

Integrating Ushul Tarbiyah Principles in Arabic Language Teaching for Holistic Islamic Education

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the relevance and integration of Ushul Tarbiyah principles in Arabic language teaching within Islamic educational institutions in order to bridge the gap between linguistic competence and character formation. The research employs a qualitative descriptive-analytical design using in-depth interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis involving Arabic teachers, institutional leaders, and students selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that Arabic language instruction remains predominantly focused on linguistic and grammatical aspects, while core tarbiyah values such as adab, tazkiyah, moral reflection, and exemplary conduct are not systematically embedded in lesson planning or classroom practice. Teachers acknowledge the importance of tarbiyah principles but lack pedagogical models and institutional guidelines to implement them consistently. From the students' perspective, Arabic learning is perceived mainly as a technical subject rather than a meaningful medium for moral and spiritual development. The study implies that integrating Ushul Tarbiyah into Arabic language pedagogy can enhance students' motivation, ethical awareness, and holistic learning experiences by positioning teachers as murabbi rather than mere transmitters of linguistic knowledge. The originality of this research lies in its empirical mapping of the conceptual and practical disconnect between Ushul Tarbiyah theory and Arabic language teaching practices, offering a value-based pedagogical framework that aligns linguistic instruction with character education in contemporary Islamic institutions.

Keywords: Arabic language teaching; character education; Islamic education; tarbiyah values; Ushul Tarbiyah

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji relevansi dan integrasi prinsip-prinsip Ushul Tarbiyah dalam pengajaran bahasa Arab di lembaga pendidikan Islam guna menjembatani kesenjangan antara kompetensi linguistik dan pembentukan karakter. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain kualitatif deskriptif-analitis dengan metode wawancara mendalam, observasi kelas, dan analisis dokumen yang melibatkan guru bahasa Arab, pemimpin lembaga, dan siswa yang dipilih melalui sampling purposif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pengajaran bahasa Arab masih didominasi oleh aspek linguistik dan gramatikal, sementara nilai-nilai tarbiyah inti seperti adab, tazkiyah, refleksi moral, dan perilaku teladan tidak secara sistematis diintegrasikan dalam perencanaan pelajaran atau praktik kelas. Guru-guru mengakui pentingnya prinsip-prinsip tarbiyah, namun mereka kekurangan model pedagogis dan pedoman institusional untuk menerapkannya secara konsisten. Dari perspektif siswa, pembelajaran bahasa Arab umumnya dipandang sebagai mata pelajaran teknis daripada sebagai sarana yang bermakna untuk pengembangan moral dan spiritual. Studi ini menyarankan bahwa integrasi Ushul Tarbiyah ke dalam pedagogi bahasa Arab dapat meningkatkan motivasi siswa, kesadaran etis, dan pengalaman belajar holistik dengan menempatkan guru sebagai murabbi (pembimbing) daripada sekadar penyampai pengetahuan linguistik. Keaslian penelitian ini terletak pada pemetaan empirisnya terhadap ketidakcocokan konseptual dan praktis antara teori Ushul Tarbiyah dan praktik pengajaran bahasa Arab, menawarkan kerangka pedagogis berbasis nilai yang menyelaraskan instruksi linguistik dengan pendidikan karakter di lembaga-lembaga Islam kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Pengajaran bahasa Arab; pendidikan karakter; pendidikan Islam; nilai-nilai tarbiyah; Ushul Tarbiyah

A. INTRODUCTION

Islamic educational institutions play a strategic role in shaping students' religious competence and character by integrating Islamic values into their curricula, prioritizing moral development and holistic growth in alignment with the objectives of Islamic education (Mansir, 2021C). As the primary language of Islamic teachings, Arabic is positioned as a foundational subject that facilitates direct engagement with the Qur'an and Hadith (Naeem & Yousaf, 2023). In the modern era, improving the quality of Arabic language instruction requires the integration of technology and innovative pedagogical strategies, including communicative approaches that emphasize real-world usage and active interaction, shifting away from mechanical

memorization toward more engaging and meaningful learning experiences (Adam & Fitriani, 2023). These approaches not only enhance linguistic proficiency but also support students in applying Islamic values in their daily lives.

