

## Desarrollando estrategias didácticas interculturales, interdisciplinarias e internacionales para promover la sustentabilidad y el desarrollo humano<sup>1</sup>

Developing intercultural, interdisciplinary, and international teaching strategies to promote sustainability and human development

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### Summary

As part of the Summer Research Program 2025 at the University of Guanajuato, three French students from the University of Caen Normandy participated in a project on inclusive education. Their project, titled "Developing intercultural, interdisciplinary, and international teaching strategies to promote sustainability and human development," aligns with UNESCO's fourth sustainable development goal. Despite their varied academic backgrounds, they shared a common foundation in social sciences, which aided their understanding of inclusive education.

The program included enriching sessions on inclusive education, led by experienced professors, and hands-on activities emphasizing environmental awareness. During the Curso de Verano week, the students taught children aged 8 and 9 at Resplandor International, focusing on sustainable development and French culture through interactive and inclusive methods.

This experience reinforced the students' belief in the importance of inclusive education, which values each child's unique contributions and adapts to their needs, creating a more equitable and effective learning environment.

**Key words:** Inclusive education, 3-inter, Resplandor International

### Introduction

As part of the Summer Research Program 2025 proposed by the University of Guanajuato, we are three French students from the University of Caen Normandy, France, participating in the investigation project supervised by Professor Abel Rubén Hernández Ulloa. We come from different fields of study: a multidisciplinary degree combining foreign languages, economics, law, statistics, communication, and informatics (Bachelor's Degree in Applied Foreign Languages), Digital Humanities—a program at the intersection of humanities and digital sciences, encompassing literature, linguistics, and history—and Economic and Social Sciences. These diverse academic backgrounds bring a wealth of cultural knowledge, viewpoints, and experiences to enrich our study project, but they also present challenges to overcome.

Our investigation project, titled "Developing intercultural, interdisciplinary, and international teaching strategies to promote sustainability and human development," focuses on the fourth goal of sustainable development as outlined by UNESCO: inclusive education. According to UNESCO, "Inclusive education is an approach that

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aims to transform education systems to meet the needs of all learners, recognizing and valuing diversity. It focuses on removing barriers to learning and participation, ensuring that every learner has an equal opportunity to succeed."

The concepts of international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural approaches, commonly referred to as the "3-inter," are three key principles often integrated to foster comprehensive and inclusive methods in various fields such as education, research, and professional practices. This approach aims to create a more integrated, holistic, and inclusive framework that leverages global perspectives, diverse disciplinary insights, and cultural understanding to address complex issues and promote sustainable development.

As an investigation project, our article will first focus on the personal advantages we bring due to our previous experiences as French students and the methods we have learned and followed, which correspond to the training based on inclusive education we have received. Then, it will delve into the applied research plan, which corresponds to the main project: a week at the International Resplendor School. This volunteer-driven, donation-based non-profit organization was founded in 2009 in the rural community of Cajones, Guanajuato, by Todd Fletcher. More specifically, this project involved teaching pupils in an inclusive manner by proposing activities on various themes we deemed relevant and interesting, tailored to the ages of the students. It will be pertinent to conclude with an assessment of our experience as international students with different individual backgrounds, sensitivities, and perspectives.



Picture 1. Resplendor's volunteers team, July 2nd, 2025.

## **Training**

Thanks to the Summer Research Program 2025, we had the opportunity to benefit from very enriching teaching aimed at raising our awareness of inclusive education.

## **Personal Experience**

In France, we did not really have specific courses on inclusive education, but our curiosity and training allowed us to gain knowledge on this subject. Before attending the program, inclusive education already evoked an image of education based on a model founded on the principle of equity and equality, aiming to integrate students within the same school system without any discrimination, regardless of their needs. Indeed, although our three fields of study are largely different, they all have one common point: social sciences. This background provides fundamental analytical tools to understand the complex issues of inclusive education, even if we did not specifically work on this topic.

In the case of the sociology of inequalities, the degree in Sciences and Society offers analytical tools to better understand the mechanisms of exclusion. For example, it allows us to understand that academic difficulties

are not solely related to the student but are more related to the structure surrounding the student, as highlighted by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu.

As part of the Digital Humanities training, work was carried out to make learning Latin fun, interactive, and inclusive. This first experience was an introduction to inclusive learning.

