

# Personal learning goals of adult language learners in MOOCs

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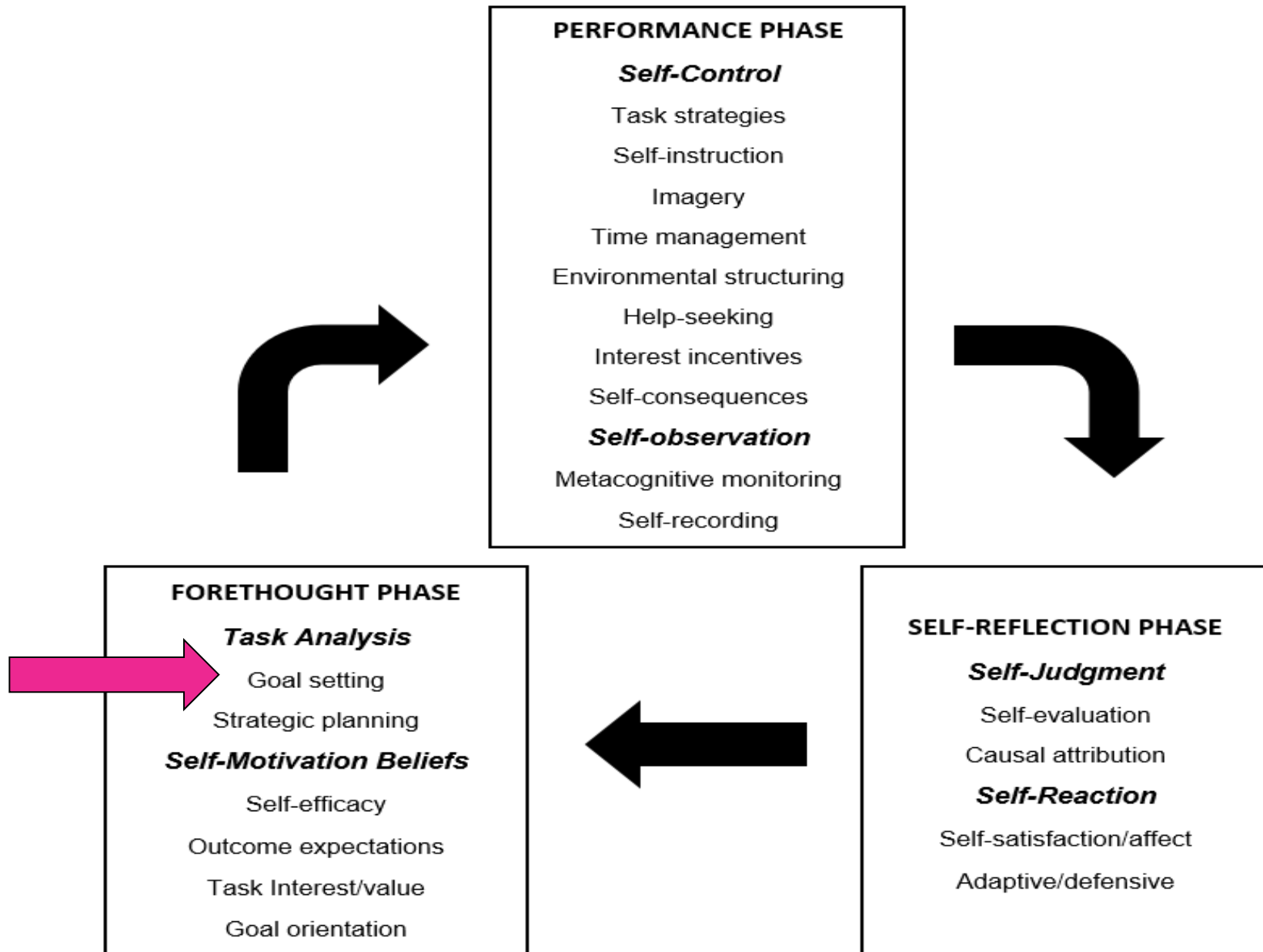
# OVERVIEW

1. MOOC success and goal setting
2. Mind the gaps
3. My study: participants & methods
4. Personal learning goals in MOOCs
5. Next steps: goal-setting support

# MOOC success and goal setting

- The course design favours "those who are able to self-regulate their learning" (Littlejohn & Hood, 2018, p. 31).
- MOOC learners "have to self-regulate their learning, very much relying on cognitive and resource management strategies, the latter to manage time, study environment, and the resources provided" (Gimeno-Sanz, 2021, p. 53).
- "Self-regulated learning refers to how students become masters of their own learning processes" (Zimmerman, 2015, p.541).

# A cyclical phase model of SRL (Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009)



# MOOC success and goal setting

- Goal setting is a critical factor "underlying attrition and achievement in MOOCs" (Kizilcec et al., 2017, p. 28).
- "MOOC completers reported significantly higher use of the goal-setting SRL subprocess than did MOOC non-completers" (Handoko et al., 2019, p. 50).
- Learners who engage in goal setting are more likely to attain their goals in MOOCs (Li, Johnsen & Canelas, 2021; Reparaz, Aznárez-Sanado & Mendoza, 2020; Vilkova, 2019).
- Complete all video-lessons and assessments, complete the online course, and obtain a certificate.

