, responsibility, and positive impact. The study's findings provide recommendations and implications for future practices in English language teaching.

**Keywords:** student-centered pedagogy and assessment, teachers' awareness, EFL context

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in the emphasis on student-centered approaches (SCA) in pedagogy and assessment domains. Student-centered pedagogy (SCP) promotes the notion that learners should actively participate in learning, while student-centered assessment (SCA) should align with students' knowledge processes and learning outcomes. The expression, SCP, in the available literature, also surfaces as learner-focused learning, teaching, and pedagogy. It maintains and promotes new viewpoints on learning and reflections on the learner's individual differences and needs and theorizes that students infer meaning from information and experience in an appropriate environment. It also relates to student opinions on what, how, and why in learning and subject material, learner accountability, and learner involvement (Cannon & Newble, 2000; McCombs & Whisler, 1997; Reigeluth et al., 2017; Rogers, 1983; Starkey, 2019). At the same time, SCA, also known as learner-centered classroom assessment, learner-centered assessment, or learner-centered education, being a broader academic concept, acknowledges that assessment significantly impacts language instructions (Baker, 2016; Tsagari & Vogt, 2017). As a result, SCA is about making assessments rational and learning-oriented (Malone, 2013). It explores how assessments are used in the classroom to improve teaching and learning, including student active participation and accountability for their learning, and how formative assessment emphasizes learning and development (Douglas, 2018; Duncan & Cohen, 2011; Lea et al., 2003).

SCPA practices are of greater prominence, and many guidelines, including teachers' awareness, have been proposed to support a learner-centered perspective in the EFL context. Teachers' views and beliefs are significant because they influence their perceptions and communication with students, teaching, and learning. Instructors' classroom decisions and behaviors are shaped by their level of awareness (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Scholars maintained that teachers' perceptions and awareness influence their practices in the classroom (Fang, 1996; Pajares, 1992).

Instructors' awareness of the effectiveness of learner-centered teaching impacts their instructional practices (Ghaicha & Mezouari, 2018). Different approaches have been employed to explore the impact of SCPA practices on teachers' awareness in the EFL context. This might manifest as teachers focusing on their students' learning. Another indicator of teachers' awareness of SCPA is that teachers count on students' existing knowledge. Teachers consider the learners' existing knowledge, assist those with learning issues, and consider their prior knowledge (Protheroe, 2007). Teachers' awareness of SCPA may also showcase teachers relying on students' experiences, backgrounds, interests, and needs. Teachers pay adequate attention to students' exposures, views, environments, pursuits, dimensions, and demands (Harkema & Schout, 2008). Awareness may facilitate an interplay between theory and practice for an effective shift in learning. Moreover, if teachers' awareness and knowledge of SCPA are found to be lacking, the classroom dynamics may be significantly affected. Many teachers are hesitant to use student-centered instructions in their classrooms because they are unaware of student-centered pedagogy practices (Johnson, 2006). In the same vein, Anderson (2002) argued that teachers lack the necessary skills to deliver student-centered teaching because of their insufficient awareness of student-centered pedagogy. As a result, teachers frequently lean towards a traditional orientation even after participating in student-centered approach workshops (Nonkukhetkhong et al., 2006; Prapaisit De Segovia & Hardison, 2008). There are instances in which teachers may believe they are utilizing student-centered techniques but are sticking with teacher-centered teaching (Ebert-May et al., 2011). Teachers continued to lean towards a traditional orientation even after participating in student-centered approach workshops (Weimer, 2013). These studies suggest that the issue of teachers' awareness regarding SCPA practices cannot be overlooked, especially when the evidence points out that many teachers might not be entirely aware of the potential or how to employ these practices.