The LEA degree, due to its multidisciplinary nature, offers an international outlook, intercultural knowledge, and language prerequisites that proved to be assets for this project.

From a professional standpoint, some of us have also been able to experience education through childcare. This experience allowed us to gain confidence, develop our communication with children, and better understand their needs.

### Methodology

Our project took place over three consecutive weeks. We can associate it with methodology because during the first two weeks dedicated to our training as teachers, various speakers, particularly professors with diverse backgrounds and origins, shared their knowledge and professional and personal experiences on inclusive education. This training provided us with the key tools for the next steps. During our training sessions, we were accompanied by Todd Fletcher, an associate professor in the Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation, and School Psychology in the College of Education at the University of Arizona, founder of International Resplendor School, and now retired, and Taucia Gonzalez, an assistant professor of special education at the University of Arizona.

During our first session, we exchanged ideas on the topic of inclusive education to share our knowledge and viewpoints in the form of a debate. The article titled "Taking a Spatial Turn in Inclusive Education: Seeking Justice at the Intersections of Multiple Markers of Difference" by Federico R. Waitoller and Subini Ancy Annamma, published in 2013, allowed us to enrich our knowledge of the concept of inclusive education. It highlights, among other things, three dimensions of justice based on redistribution to combat inequalities in the distribution of resources, recognition by valuing cultural and identity differences, and the importance given to the representation of marginalized groups to better meet their needs.

During another session, it was also relevant to discuss Mexico, the various migration crises, and their impact on education. A group of four Americans from James Madison University in Virginia wanted to present the problems faced by Mexican families residing in the United States. Indeed, 4.4 million children born in the United States live with at least one undocumented parent. This situation can cause psychological disorders in children due to the forced separation from a parent in an irregular situation. We realized that the attachment bond between the child and the parent is precious for ensuring the child's proper development. The deportation of a parent can also plunge the family into financial insecurity caused by the loss of income within the household. The deportation of undocumented parents also has notable consequences on education. These consequences can take several forms, such as absenteeism, school dropout, isolation, or emotional distress. Solutions can sometimes be implemented, such as post-traumatic treatments adapted to the child or more inclusive public policies informed of everyone's needs. This exchange allowed us to take a step back from our more Western vision of inclusive education. We were able to discuss the importance of making the school a place of support within a safe and reassuring environment while maintaining the instruction of all. Our knowledge was enriched thanks to the presentation by Mrs. Céline Herrera, Professor at Leeward Community College, Hawaii. This presentation aimed to question the theories of generalist psychology and pedagogies and thus propose a more inclusive approach through cultural psychology by better integrating indigenous populations. These so-called "generalist" studies are so because they are mainly based on productions from the Western world. Indeed, the productions come from only a small part of the globe. For example, countries corresponding to Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic (W.E.I.R.D) are overrepresented in psychology research productions with 96% of productions coming from these countries, although they represent only 16% of the world's population. After this alarming observation, the goal is not only to take into account Western cultural criteria but to broaden our approach to indigenous populations. This intervention therefore questions our different educational practices and the theoretical sources we use so that they are more inclusive and take into account the different cultures of the students.

On June 24, we had the privilege of welcoming Kenneth Chacon and Maribel Ternate from California. Through the Bracero Program, they explained to us the importance of inclusive education for students of foreign origin.

This program was implemented between 1942 and 1964 in the USA and allowed nearly 2 million Mexicans to come and work temporarily in agriculture. Despite the agreement between the two countries, the workers were exposed to abuse and great precarity. The children of the braceros found themselves in school systems that did not necessarily take into account their culture, language, and migration history. Faced with this reality, our speakers emphasized the importance of inclusive education. It must seek to value cultural differences by allowing students to fully flourish with their roots. Such an approach strengthens self-esteem, promotes academic success, and builds a fairer society. The example of the Bracero Program reminds us that the school must be a place of welcome and recognition, where every student, regardless of their origin, has their place. Maribel Ternate, speaking from her own experience, told us that in some school systems, words like "pluma" are rejected in favor of "bolígrafo," considered more correct. However, "pluma" is commonly used in some Spanish-speaking cultures. Banning it amounts to denying part of the students' linguistic identity. This can create a feeling of rejection, as if what they had learned at home was worthless. Inclusive education should, on the contrary, recognize and value these differences. Accepting terms like "pluma" is also about respecting the students' culture of origin so that they feel fully at home in school.