Challenges related to Arabic language learning outcomes across various Islamic educational institutions, including Madrasah Aliyah (MA), Madrasah Tsanawiyah (MTs), and Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), are multidimensional and rooted in several critical factors. Many students demonstrate low motivation to learn Arabic, which is exacerbated by traditional teaching methods that emphasize memorization over interactive or communicative approaches (Salam & Luksfinanto, 2024). There remains a strong reliance on outdated instructional techniques that fail to promote students' speaking skills, resulting in learning that is heavily focused on receptive skills such as reading and leading to weak oral communicative competence (Prasetya & Ihwan, 2025). Furthermore, the limited availability of qualified Arabic teachers and insufficient learning resources significantly hinder the instructional process, further complicating efforts to improve language acquisition (Ningsih & Hamdy, 2025). Variations in teacher competence also intensify classroom dynamics, creating inconsistencies in instructional implementation and classroom management, which ultimately affect the quality of students' learning experiences (Widayanti & Sofa, 2025). In addition, an imbalance between the traditional emphasis on grammatical and morphological aspects of Arabic and the development of practical communicative competence restricts students' ability to use the language effectively in real-life contexts (Kurniawan & Haryanto, 2024).

Ushul Tarbiyah serves as a philosophical foundation in the process of Islamic education, emphasizing a comprehensive approach that supports the holistic development of learners. This framework is grounded in core values such as *fitrah*, which views human beings as possessing innate dispositions; *tazkiyah*, which underscores the importance of spiritual purification; and *tarbiyah bil qudwah*, which emphasizes role modeling in education (Anwar et al., 2025). Collectively, these principles foster a balance between spiritual and intellectual growth while promoting character development through the integration of ethical behavior (*adab*) within the educational curriculum. By advocating a character-based teaching approach aligned with Ushul Tarbiyah principles, educators commit to nurturing

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students' personalities in a holistic manner, consistent with their spiritual essence and innate values, thereby producing individuals who are mature both academically and morally (Mehmood & Siddique, 2025). This alignment not only enhances educational quality but also instills a sense of responsibility in learners to practice the values internalized through their education, ultimately shaping character in accordance with Islamic teachings (Trisnawaty et al., 2025).

However, tarbiyah values have not yet been fully integrated into the pedagogical practices employed in Arabic language instruction, indicating a significant methodological gap. Learning curricula tend to prioritize cognitive aspects, such as grammar and vocabulary mastery, often neglecting essential components such as *adab* and the internalization of core tarbiyah values (Abdulsamad & Gallego, 2025). For instance, many educators continue to rely predominantly on traditional methods such as the audio-lingual and grammar-translation approaches, which emphasize memorization rather than experiential learning that could foster students' moral and ethical awareness (Abdalla, 2025). This cognitive-centered orientation has resulted in educational environments that provide limited attention to learners' holistic development, including the cultivation of values that promote courtesy and character formation.

Moreover, there is a lack of empirical studies that directly link tarbiyah principles with instructional strategies, learning design, and methods in Arabic language teaching. The absence of strong evidence-based research impedes the translation of theoretical frameworks into applicable pedagogical practices (Ateyh, 2024). As noted, the lack of comprehensive mapping of Ushul Tarbiyah implementation in Arabic language classrooms hinders efforts to assess the extent to which these values are genuinely integrated into instructional practices (Abdulsamad & Gallego, 2025). Without an empirical foundation, educators must navigate the complexities of language teaching without clear guidance on integrating value education into instruction, thereby perpetuating the gap between cognitive learning objectives and the moral demands of tarbiyah-based education.

Previous studies on Ushul Tarbiyah have generally focused on its role within Islamic education at a broader level, often overlooking its direct relevance to Arabic language instruction. This gap is particularly evident in the tendency of Arabic

language learning studies to concentrate on methods, media, or learning outcomes without examining how foundational concepts can enrich pedagogical strategies in Arabic teaching (Zuraidah et al., 2024). Existing literature reflects a simplification of educational discourse within Arabic pedagogy, resulting in insufficient integration of ethical and moral dimensions into instructional practices (Triani et al., 2023). This condition hampers the development of a comprehensive framework capable of aligning academic objectives with character building and moral education, which constitute the core of Tarbiyah.