Furthermore, the researchers believe that teachers are the key players in the pedagogy and assessment domains, and their awareness regarding the employment of SCPA practices would affect students' success in learning. Moreover, it is important to examine the teachers' awareness of the two practices. Researchers also noticed that studies on EFL teachers' awareness of SCPA practices in the Najran University context are worrying. Hence, the current study intends to address the existing gap through the following objectives:

1. Examine English teachers' awareness of SCPA practices.
2. Explore potential variations in participants' answers based on demographic variables.
3. Determine how SCPA practices affect EFL learners' language success rate.

## 2. Review of Literature

There has been a significant focus on SCPA practices within English language teaching, especially in the last two decades. Various studies have investigated the impact of these practices on students' learning success in different educational contexts. One crucial factor influencing students' learning success is the level of awareness among teachers, as it directly correlates with how pedagogy and assessment tasks are executed in the classroom. The significance of teachers' awareness in implementing SCP is underscored by its association with positive learning outcomes.

Despite a limited body of literature, existing studies suggest that while teachers exhibit positive attitudes toward SCP, challenges arise in translating these attitudes into classroom practices. Ghaicha and Mezouari's (2018) examination of Moroccan EFL instructors revealed favorable attitudes towards learner-centered pedagogy, yet resource constraints led many to adhere to traditional, teacher-centered strategies. Similarly, Du Plessis (2020) found that student teachers had minimal awareness of learner-centered pedagogy, perceiving its application as highly challenging. In Tanzanian secondary schools, Salema's (2017) study discovered that a significant number of teachers predominantly employed teacher-centered pedagogy and assessment practices, indicating a lack of awareness regarding learner-centered approaches. Nonkukhetkhong et al. (2006) found a discrepancy between teachers' opinions on learner-centered teaching and their actual classroom practices, suggesting a misunderstanding of the concept due to insufficient awareness. Contrary findings are present in Othman's (2010) study, where Malaysian primary school English teachers were found to employ various student-centered pedagogical practices, reflecting a higher level of awareness. However, Weiss et al. (2003) reported limited knowledge or awareness of student-centered pedagogy among teachers, with the majority of lessons being teacher-centered. The need for student-centered pedagogy is widely advocated in the literature, and studies, such as Marwan's (2017) investigation, emphasize its positive impact on learning outcomes. Nevertheless, challenges persist, as highlighted by Ebert et al. (2011), who uncovered a mismatch between teachers' self-reported adoption of learner-centered approaches and actual classroom observations, indicating potential awareness issues. Similar awareness challenges are evident in the realm of student-centered

assessment practices. Rich et al. (2014) argue that learner-centered assessment methods contribute to more effective teaching and longer-term retention compared to traditional approaches. Liu and Zhang's (2023) exploration of EFL teachers' feedback practices revealed that instructors' awareness of SCPA influenced the choice of feedback strategies. Zolfaghari et al.'s (2022) study, exploring the alignment of assessment practices with learner-centered pedagogy in teacher training programs, underscored a noteworthy misalignment. The results indicated that teachers did not incorporate student-centered evaluation methods, possibly due to a lack of awareness.

Henceforth, despite the increasing emphasis on SCPA practices in English language teaching, there persist challenges in translating positive attitudes into effective implementation in the classroom. The literature portrays a complex scenario, with varying levels of teacher awareness influencing the adoption of student-centered approaches.

Consequently, the researchers stress the importance of investigating teachers' awareness of SCPA practices, leading to the reformulation of the problem statement to address the following research questions:

1. What do English teachers comprehend in SCPA practices?
2. Do participants' responses exhibit significant differences based on their demographic variables?
3. How does awareness of SCPA practices affect EFL learners' language learning success rate?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Design

This descriptive research focuses on investigating English teachers' awareness of SCPA practices within the EFL setting. Additionally, it aims to examine the correlation between participants' responses and their demographic variables.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample of the Study

The study involved 110 EFL teachers from a university in the southwestern region of Saudi Arabia, representing diverse nationalities, including Algeria, Jordan, India, Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and others. Their qualifications range from master's to doctoral degrees in various fields of applied linguistics, with teaching experience falling within different brackets: 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and over 10 years. Proficiency in the English language among participants varies from near-native to non-native. Participants were conveniently selected, and the questionnaire achieved a response rate of 66.36%. The demographic distribution of 73 participants includes information on gender, degree, specialization, and teaching experience. Additionally, 20 participants agreed to participate in an interview.