The sessions on June 17 and 18 focused on the theme of sustainable development, particularly on environmental awareness and protection.

On June 17, we went to the university laboratory, where the biologist and professor of Brazilian origin, Brito, gave us a course. To begin, she explained what a worm composter was, a composter that uses the absorption of organic matter by earthworms, which differentiates it from a classic composter. To understand its operation, she then taught us how to make our own. All of her knowledge could be useful to us later for the courses we were going to give to the children. Next, we planted plants and cacti, which was an opportunity to learn more about the country's climate and its impact on the photosynthesis process. Indeed, due to the dry and hot climate, part of the photosynthesis process takes place at night when the humidity rate is higher and the temperature is lower. The course ended with a presentation of the Mexican selective sorting system by two doctoral students. It may be relevant to comment on the content and form of this session, both of which were interesting because they were linked to inclusive education. Indeed, the content was relevant because the session focused on the theme of environmental protection, and the form was also relevant due to the playful dimension of the activity. Thus, we can note that our training itself was based on inclusive education.

On June 18, we went hiking in the mountains of Las Palomas. This session was an opportunity to discover the biodiversity of the ecosystem of the Guanajuato region. Indeed, we were able to observe various species of plants and birds along the 10 km route. Although the environmental dimension is obvious here, the playful dimension of the session can also be noted. Indeed, before starting the hike, each of us chose a name related to nature, which we then had to explain to the other members of the group. This was a way to learn more about our teammates and their personalities. Additionally, each of us had a list of species to spot along the way, which was similar to a treasure hunt. Again, even if the hike itself was not a task, the playful dimension helped to spark our interest even more.

The session on June 19 was even more concretely part of our training because we had to present to the others an aspect of our culture of origin related to sustainable development. The presentations focused on the diversity of the environment and the issues in the territory of Virginia in the United States, the biodiversity of Colombia and more specifically that of the city of Cali, and the preservation of water in Mexico through the presentation of a sustainable irrigation system. On our part, we chose to present sustainable shellfishing, an activity practiced on the coasts of Normandy, our region. Indeed, this very popular leisure activity is subject to many restrictions to make it compatible with sustainable development. Thus, we found it interesting to present it as a practice to adopt as a responsible and committed citizen in the preservation of the coasts. During the presentation, our audience was rather passive, but the second part, corresponding to a quiz, allowed everyone to test their knowledge and learn more about the theme. We appreciated the free dimension of this group work, which allowed us to take a real interest in the session. Each group (we were grouped by country) naturally combined theory and practice with a presentation and a game (quiz, manual activities, bingo, etc.), which we found interesting. Additionally, we found it enriching that everyone could give their opinion on the presentations of the other groups. This allowed us to receive constructive feedback and improve, especially since our peers are all trained in education. We also noted differences between our group and the others in the approach and realization of the work. Indeed, on the one hand, we noticed that their experience in education allowed them more ease in oral explanations. On the other hand, communication was simpler for them because the majority were either native English or Spanish speakers.



Thus, although our experience before this research program did not have a direct link with inclusive education, we realized that we already had assets, particularly in understanding the child and the issues of inclusive education. To conclude this first part, it is interesting to note that this two-week training is very clearly anchored in the notion of the 3-inter. Indeed, from an international point of view, we were able to bring our European vision, whether it was our knowledge of the subject or our Western point of view, which sometimes could be limited by our lack of knowledge of certain themes. For example, immigration to the United States is a theme that is highly publicized in Europe, so we could bring our knowledge of the subject, but it was still limited. Being able to hear the point of view of people native to the United States brought us new elements that raised our awareness of the subject. The diversity of nationalities of the members of our program was also enriching on this same point but also from an interdisciplinary and intercultural point of view. Each person could share their personal and professional experience, which provided various opinions enriching our training and our personal reflection.