Furthermore, there remains a shortage of studies that specifically assess the conceptual relevance and practical integration between Ushul Tarbiyah and Arabic language teaching within Islamic educational institutions. Research addressing the relationship between character education and Arabic language learning remains limited and often fails to elaborate on how tarbiyah values can function as a moral-pedagogical foundation for contemporary instructional design (Ramatni et al., 2025). The absence of focused research constrains the development of integrated pedagogical approaches and prevents educators from optimally utilizing tarbiyah moral values to enhance students' learning engagement and ethical development. Therefore, addressing this gap is essential to establishing more integrative educational practices grounded in Tarbiyah principles, thereby enriching language learning experiences while fostering students' character formation.

Arabic language instruction in Islamic educational institutions thus requires a model that is not solely oriented toward linguistic competence but also toward character formation in accordance with tarbiyah principles, allowing language proficiency to develop alongside value internalization and moral strengthening. Achieving this goal necessitates critical analysis capable of bridging Ushul Tarbiyah theory with classroom practice, while offering an analytical study that explicitly connects these two disciplines so that their relevance becomes evident both conceptually and practically. Such efforts are crucial to filling existing research gaps by providing a clear mapping of tarbiyah values and their potential application in Arabic language teaching, thereby establishing a strong theoretical foundation for the development of value-based instructional strategies. This integrative approach is not only relevant to improving the quality and direction of Islamic education but also

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holds the potential to generate new instructional models or principles adaptable across institutions, addressing the urgent need for a more comprehensive, value-oriented, and character-based paradigm in Arabic language education.

B. METHODS

This study employs a purely qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical design to explore in depth the relevance of *Ushul Tarbiyah Islamiyah* in Arabic language teaching within Islamic educational institutions. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with Arabic language teachers and institutional administrators, as well as students as supporting informants, complemented by direct classroom observations and document analysis, including lesson plans, curricula, and institutional policies. Informants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that data were obtained from participants who possess a thorough understanding of value-based pedagogical practices. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify patterns, relevance, and potential integration of tarbiyah values in instructional practices. Data credibility was ensured through source triangulation, methodological triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. All research procedures were conducted through systematic stages of preparation, data collection, thematic analysis, and report writing, resulting in a comprehensive empirical understanding of the relationship between tarbiyah theory and Arabic language teaching practices.

C. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Finding

The findings from interviews with Arabic language teachers from three institutions indicate that instruction remains predominantly dominated by a linguistic orientation, such as grammar instruction, pattern drills, and vocabulary memorization. The teachers acknowledged that tarbiyah values—such as learning ethics (*adab al-ta'allum*), character development, and the internalization of spiritual values—are indeed important; however, these values have not yet occupied a strong position within instructional planning.

A teacher from the first institution emphasized that “instruction is still driven by curriculum targets,” while a teacher from the second institution stated that “tarbiyah values often emerge incidentally rather than being intentionally planned.” The third teacher noted that time constraints and administrative demands make the integration of values difficult to realize within teaching strategies. Across all interviews, a consistent pattern emerged: although teachers recognize the urgency of tarbiyah, they lack models, guidelines, or instructional designs that would enable the systematic implementation of these values.

Interviews with institutional policymakers revealed findings that further reinforced the conditions observed at the teacher level. Leaders from all three institutions stated that Ushul Tarbiyah values are indeed embedded in the institutional vision; however, they have not yet been translated into practical regulations or binding curricular instruments. A policymaker from the first institution explained that efforts to integrate values remain “largely discursive,” while the second emphasized that teachers often operate without a clear moral-pedagogical framework. The third policymaker acknowledged that there has never been training specifically designed to connect tarbiyah theory with Arabic language teaching methods. All leaders recognized the urgent need to formulate a learning paradigm that goes beyond linguistic aspects alone and actively promotes students’ character formation. These findings reveal a structural gap between value-based institutional visions and technically oriented instructional practices.