#### 3.3 Ethics Statement

The research received approval from the Ethics Committee of the Deanship of Scientific Research at Najran University (code: NU/RG/SEHRC/12/14), and written consent was obtained from the participants.

#### 3.4 Study Tools

Two instruments were used to gather information for the study and address the research questions: a semi-structured interview and a five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The questionnaire aimed to find out how well-versed English teachers were in SCPA practices from their perspective. The researchers created the questionnaire items and the semi-structured interview questions based on their experience. The questionnaire was divided into three primary sections: awareness of SCP practices (10 items), SCA practices (10 items), and demographic data (gender, experience, degree, and specialization). In addition, the semi-structured interview intended to discover how SCPA practices impact the language success rate of EFL students.

##### 3.4.1 Validity

The validity of the study tools was guaranteed through the assessment of face validity and internal consistency. Six experts in second language teaching evaluated these tools to determine their capability to gather data relevant to the study's questions and objectives. The experts, after the assessments, confirmed that the study tools aligned with the study's objectives. Furthermore, the experts identified certain areas necessitating modifications, including wordiness, language nuances, contextual relevance, and adjustments in items and domains:

From	To
<i>SCP practices</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student-autonomy</li> </ul>	self-learning

- motivation                      motivational tasks
- role playing                    role play activities
- reflection                        student reflection tasks

*SCA practices*

- summarizing and note taking                      summarizing, synthesizing, and note taking

*Semi structured interview questions*

From:

- What do the teachers' think of employment for SCPA practices in the EFL classroom?
- Do these practices affect students' learning?

To:

- How does your (teachers) awareness of SCPA practices affect EFL learners' language learning success rate?

Moreover, the research tool, specifically the survey, was distributed among 20 male and female instructors for the evaluation of internal consistency. Following this, Pearson's correlation coefficient was computed to scrutinize the connections among items, domains, and the overall scale. The results obtained from the pilot study analysis are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Pearson's Correlation Coefficient Results

Domain-item	correlation coefficient-dom ain	correlation coefficient- scale	Domain-item	correlation coefficient-dom ain	correlation coefficient- scale
SCP practices	1	.962**	SCA practices	1	.969**
1	.690**	.680**	1	.841**	.824**
2	.670**	.671**	2	.842**	.877**
3	.871**	.775**	3	.536*	.553*
4	.640**	.455*	4	.648**	.622**
5	.709**	.737**	5	.607**	.613**
6	.757**	.762**	6	.712**	.762**
7	.630**	.689**	7	.814**	.780**
8	.788**	.775**	8	.811**	.726**
9	.626**	.617**	9	.709**	.737**
10	.584**	.501*	10	.612**	.542*

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed), \* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The results presented in Table 1 indicate that Pearson's correlation coefficients for items related to the total score of the domain varied within the range of (0.536\* to 0.871\*\*). Moreover, the correlation coefficients between the items and the total score ranged from (0.455\* to 0.877\*\*). Additionally, the domains showed correlations with the total score ranging from (0.962\*\* to 0.969\*\*). These results affirm the validity of the survey items, domains, and the total. Importantly, the correlation values were statistically significant at the 0.01 or 0.05 level.

3.4.2 Reliability

The reliability coefficient, using Cronbach's alpha equation via the test-retest method, was computed based on the total score of the survey. The questionnaire was administered twice, with a three-week interval between the initial and subsequent applications. In the SCP practices domain, comprising ten items, the re-test reliability is 0.92, indicating a high level of stability, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.88, reflecting strong internal consistency. Similarly, in the SCA practices domain with ten items, the re-test reliability is 0.89, suggesting consistent results over time, and Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.87, indicating robust internal consistency. When considering the total score, encompassing all 20 items, the re-test reliability is 0.94, highlighting a high degree of stability, and the

Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.93, demonstrating strong internal consistency. These reliability coefficients collectively affirm the dependability and consistency of the study tool in assessing both SCP and SCA practices, reinforcing its reliability for comprehensive evaluation in the educational context.