### **Investigation Plan/Data Collection Work:**

We had the opportunity to implement the knowledge and exchanges we had received at Resplendor International. As previously mentioned, Resplendor International is a non-profit organization founded in 2009. It works for the educational, cultural, and social development of local populations, particularly children, youth, and women. It offers various programs: academic support, artistic and sports activities, environmental education, and awareness campaigns. The organization also welcomes international volunteers, such as Mexicans, Americans, Colombians, and French, to carry out these projects in the field, in an intercultural and caring atmosphere. In partnership with Mexican and American universities, Resplendor is recognized for its commitment to inclusive, sustainable, and accessible education for all.

From June 30 to July 4, every day from 3:30 PM to 7:00 PM, we had the opportunity to teach children aged 8 and 9 with activities of our choice. Our choice first focused on the theme of sustainable development, a subject that is personally important to us and crucial for the education of the current generation. Given the environmental challenges of our century, it seemed obvious to address this theme with the youngest. We were all the more curious to discover if Mexican children were aware of it and to what extent. Indeed, it was also interesting to compare the level of knowledge of Mexican children with the awareness of French children on this subject.

We first decided to create a logical sequence from Monday to Wednesday. We dedicated Monday to a discussion about the environment. We started with a presentation, supported by a slideshow, on what biodiversity is. The environment is a universal subject that can interest and concern all children, regardless of their origins, abilities, or personal contexts. This creates a common space for reflection. Then, we asked the children to draw what biodiversity evokes for them. This format shows consideration for different forms of expression. By inviting the children to draw rather than just speak or write, we tried to value artistic visuals, which is a key to inclusion. Moreover, by asking the children to draw what biodiversity evokes for them, we started from their individual representations, thus valuing their personal point of view, which is fundamental for each to feel legitimate in participating. However, we noticed a certain mimicry among the students, which presented itself as a limit to our activity. For example, butterflies and waterfalls often reappeared in the works.

On Tuesday, we presented to the children what a worm composter is. We made a presentation on composting and how to create a worm composter. Presenting a concrete object allows students to better understand through observation, which can be beneficial for children who may have attention disorders or for those who retain information better through visuals. We finished with an activity on whether or not an object is compostable. This activity allowed for the integration of all students, and inclusion also came through the fact that each could participate in their own way. As we constantly wanted to improve and better adapt to the children's needs, we decided to add a game to our presentation. Indeed, with the first group, we had seen that the time seemed long for them. That's why, with the second group, we created an outdoor game. Indeed, we thought that outdoor games offer a rich and stimulating environment that can help children develop and improve their concentration skills in a natural and healthy way. Consequently, we took the children outside to form a circle. One by one, they had to say the name of something recyclable. If it was wrong or if the word had already been said, the child was eliminated.

Wednesday was dedicated to a relay game on sorting. There were 3 teams of 5 children, and each in turn had to throw a ball. After showing them the image of an object or food, the goal was to aim for the correct recycling bin. There were 5 different bins: compost, the so-called "dangerous" bin (syringe, computer), the sorting bin, the glass bin, and the household waste bin. The activity is a motor skills game, which promotes inclusion for children who need to move or who learn better by manipulating. Moreover, group work fosters cooperation and mutual aid among peers. In an inclusive logic, this allows each student to make their contribution, even if they have difficulties, because success is collective. Additionally, the use of images facilitates understanding for students. It is an essential lever of accessibility in an inclusive approach.

We concluded from these first three days that outdoor activities and games, rather than simple presentations where students remain passive in the face of our explanations, stimulated the children more, allowing them to concentrate better and thus potentially understand and retain information better in the long term. This was further proof that children's learning is more effective through inclusive activities where they feel directly



integrated into the practice.

Picture 2 and 3. Outdoor activity of relay game on sorting, July 2nd, 2025.

The last two days of this week were devoted to the theme of French culture. This was an opportunity for us to share our knowledge and exchange with the children about France and our customs.

