

Detecting Major Problems in Learning English Through Blog-based Class

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ABSTRACT

Students' blog in PBIG Unilak have been used to promote English skills during these two years. This mixed method study aimed to identify and describes the major problems faced by the students during the implementation of blogging based class. This study based its data from 168 students who attended 5 different classes based-blog. Employing a total sampling technique, the students were invited to fill up online questionnaire and interview. However, only 161 feedbacks can be processed. The analysis in this study reveals there are three major problems in blog-based class, which significantly contributed to an unproductive learning process atmosphere at PBIG Unilak namely: Lack of confidence in posting article and comments in the blog; Lack of IT skills and Cyberbullying.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Blog in recent years has been widely used as an effective tool to reach the global result of teaching in the education field. In the past few years, hundreds of papers published and discuss the benefit of the blog in many educational settings. This phenomenon rising significantly showing that blog considered effective as a media, that can be extended into many approaches and strategies to improve students skills as well as to raise the motivation in their learning process [2]. The implementation of the blog has changed education point of view to be more comprehensive and effective. It can also transforms into varied in contributing to ease learning process including in English language teaching (ELT) context. The development of education alongside IT support has given a significant contribution to the development and extended the conventional learning media. It turns out to be more innovative, varied and creative as this is expected happened in English education department or Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris or PBIG under FKIP Unilak Pekanbaru (henceforth; PBIG), Indonesia that had used the blog in some of their classes since two years ago. According to Hamuddin (2016), the blog-based class at PBIG has a positive perception among the bloggers and it was used in many ways to increase students' knowledge as well as to increase the critical thinking of the students. In view of the fact, PBIG through this study tries to analyze and evaluate in order to see the the implications of blog in teaching English that they initiated since two years ago.

In the past of two years, the students who found actively writing on the blog (blogger) seems smoothly rising at PBIG. Based on the pre-observation in this study, a total of 168 students were found has a blog and many of them were active bloggers. The policy of having a students' blog in some courses initiating its trends. The blog was used as learning media as well as a strategy in some courses e.g. Reading, Intro to Linguistic, Semantic, Discourse Analysis and Prose [5]. Moreover Blog in the blog-based class was used to post an assignment such as article review, presentation slide, and discussion forum. Learning process in some

of these courses somehow showing that blog is not only for writing and reading exercise in ELT context but also becoming tools for students to up-to-date with the recent study regarding their assignment and stay connected with peers and their lecturer. Hamuddin (2016) also mentioned that due to the blog rising, student's blogging club was founded by the faculty and it becomes one of the favorite clubs in co-curricular activities so far.

However, it cannot be denied that every process of learning must have an obstacle, challenges or problems, including the courses which uses blogs as a medium of instruction or strategy. The problem of student productivity and discipline in doing the tasks may be some of the problems faced in the blog-based learning process, as found by Hungerford (2012) where students sometimes post tasks that are "just it" to avoid punishment from their lecturers. Aydan (2014) and Fageeh (2011) also found that in their research, "in addition to the problems of productivity and discipline, the problems faced by students are the problems of language use and the lack of confidence to post on the blog". Some of the previous studies above had proven that blogs as a learning journals, media or strategy can be very useful in helping English teachers as well as students. Yet, it still has an obstacle or problems during the applications that will ruin the goals of the teaching process, therefore, to maximize the goals, a study is needed to identify the problem in the early stage to manage the problems.

The similar opinion also mentioned by Hungerford (2012), Aydan (2014) and Fageeh (2011), in their papers, the problematic use of blogs for teaching English should be identified as early as possible to maximize the result. Therefore, this research tries to identify the problems faced by students of PBIG in their blog-based class. The main contribution to this study lies in the findings of in-depth information on their major problems regarding the use of blogs in English language teaching (ELT) situation.