### 3.5 Statistical Processing

SPSS version 23 was employed, utilizing various methods to analyze the results. The tool's internal consistency was assessed using the Pearson correlation coefficient, while reliability was ensured through Cronbach's Alpha and re-testing. Means, standard deviations, and rankings were computed to address the research questions. In addition, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine variations in teachers' responses based on gender, experience, degree, and specialization. Finally, the qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process involved thorough reviewing, reading, and categorizing the data into primary topics, leading to themes.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Teachers' Awareness of SCP Practices

The results in Table 2 demonstrate that the study sample's awareness of SCP practices in EFL classrooms was a very large degree ( $M=4.41$ ,  $SD=.575$ ). According to this finding, the study population has a very high level of awareness regarding SCP. All values at the item level fell between (4.55 and 4.18). Every item was rated very high, except for the final item, which was rated large.

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics for SCP Practices

No.	Rank	Item	Means	Standard deviations	Degree
1	1	I am aware of interactive classroom activities	4.55	.765	Very large
2	2	I am aware of extensive lecturing	4.53	.689	Very large
3	9	I am aware of collaborative & cooperative learning tasks	4.32	.896	Very large
4	7	I am aware of differentiated instructions	4.33	.800	Very large
5	6	I am aware of technology (E-Learning Apps) to continue discussion outside classroom	4.40	.571	Very large
6	5	I am aware of self-learning	4.41	.814	Very large
7	3	I am aware of motivational tasks	4.52	.648	Very large
8	4	I am aware of role play activities	4.49	.801	Very large
9	8	I am aware of student reflection tasks	4.33	.851	Very large
10	10	I am aware of community-based activities	4.18	1.018	Large
		Total degree	4.41	.575	Very large

### 4.2 Teachers' Awareness of SCA Practices

The results in Table 3 indicate that the study sample's awareness of SCA practices in EFL classrooms was a very large degree ( $M=4.38$ ,  $SD=.548$ ). This suggests the study sample has a high level of awareness regarding student-focused assessment practices. All values at the item level fell within the range of (4.58–4.05). Except for items 8 and 9, which were rated large, every item received a very high rating.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics for SCA Practices

No.	Rank	Item	Means	Standard deviations	Degree
1	4	I am aware of cues, questions, and group discussion	4.49	.648	Very large
2	6	I am aware of summarizing, synthesizing, and note taking	4.48	.766	Very large
3	5	I am aware of multiple drafts of written assignments	4.40	.640	Very large
4	1	I am aware of frequent feedback to students on their progress	4.58	.498	Very large
5	2	I am aware of multiple varieties of class tests/quizzes	4.56	.577	Very large
6	8	I am aware of shared and independent writing activities	4.32	.896	Very large
7	3	I am aware of student presentations/participations	4.53	.625	Very large
8	10	I am aware of portfolios	4.05	.926	Large
9	9	I am aware of journals	4.05	.880	Large
10	7	I am aware of self-assessment	4.37	.697	Very large
		Total degree	4.38	.548	Very large

#### 4.3 Teachers' Responses to SCPA practices by Their Demographic Variables

As indicated by the information presented in Table 4, there were no significant differences observed in the study sample's responses regarding teachers' awareness of SCPA practices in the EFL classroom, with respect to their demographic variables. This outcome implies that the participants' demographic variables did not exert a notable influence on their responses to questions related to SCPA practices.