With our two groups, we conducted an activity on the theme of crêpes. To facilitate the activity from a logistical point of view, we had cooked this specialty beforehand. First, we started by explaining the tradition of Candlemas, an ancient national holiday. Then, we presented the different ingredients useful for the recipe, first in Spanish, then in French. The goal was for the children to repeat the word in French. This activity presented itself as a fun way for the children to integrate French vocabulary. Finally, the children made, under our supervision, the preparation of the crêpes. After the children washed their hands independently, we gave them a task to accomplish, such as cracking the egg, pouring the flour, adding milk, or mixing. This allowed everyone to get actively involved in the preparation of the crêpe batter, but it also required a certain rigor on their part because cooking is a discipline that requires precision. As teachers responsible for the safety of our students, we then cooked the crêpes, reminding them of the danger of fire. We then offered the children crêpes with Nutella or jam to best match everyone's tastes. Some decided to mix the two flavors in their crêpe, and others wanted to come back to us for a new one. This activity, although complicated to set up from a logistical point of view, was a success, and the children thanked us for sharing this moment with them. We had wondered about the relevance of making the crêpe batter with them on site because it was a group of fifteen children in a small space. However, carrying out this activity



was a good idea, allowing them to have a certain responsibility. This experience allowed us to adapt our teaching method to each child and age group, some being more distracted. We had to take into account the needs of each so that they all got involved in the different activities.

On Friday, we asked the 8-year-old children to draw emblematic French monuments: the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, the Moulin Rouge, the Mont Saint Michel, and the Louvre Museum. Initially, to maintain the link with sustainable development, we wanted the children to use recyclable waste for their production. However, after reflection, we realized that from a logistical point of view, this would be difficult to achieve. Therefore, first and foremost, it seemed important to us to briefly present the history of each monument. Unsurprisingly, the children, apart from the Eiffel Tower, were not familiar with these monuments. When it came time to choose which monument to draw, most wanted to draw the Eiffel Tower, as if they preferred to draw something they knew. However, the presentation of the monuments also proved useful because some were curious to draw a monument with an atypical history or shape, like the Louvre Museum. To encourage their creativity, we made all kinds of materials available to them: colored pencils, markers, colored sheets, craft paper, cardboard, glue, stickers... Some asked us for help to trace the initial shape, but we also left the models of the monuments on the table to facilitate their reproduction. This activity allowed us to understand that with little, children can



still be very creative.

Picture 3: Cooking activity, July 3rd, 2025. Picture 4: Drawing activity, July 4th, 2025.

This week at Resplandor International offered us a particularly enriching experience, both on a human and pedagogical level. By putting into practice the principles of inclusive education through various activities, we were able to observe how essential listening and creativity are to encourage the involvement of each child.

The first days, focused on sustainable development, allowed us to address a universal theme. Thanks to visual supports, concrete manipulations, and group games, we were able to encourage individual expression, cooperation, and active participation from all. These activities highlighted the importance of varying pedagogical formats to meet the diversity of children.

The days dedicated to French culture, on the other hand, were an opportunity to create an intercultural dynamic. The activity around the preparation of crêpes particularly illustrated the interest of a concrete and collaborative learning experience, promoting both responsibility and the pleasure of learning. Our last activity on French monuments allowed us to measure the children's ability to adapt and their creativity, even with simple means. This reinforced our conviction that inclusion is not only based on material resources but also on a benevolent, attentive, and valuing attitude towards the child.

In conclusion, this experience at Resplendor International confirmed to us that inclusive education is a fairer, more open, and ultimately more human form of learning.

## **Results and discussion**

This teaching experience was based on pedagogical methods that promote the emancipation of children, allowing them to learn in a playful way through games.

Whether it was the training or the practical implementation, the experience opened our minds and made us aware of the importance of inclusive education in our time. The learning that resulted from this experience led us to take a step back and ask ourselves how this knowledge could be useful to us in the future, which is part of a true investigative approach.

From a human perspective, we greatly appreciated the curiosity and eagerness to discover and learn shown by the children. Moreover, from a pedagogical point of view, since the theme of sustainable development was at the heart of the week at Resplendor, it is interesting to note that many children were already aware of environmental protection. Indeed, to make our presentations playful and to enrich the course, we encouraged student participation. Some were able to explain what a composter is, what biodiversity and recycling are... This observation pleasantly surprised us because, having lived in Guanajuato for more than a month, we found the recycling system limited and not very accessible.

However, we encountered some difficulties during this experience.