Meanwhile, interviews with students from the three institutions revealed classroom realities from the learners’ perspectives. Nearly all students stated that Arabic language learning feels “like a language structure course,” providing little space for value meaning-making or character development. Students from the first institution reported that teachers frequently emphasize memorization but rarely connect it to moral meaning.

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Students from the second institution described instruction as drill-oriented and evaluative, resulting in a classroom atmosphere focused more on answer accuracy than on the cultivation of *adab*. Students from the third institution noted that tarbiyah values appear only when teachers address disciplinary issues, rather than being integrated into the learning process itself. These data indicate that students do not perceive consistent value integration, and many view moral values as rules imposed externally rather than as integral components of meaningful learning experiences.

Classroom observations further strengthened the interview findings. Field notes indicate that most teachers begin lessons with greetings and prayers; however, learning activities subsequently proceed in conventional patterns, including theoretical explanation, exercise completion, and correction. No activities were observed that aimed at value internalization, such as reflection, role modeling, or moral dialogue. Teachers tended to position themselves as transmitters of content rather than as character mentors (*murabbi*). Observations also showed that teacher-student interactions were largely formal and unidirectional, and that Arabic language use was primarily directed toward academic objectives rather than attitudinal development. The classroom environment demonstrated limited opportunities for discussion that might foster tarbiyah values such as responsibility, discipline, mutual respect, and spiritual awareness. This further confirms that Ushul Tarbiyah principles have not been implemented in a planned or sustainable manner within Arabic language instruction.

Overall, the interview and observation data demonstrate a structural and pedagogical disjunction between tarbiyah as a foundational educational principle and its manifestation within everyday classroom practices. Although tarbiyah is theoretically positioned as the moral-spiritual backbone of Islamic education, empirical evidence indicates that its application in Arabic language instruction remains fragmented and incidental rather than

systematic and intentional. Teachers tend to prioritize linguistic targets – such as vocabulary acquisition, grammatical accuracy, and reading comprehension—without embedding these objectives within a coherent value-oriented pedagogical design. As a result, tarbiyah values are often conveyed implicitly, relying on personal teacher attitudes rather than structured instructional strategies grounded in educational theory. At the institutional level, this gap is further reinforced by the absence of clear policy frameworks, curriculum guidelines, and professional development programs that explicitly integrate tarbiyah with language pedagogy. School leaders and curriculum developers appear to conceptualize character education as a parallel agenda rather than an integral component of subject-specific instruction. This separation weakens the transformative potential of Arabic language learning, reducing it to a technical exercise divorced from its ethical, spiritual, and civilizational dimensions.

From the learners' perspective, students experience Arabic lessons primarily as cognitively demanding but affectively neutral activities. They rarely perceive linguistic learning as a medium for internalizing values such as discipline, responsibility, humility, or intellectual sincerity. Consequently, Arabic language education risks reproducing instrumental learning orientations, where success is measured by test performance rather than by personal growth and moral awareness. These findings highlight an urgent need for a pedagogical model that reconceptualizes Arabic language learning through an integrative tarbiyah framework. Such a model should align learning objectives, instructional strategies, classroom interactions, and assessment practices with value-based educational goals. By embedding tarbiyah systematically within linguistic instruction, Arabic language education can function not only as a tool for communicative competence but also as a meaningful vehicle for character formation, thereby fulfilling its holistic educational mandate in contemporary Islamic schooling contexts.

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2. Discussion

The interview and observation findings reveal that Arabic language instruction in the three institutions is still predominantly dominated by a linguistic approach focused on memorizing grammatical rules, structured drills, and content completion. As a result, opportunities for the systematic internalization of tarbiyah values have not yet been firmly established in classroom practice. Although each institution claims to uphold an educational vision emphasizing character formation and value integration, the reality of teaching practices indicates a clear gap between institutional mandates and teachers' implementation, which tends to maintain traditional instructional patterns without explicit linkage to moral-pedagogical objectives. Students' perceptions further reinforce this gap, as they largely view Arabic as a technical subject associated with vocabulary memorization and sentence structures rather than as a medium for cultivating *adab*, discipline, or value awareness as envisioned by tarbiyah principles. Overall, these findings underscore that the integration of tarbiyah values remains declarative at the level of institutional vision and has yet to assume a consistent operational form in teaching and learning activities.