**Table 4.** MANOVA Analysis Results for SCPA Practices by Variables

Source	Dependent Variable	Type I Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	SCP practices	.128	1	.128	.384	.538
	SCA practices	.100	1	.100	.330	.568
	Total	.113	1	.113	.374	.543
Specialization	SCP practices	.249	2	.124	.374	.690
	SCA practices	.852	2	.426	1.409	.252
	Total	.505	2	.252	.835	.439
Degree	SCP practices	.182	1	.182	.547	.462
	SCA practices	.021	1	.021	.068	.795
	Total	.020	1	.020	.066	.798
Experience	SCP practices	1.280	2	.640	1.924	.154
	SCA practices	.702	2	.351	1.162	.319
	Total	.953	2	.476	1.575	.215
Error	SCP practices	21.959	66	.333		
	SCA practices	19.946	66	.302		
	Total	19.967	66	.303		
Total	SCP practices	1440.600	73			
	SCA practices	1424.360	73			
	Total	1431.320	73			

#### 4.4 SCPA Practices and EFL Learners' Language Success Rate

The analysis of the participants' answers about how SCPA practices would affect learners' language success rate. The results of the semi-structured interview indicated that the respondents confirmed that these practices are connected to

students' language success. The interviewees' answers revolved around four themes: encouragement, engagement, responsibility, and positive impact. The interviewees explained that SCPA practices can make students more encouraged during their language learning by thinking for themselves and correctly using their learning skills. The following are excerpts supporting the theme of encouragement:

T2: "Because students do better when encourage to think for themselves as compared to having their thinking done for them"

T15: "students have better performance when they are encouraged to think instead of doing the thinking for them"

T19: "By creating encouraging environment for the students to practice their own English freely plus using their self-learning skills correctly"

In addition, the results showed that when students are the center for pedagogy and assessment practices, they are more interactive, involved, engaged, and socially intelligent, thus improving their language success. The following are some evidence:

T3: "Students get more involved in learning and assessment practices that enhances their learning success rate"

T4: "Students being the core of class is the method to encourage students to be interactive and engaged all the time" They can search for information valuable in the field of learning English to improve by applying self-study"

T12: "It affect their (IQ)" It develops their listening, reading n writing skills"

Furthermore, the participants added that SCPA practices could increase students' responsibility and accountability for learning. This in turn helps in improving his course of language success as seen in the following answers:

T3: "When the student has the feeling of being the center of the learning process, he will feel more responsible and try to achieve better learning outcomes"

T7: "Individual accountability" "Develops problem solving skills" "Improve students' participation"

Further, SCPA practices can positively affect students' language learning success if applied effectively.

T6: "Student-centered instruction leads to better language learning and better affect compared with teacher-centered instruction"

T8: "If we understand the importance of student-centered pedagogy and use it effectively in the classroom, we can surely improve the success rate of the students"

T13: "When we use it, students will learn well and achieve learning outcomes"

## 5. Discussion

The findings suggest that the study population possesses a very high level of awareness regarding SCPA practices centered around students. The reason for these findings may be attributed to the participant's extensive experience in teaching English, encompassing EFL contexts. More than 50% of teachers have degrees in applied linguistics, which indicates their knowledge of SCPA practices. In addition, the teachers have been in the profession for more than ten years, which may also be a reason for the current findings. The substantial experience demonstrates the successful application of the theory, knowledge, and understanding they acquired through study. The current study's results are consistent with Ghaicha and Mezouari (2018), who looked into how Moroccan EFL instructors felt about learner-centered pedagogy. They, as in the present research findings, concluded that teachers had favorable attitudes toward the learner-centered pedagogy practices implementation. The results are also consistent, partially though, with Hemmati and Aziz Malayeri (2022), who state although the participants had a thorough awareness of SCPA; they did not use it in the classroom since the Education Department had not yet started any activities to improve SCL implementation. However, the outcomes of this study contradict the findings of Du Plessis (2020), whose research indicated that student instructors perceived the implementation of learner-centered pedagogy as highly challenging and exhibited limited knowledge about it. In addition, the results contrast with Salema's (2017) study, which investigated assessment practices in Tanzanian secondary schools through diverse data collection and analysis methods. The results indicated that numerous teachers predominantly employed teacher-centered practices, pointing to significant awareness and understanding challenges among teachers and students concerning SCPA practices.