The problem-solving process by identifying the problems can be described as a journey from meeting a problem for the first time to finding a solution, analyzing it, communicating it and evaluating the path. There are many models of the problem-solving process but they all have a quiet similar structure. Therefore, this study tries to find out the problems from the students' own perception. In the line of the path, this study shares a thought and sees that problems as something beyond what prevent the students from reaching their goals in learning English through the blog. Furthermore, the problems encounter the learning process based on the students in blog-based class in PBIG FKIP Unilak in broadening ELT context through blogging activity.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This mixed method study tried to identify the students' problems in their blog-based class at PBIG. The online questionnaire, interview as well as blog entries as the main instruments in data collection were analyzed since October 25 - February 25, 2017 (4 months) focusing on the 2 and 4th students. This study set 168 students however some of them drop this course in the middle of the semester or not filling the questionnaire completely. In the end, his study lists 161 incoming answers through an online questionnaire that fit with the standards in this study. These 161 respondents were considered representing the population in this study. Figure 1 describes them comprehensively.

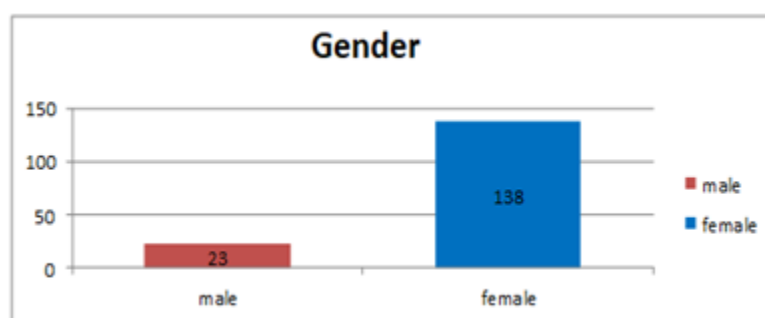


Figure 1. Respondent based on gender

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative data in this present study found that 74.3 % of the respondents had experiencing varied problems in their blog-based class. It means that the majority of the students quiet familiar with problems in their blog-based class as seen the Figure 2.

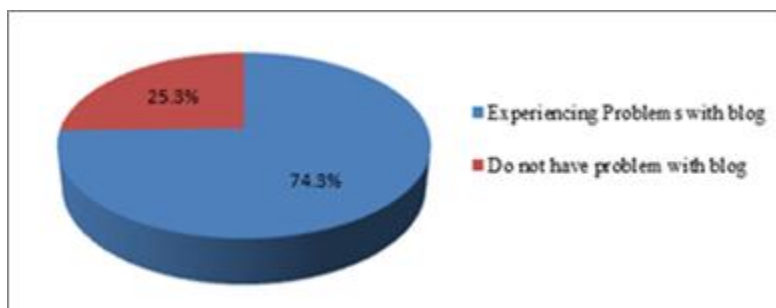


Figure 3. Experiencing problems in blog-based class

The analysis of the data from the respondents exposes and figured out 3 major problems faced by students in their blog-based class, namely: Lack of confidence in posting article and comments in the blog; Lack of IT skills and Cyberbullying among them. These 3 major problems seem the reasons that prevent the students gaining the objectives and goals of the learning process as it mentions in both quantitative and qualitative data in this study.

3.1. Lack of Confidence

The quantitative data in this study, notice that lack of self-confidence (henceforth: To sum up, it can be well said as 'lack of confidence') is one of the major problems in learning English through blog especially in posting or commenting on the blog. Lack of confidence often occurs in the process of learning a foreign language as it found in PBIG students. The lack of confidence somehow influence the productivity of the students in posting or commenting on the blog. Figure 4 shows experiencing lack of confidence.

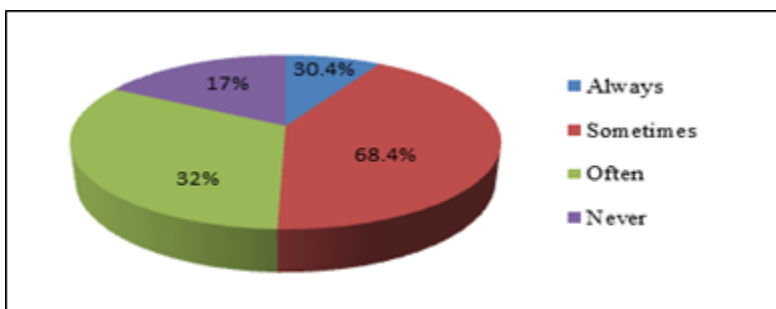


Figure 4. Experiencing lack of confidence

The quantitative data somehow showing that lack of confidence is one major issue in problems faced by the students and somehow transforming onto their biggest problem in learning English during the application of blogs at PBIG. The quantitative data exposed above seems quite similar with the qualitative data taken from the student's interview. Some of the excerpts from the interview presented below:

"Masih kurang percaya diri [...], karna kan takut salah di baca orang banyak, itukan public" (I feel lack of confidence [...] because I am afraid it will be read by many people. It is in the public, right?)
(SS.5 - 00:06:12)

"[...] soal percaya diri iya pasti kurangnya rasa percaya dirinya karna belum paham betul apa itu Blog." ([...] about confidence, I am so sure that my confidence is not so good because I still not understand yet, how to use blog)

(SS.10 - 00:01:12)

The data in this study also realize that it seems lacks of confidence problem is closely related to grammar and vocabulary problems. This is clearly illustrated in the question on the questionnaire. *"I feel less confident with my writing in blogs because the grammar is not good"*. It was 68% of the total respondents in this study agreed with it. Then, to the question *"I feel less confident with my writing on the blog because my vocabulary is still limited"* it was found 71% answered agreed, It means that they experiencing problems because of grammar and vocabulary limitations. These two things also were quite exposed in the qualitative data based on the interview transcription analysis.

"[...] selama ini Grammar yang menjadi permasalahan saya {mmhhh} masih kurang dan lagi masih belajar" ([...] so far, my problems is grammar {humming} still limited and I still learn it)

(SS.1- 00:01:12)

"Karna kan bisa malu [...] Grammar mungkin masih belum mengerti kali" (it can be so ashamed [...]) maybe, because I am not so good with grammar)

(SS.5- 00:08:12)

"Sebenarnya sih kurang percaya diri [...] Kalau dari Grammar sih masih kurang banget [...]" (Frankly speaking, my problems is lack of confidence [...] I realize that my grammar is so limited)

(SS.6- 00:07:50)

3.2. Lack of IT Skills

The second main issues that are transforming into became one of the major problems in learning English through blog-based class is lack of IT skill. This is exposed from the quantitative data as well as the qualitative data during the analysis in this study.

Figure 5 shows clearly describes that more than half (61.9%) of the students were found had experienced problems frequently with the blog technology implementation in their learning process. Nevertheless, many of them also (28.6%) sometimes still experiencing problems. Therefore lack of IT Skills is listed as one of the problems that affect the effectiveness of the use of blogs as a medium of learning English at PBIG. The data reveals lack of IT skills appears in various situations and become one of the problems faced by students. The quantitative data also exposed lack of IT skills as one of the major concern with the question. *"I am still confused about uploading something in my blog"*. Half (50%) of students were found agreed with the questions, means that they are experiencing problems with the technology in blog implementation. As well as on the questions. *"I am confused in editing the look, and my writing on the blog"* There are 44% students answered agreed with that.

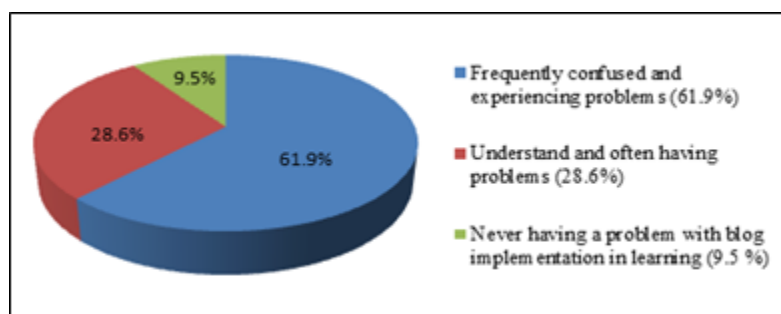


Figure 5. Experiencing lack of IT Skills

Therefore, lack of IT skills is one barrier that affects the effectiveness of the use of blogs as a medium of instruction in learning English. The clearest interpretation can be seen from the question statement *"The limitation of my knowledge about IT makes the use of blog become In learning English."*

Figure 6 shows reveals that IT skills and knowledge is strongly connected with the effectiveness of the learning process. The data above showing us that more than half of the students seem to experience lack of IT skills that become a barrier to gain the goals of the learning process here. Similarly, the qualitative data are also showing the same finding, as can be seen in the excerpts from the interview transcription below.