We provided more theoretical teachings at the beginning of the week at Resplendor, but we realized that the children, particularly the group of eight-year-olds, lacked concentration and that we needed to evolve our learning strategy so that they were fully involved in the activities. Focusing on outdoor activities, even if it may seem contradictory at first, led them to channel themselves and feel less confined. We also noticed that the students' attention was more scattered during the first two days. For example, many students asked to go to the bathroom, whereas during the last activities, which we considered more playful, the children were absorbed in these activities and felt less need to move around. Learning through play has been the subject of much research that has proven its effectiveness. We can, for example, mention the work of Jean Piaget, a Swiss psychologist recognized for his work in developmental psychology. Play is not just a tool for distraction but can also be a real learning tool, taken seriously for many years. Jean Piaget, in "La Psychologie de l'Enfant" published in 1966 by "Que sais-je?", considered play as "a fundamental mechanism for the assimilation of knowledge." The child, by playing, experiments, transforms, and adapts the rules of reality. Applied to teaching, this means that play allows the integration of abstract concepts through concrete situations. Between the ages of 6 and 11, children enter a new learning phase: they explore the "concrete operational stage." This consists of developing new "capacities for conceptualization and logical reasoning that still require a direct link with the concrete."

Furthermore, among the 4 volunteers in charge of leading the children's workshops, 3 were not Mexican, including 2 who did not speak Spanish, which represented a linguistic obstacle, especially during oral presentations. Consequently, the presence of Alexis in our group, a Mexican student in education, was of great help to us. This ensured that the students understood well. Nevertheless, we were able to see that non-



verbal communication can be effective: certain gestures, such as those used to ask for silence, proved to be universal. We can also take the example of outdoor games, which do not require extensive verbal communication. In these contexts, gestures and movements are often sufficient to make oneself understood, both between adults and children and among the children themselves.

In a study applied to ENSET in Douala, entitled "Non-verbal communication in pedagogical action and teaching effectiveness," the authors note that some teachers use non-verbal communication, which they define as a set of actions such as signs, gestures, facial expressions, posture, etc., during pedagogical action, and others do not. The authors then observe a positive correlation between non-verbal communication and teaching effectiveness. On the contrary, among teachers who limit themselves to speech, there are delays in lesson progress. The authors emphasize that the teacher's personal attitude during the lessons can be considered "a determining factor for better understanding" on the part of the students.

We can also link this to the various works of the American psychologist Paul Ekman (1934), which confirm the fact that facial expressions are universal. Through his work, Ekman also demonstrated that major emotions such as joy, sadness, or fear are universal regardless of culture or language. Isolated individuals from tribes in Papua New Guinea were able, from photographs, to identify different facial expressions. This demonstrates the universal character of emotions. Thus, even if we did not all speak the same language, we could easily decipher the emotions that crossed the children's faces, their micro-expressions, or even through the tone of their voice.

All these situations required us to have a great capacity for adaptation, reactivity, and flexibility in order to best meet the needs of each child while maintaining an inclusive, caring, and conducive atmosphere for learning.

## Conclusion

Our participation in the Summer Research Program 2025 at the University of Guanajuato was an enriching experience that highlighted the importance of inclusive education. As French students from diverse academic backgrounds, we brought unique perspectives to the project.

Our investigation, titled "Developing intercultural, interdisciplinary, and international teaching strategies to promote sustainability and human development," aligned with UNESCO's fourth sustainable development goal. Throughout the program, we benefited from comprehensive training that expanded our understanding of inclusive education, thanks to experts like Professor Todd Fletcher and Taucia Gonzalez.

The practical application of our training at Resplandor International was a crucial part of our experience. Teaching children aged 8 and 9, we focused on sustainable development and French culture, using interactive and playful methods. Our activities, such as drawing biodiversity and making crêpes, were designed to be inclusive and accessible to all children.

Despite challenges like language barriers, we adapted our teaching strategies to meet the needs of each child. The presence of Alexis, a Mexican education student, was crucial in bridging the communication gap. We also recognized the importance of non-verbal communication, which transcended cultural and linguistic differences.

Our experience at Resplandor International reinforced the importance of inclusive education, creating a fairer and more open learning environment. The principles of international, interdisciplinary, and intercultural approaches were evident throughout our training and teaching.

In conclusion, this program not only enhanced our understanding of inclusive education but also equipped us with the skills and knowledge to promote sustainability and human development in our future endeavors. We are committed to carrying forward the lessons learned and advocating for inclusive education in all its forms.

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