The relationship between the research findings and Ushul Tarbiyah Islamiyah theory highlights the fundamental role of tarbiyah values – such as *adab*, *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification), role modeling, and moral internalization – in the educational process, particularly in Arabic language instruction (Ramatni et al., 2025). Core tarbiyah principles advocate an integrative approach in which these values are reflected in pedagogical practices. Research indicates that teachers play a crucial role in instilling Islamic character values, which significantly contribute to positive behavioral changes among students (Irfan & Sain, 2024). Furthermore, character education in Arabic language learning emphasizes the importance of developing not

only linguistic competence but also students' ethical awareness and social responsibility (Sukarno & Riyadini, 2024). This dual focus aligns with the tarbiyah framework, which seeks holistic learner development.

Nevertheless, a considerable gap persists between the ideal practices promoted by tarbiyah pedagogy and the instructional strategies implemented by teachers in Arabic language classrooms. Observational findings indicate that although teachers articulate learning objectives – such as those identified in studies conducted in Madrasah Tsanawiyah – the integration of Islamic values into daily instructional practices remains inconsistent. Curricula that prioritize linguistic competence without an explicit ethical framework further contribute to learning processes that do not fully facilitate the moral dimension inherently embedded in Arabic language education (Sukarno & Riyadini, 2024). Thus, while tarbiyah theory emphasizes comprehensive education encompassing both academic and moral development, current instructional practices remain fragmented and require realignment with the holistic objectives of Islamic education.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research highlighting the integration of tarbiyah values within educational contexts, particularly in Arabic language learning. Alwi et al. identified that the internalization of character education values in Arabic instruction contributes significantly to character formation in various Islamic boarding schools, reinforcing the importance of moral education that develops alongside language mastery in alignment with Ushul Tarbiyah Islamiyah values (Alwi et al., 2024). Previous studies have also affirmed that embedding Islamic ethical principles in language learning fosters not only academic competence but also students' moral awareness (Mangadang et al., 2025). This study extends these findings by demonstrating existing obstacles to the implementation of tarbiyah principles, including teachers' difficulties in integrating values due

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to curricular constraints and limited institutional support (Andryani & Huriyah, 2025).

The gap between the theoretical expectations of tarbiyah pedagogy and classroom realities becomes increasingly evident. Several studies, such as those by Tahir and Maarof, indicate that rigid adherence to standardized educational frameworks in certain international Islamic schools restricts the active integration of Arabic language learning, despite its critical role in strengthening students' connection to their religious and cultural identities (Tahir & Maarof, 2021). This study also found that teachers often lack adequate training in value integration, which, according to Triviño-Amigo et al., negatively affects curriculum implementation quality and limits teachers' capacity to adopt more integrative instructional strategies (Triviño-Amigo et al., 2022). Overall, the findings map three categories of barriers that reinforce this gap: structural barriers reflected in curricula that do not prioritize moral education; cultural barriers arising from societal expectations that insufficiently emphasize ethical integration; and administrative barriers manifested in limited teacher training and instructional resources (Mangadang et al., 2025).

Arabic language learning processes are significantly influenced by the presence or absence of tarbiyah values encompassing moral and ethical teachings. Students who do not internalize these foundational values tend to experience declines in learning motivation and discipline (Ariati et al., 2024). Several studies indicate that when tarbiyah values are neglected, students often perceive Arabic as merely an academic burden rather than an essential component of their cultural and religious identity (Auliyalloh et al., 2024). This perception reduces students' emotional and intellectual engagement, as learning materials are not connected to their lived values (Ismail et al., 2023). In fact, successful language learning depends not only on mastery of grammar

and vocabulary but also on moral and spiritual motivation that imbues the learning process with meaning (Sutisna & Atha, 2023). Therefore, integrating value education is crucial for enabling students to connect linguistic learning with their personal and social identities.