"Saya tidak terlalu banyak tahu, tapi gimana ya, saya cuma tahu tentang isinya (content) kalau yang fitur-fiturnya tidak terlalu banyak sih" (I don't know much, but how to say it, I just only know how to post and about the widgets, I don't know much)

(SS.2- 00:02:00)

“kalau untuk mengedit Blog jadi bagus sekali gitu itu agak ribet [...] saya belum mengerti sejauh ini” (To do the blog editing its quite complicated, I don’t know too much yet)

(SS.4- 0:04:00)

“[...] tentang design, karena saya juga kurang tidak terlau pandai design di Blog.”(about the design. I am not too good about it)

(SS.8- 00:03:02)

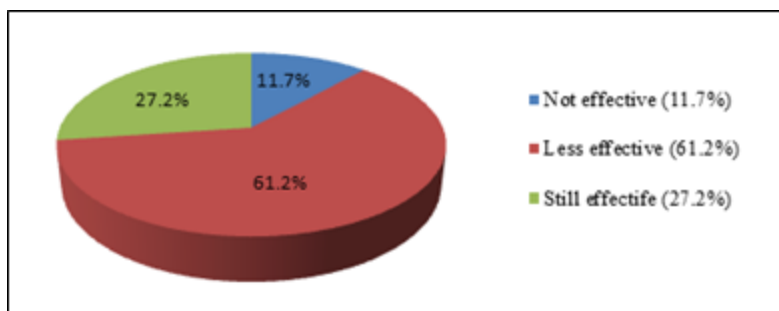


Figure 6. Lack of IT skills influences the effectiveness

3.3. Cyberbullying

The activity of bullying in cyberspace among students is one of the major issues found in this study, this phenomenon commonly referred as cyberbullying. To make it clear, this study sees cyberbullying as a form of bullying by a person or a group of students through the internet or electronic devices by sending messages containing an intimidating, threatening nature or spreading insulting, embarrassing content to make other students feel uncomfortable in the virtual world, all these actions then categorized as cyberbullying. The data in this study reveals that many comments indicated as cyberbullying on the students’ blogs, as shown in Figure 7.

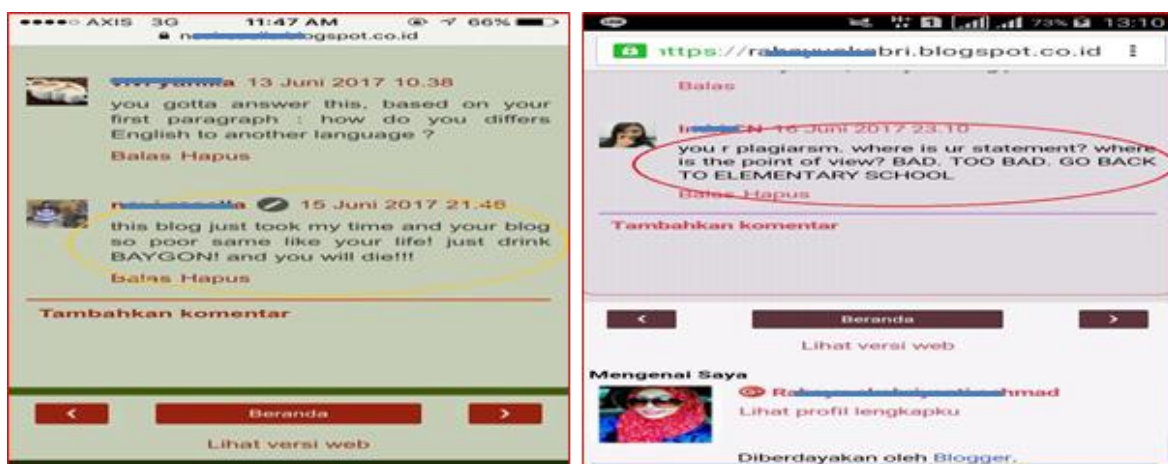


Figure 7. Example of cyberbullying (BSC.11/ SS-21; BSC.41/ SS-11)

The data reveals that bullying on the blog was recorded quite high in terms of quantities. Somehow, this study also found an interesting fact that the cyberbullying was rising significantly when some students had a bad performance after the class presentation. Some of the examples Figure 8 showing the fact:

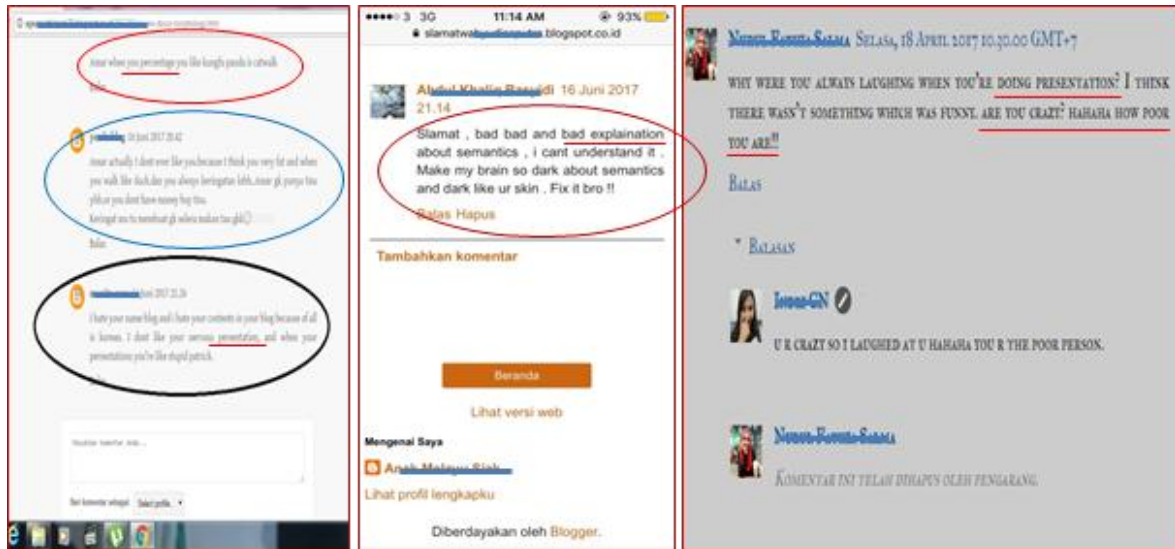


Figure 8. Example of cyberbullying

Cyberbullying becomes one of the greatest problems that have a real negative impact in the learning process for both the perpetrator and the victim of cyberbullying as many previous studies had discussed it, such as Aune, N.M. (2009), Utami, Y. C. (2014), Corcoran, L., Guckin, C. M., & Prentice, G. (2015), Hinduja S, Patchin JW. (2013), Kowalski, R.M., Limber, S.P., & Agatston, P.W. (2008), Slonje, R., (2011) and Teasley, M. (2013). This study found the fact that 35% of the respondents had been victims of cyberbullying during the implementation of the blog in learning at PBIG Unilak, nevertheless, 5% students answered sometimes being bullied and 2% of them were always victims of perpetrators (refers to Figure 9). So it seems that there are many of them have experienced a cyberbullying.

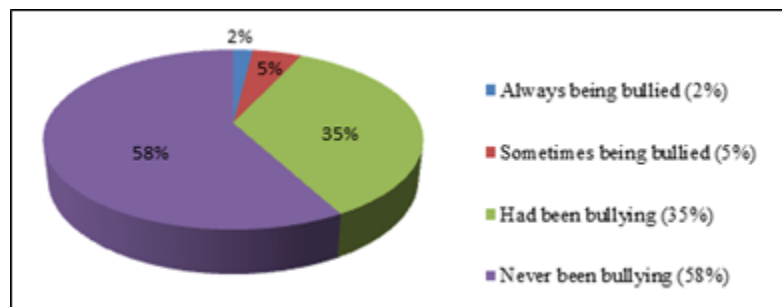


Figure 9. Frequencies of being a cyberbullying victim

The quantitative data also exposed that there are some students who like to perform cyberbullying activities. These students somehow transform into perpetrators during the blog-based class activities is shown in Figure 10.