Moreover, demographic factors such as gender, experience, degree, and specialization did not play any significant role in influencing the responses of the study sample. This result may be because both male and female participants in the study hold degrees in English and related subjects. The contents of these degrees, especially applied linguistics,

place a greater emphasis on SCPA. Besides, the extensive experience of the participants fostered a tendency to implement SCPA practices. This incline is based on their profound understanding of student-centered domains, especially when utilizing identical curricula, pedagogical approaches, and conceivably a unified assessment strategy. Surprisingly, the researchers did not encounter any studies that either corroborate or challenge the outcomes of the current study. Lastly, the content analysis revealed that SCPA practices are related to language success in encouragement, engagement, responsibility, and positive impact. Students are encouraged during their language learning by thinking for themselves and using their learning skills. Placing students at the focal point of SCPA practices results in increased interaction, involvement, engagement, and social intelligence, ultimately enhancing their language proficiency. This approach also fosters students' ownership and responsibility for their learning and, in turn, helps in improving students learning in general and can positively affect students' language learning success in particular if applied effectively. The current findings can be due to the prevailing preference for SCPA approaches among all stakeholders in academia. In addition, the shift from a teacher-centered paradigm to a student-centered one creates a more favorable environment for teachers. In this context, teachers are to be aware of both domains and incorporate them into their instructional practices, with a focus on keeping learners at the center of the educational process.

The analysis of the qualitative data supports Weimer (2002), who indicated that a learning environment that speaks to the core of learning is produced by learner-centered pedagogy. It encourages students to interact with the content, start a conversation, and assess their progress on their own. In addition, the results align with Barr and Tagg (1995), Kolmos et al. (2008), and Slavich and Zimbardo (2012), who claim that in line with the latest development, university teaching and learning have changed from being lecture-based and teacher-centered to putting more of an emphasis on involving and increasing student learning. Additionally, the results of this study support Sabah and Du (2018), who opine that giving students a chance to participate in activities while interacting with the subject matter, the teacher, and other students is a critical component of a student-centered approach.

## 6. Conclusion

This study demonstrated how aware English teachers are of SCPA practices. The results imply that teachers place significant emphasis on the two domains' and incorporate them into their instructions. Most teachers share a very high level of knowledge and awareness of the idea that students should actively participate in the learning process to maintain a high level of student-centeredness. Furthermore, demographic variables, such as gender, experience, degree, and specialization were found to have no significant impact on the responses of the study sample. Moreover, the results indicated a consistent understanding among instructors regarding SCPA procedures, with instructors demonstrating a high level of commitment to implementing these practices in their lesson plans. The content analysis of interviews affirmed that these practices are closely tied to students' language success. The study's findings underscore the importance of enhancing instructors' awareness of SCPA practices as a crucial step in advocating for placing students at the center of all teaching and learning endeavors. Teachers, acting as facilitators, play a pivotal role in guiding and motivating learners in this paradigm shift from teacher-centered to student-centered instruction. To effectively implement this shift, instructors need training on innovative teaching and evaluation practices in the EFL context. While the findings can offer valuable insights to academic leaders, caution should be exercised in drawing broad conclusions, considering the study's exclusive focus on teachers. Issues related to raising awareness of SCPA practices among both teachers and students merit further attention. This study proposes numerous potential directions for future research in the EFL context and SCPA. These avenues encompass conducting longitudinal studies to assess the enduring impact of teacher awareness and implementation on students' language proficiency and academic success. In addition, it is essential to explore the efficacy of teacher training programs in augmenting awareness and implementation. Comparative studies can gauge effectiveness across varying proficiency levels, while cross-cultural studies can delve into diverse cultural contexts. Furthermore, investigating technology integration for facilitating student-centered learning is crucial.

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### Authors contributions

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