Integrating tarbiyah values into Arabic language instruction not only strengthens students' character but also enhances the overall quality of learning experiences. These values foster essential traits such as perseverance, respect, and responsibility – qualities necessary for success in both learning and daily life. Students who perceive their learning as aligned with their deeply held values tend to demonstrate higher motivation, which ultimately improves academic achievement and engagement with the target language (Sutisna & Atha, 2023). Conversely, neglecting these values risks weakening students' moral foundations and creating a generational disconnection from their language and traditions, potentially threatening the continuity of cultural knowledge and ethical frameworks within their communities (Nursamsy, 2025). Thus, tarbiyah integration represents an urgent necessity for cultivating learners who are both linguistically competent and morally grounded.

The proposed tarbiyah-based Arabic language learning model emphasizes the integration of *adab* (ethics) at every stage of instruction by foregrounding core concepts such as moral dialogue and value reflection. By positioning teachers as educators who nurture not only linguistic skills but also students' character and spirituality, this model offers an approach that goes beyond technical proficiency and provides space for learners' moral and emotional development. Through moral dialogue, students are encouraged to engage reflectively with their learning experiences and the values embedded in Arabic language study, thereby fostering deeper commitment to both learning processes and personal growth (Alwi et al., 2024).

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This model is particularly relevant for madrasahs, Islamic boarding schools, and other Islamic educational institutions that emphasize a balance between academic achievement and character development. By embedding tarbiyah values into the curriculum, educators can create more supportive and meaningful learning environments aligned with students' cultural and religious contexts (Gao et al., 2024). The broader applicability of this model is substantial, as it has the potential to enhance not only language proficiency but also students' moral foundations and social contributions. This integrated approach can lead to improved educational outcomes and support students in navigating their identities amid modern challenges without losing their cultural roots and values (Hamidah et al., 2023). Accordingly, this innovative framework provides a vital foundation for shaping a generation that is not only proficient in Arabic but also possesses mature character and readiness to contribute positively to society.

This study has several limitations that warrant consideration, particularly regarding the limited research scope confined to three institutions, which necessitates cautious generalization of the findings. The relatively small number of informants and uneven institutional characteristics may also affect the breadth of perspectives obtained. Additionally, non-longitudinal and occasional classroom observations limit the depth of captured instructional dynamics, while qualitative analysis reliant on researcher interpretation inevitably carries the risk of bias, including subjectivity in interpreting participants' responses and potential confirmation bias when aligning findings with theoretical frameworks. Nevertheless, this study opens avenues for future research to expand research settings, increase participant numbers, implement longitudinal observations, or employ mixed-methods approaches, thereby enabling a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of tarbiyah value integration in Arabic language education.

E. CONCLUSION

This study affirms that Arabic language instruction in the institutions examined continues to be dominated by a linguistic approach focused on structural aspects of the language, while tarbiyah values such as *adab*, *tazkiyah*, role modeling, and moral internalization have not yet been systematically implemented in everyday instructional practices. The interview and observation findings reveal a clear gap between institutional visions that emphasize moral formation and teachers' pedagogical practices, which remain largely confined to the delivery of grammatical content without value reinforcement. As a result, students experience learning processes that lack meaningful engagement due to the absence of value integration, negatively affecting their motivation, discipline, and perceptions of Arabic as a subject detached from their moral and spiritual identities. This study both reinforces and extends previous findings regarding the urgent need for value internalization in Arabic language learning, while proposing a tarbiyah-based instructional model that positions teachers as *murabbi* through the use of moral dialogue, value reflection, and the reinforcement of *adab* at every stage of instruction. Although this research has limitations related to research scope, number of informants, and depth of observation, its findings open substantial opportunities for future studies and offer new directions for curriculum development and Arabic language teaching practices in Islamic educational institutions to become more holistic, relevant, and aligned with the fundamental objectives of tarbiyah.

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