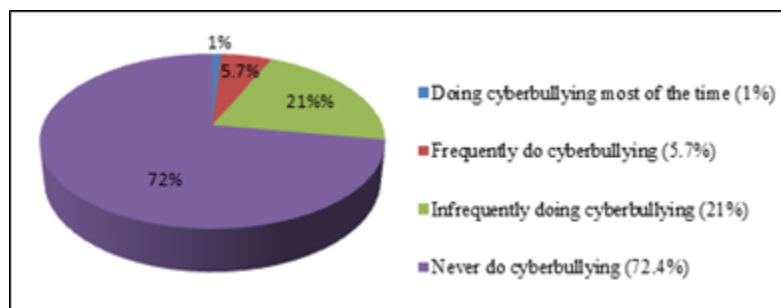


Figure 10. Frequencies of being a perpetrator of cyberbullying

The quantitative data from Figure 10 illustrates that there are some students tend to perform activities which can be indicated as cyberbullying or act like perpetrators. The statistic number that needs to be aware was the students that quite familiar with cyberbullying activities consists of those who are doing cyberbullying most of the time (2%) and those who frequently do cyberbully (5.7%). There is another 21% who also tends to do a cyberbullying activities even it was occasionally.

Furthermore, cyberbullying was found as one of the problems that significantly affects the productivity of respondents in the blog-based class at PBIG FKIP Unilak. This is revealed clearly in the analysis of the questions (12) "I think, feedback that intended to bully, makes me afraid to post another assignment/posts on the blog".

The data in the Figure 11 counted there are 62% of the respondents support the statement. It consists of 19% students answered strongly agreed that cyberbullying's impact on them is something destructive and 43% students answer is agreed that contributing to their less-productivity.

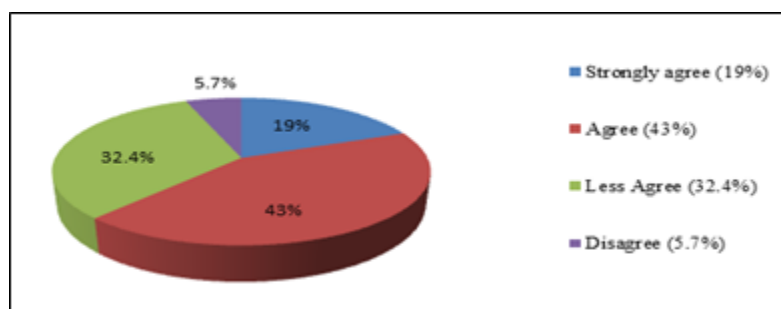


Figure 11. Cyberbullying vs. productivity

The data above tries to illustrate that there is a significant number of respondents who assume cyberbullying is one reason for their less productivity. It means that more than half of the students felt that cyberbullying is a destructive thing which influences their productivity. This finding also quiet similar with the analysis of the qualitative data from the interview. Some excerpts are presented below:

Iya dikomentari yang enggak-enggak [...] Karna kan bisa malu atau apa" (sure, sometimes I got ridiculous comments [...] It can makes me feel humiliate)

(SS.5- 00:07:25)

"Dilecehkan pernah! sering malah, jadi takut mau posting-posting lagi di blog" (I had been bullied! I got bullied for many times, it makes me afraid to make another post in the blog again)

(SS.8- 00:11:35)

The data above quite clear to illustrate that cyberbullying is a barrier to gain the goals of the learning process. Therefore it listed as one of the major problems in this study.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Many previous studies had discussed and proposed the use of blogs in English language teaching (ELT) context since it has many advantages. However, to maximize a process and the result it is necessary to know the problems faced by the students. Therefore, using a descriptive-qualitative method, based on Miles and Huberman (1994) this study explored it and realized that are some problems and obstacle that

transforming onto a barrier which prevents the students as well as the lectures from gaining the objectives and goals in the learning process.

There are three common problems found in this study namely: Lack of confidence, Lack of IT skills and Cyberbullying that seem being contributed negatively. This study also notices that lack of confidence is one of the major problems in learning English through blog especially in posting or commenting on the blog. The next two common problems that were transforming into became major problems in learning English through blog-based class is known as lack of IT skills and the activity of bullying in cyberspace or cyberbullying. This study found that these three major problems are a barrier to gain the goals of the learning process. Therefore it listed as one of the major problems in this study, and therefore, it needs a preventive action from the faculty.

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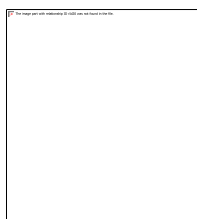
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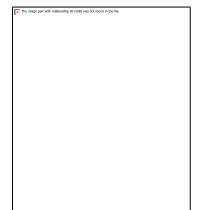
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