# Mind the gaps

1. Research on goal setting excludes learners above 44 years old (Kizilcec et al., 2017; Williams et al., 2018; Li, 2019), thereby leaving a gap in our knowledge about MOOC-based learning.
2. Many MOOC researchers extensively rely on quantitative data analysis to examine personal learning goals. Further research should favour a qualitative approach to examine learners' goal-setting behaviour.
3. The "binary division between completers and non-completers is not an adequate measure of quality or of learning in MOOCs. It fails to take into account the varied goals of learners or the ability of individual learners to determine personal markers of success" (Littlejohn et al., 2016, p. 47).
4. MOOCs remain under-researched, especially in relation to language learning and SRL (Gillespie, 2020; Sallam et al., 2020; Alonso-Mencía et al., 2020).

**RQ2:** What kinds of goal do adult language learners set for themselves in MOOCs that they select as part of their classroom-based language course?

# My study: Participants

## Case Study 1

- Ten participants
- Average age: 62 years old
- Spanish, Italian and French at a community learning centre in the UK
- Intermediate level in their target language.



## Case Study 2

- Nine participants
- Average age: 41 years old
- English for specific purposes at a local consortium in Italy
- Upper-intermediate level in English.



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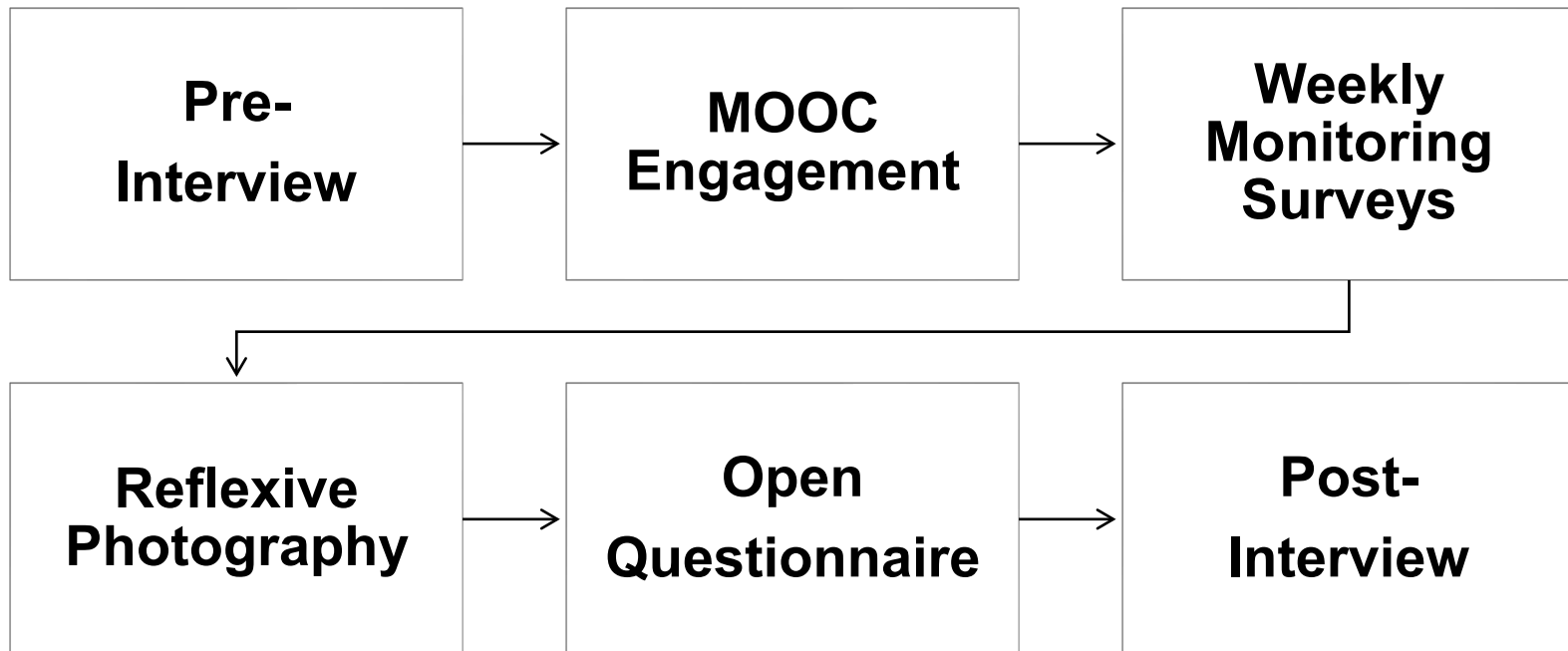
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# My Study: Methods



# FINDINGS



Image by Barbara Conde G (2021)

# Personal learning goals in MOOCs

1. Participants did not spontaneously generate goals for themselves at the start of their MOOC-based learning.
2. They initially opted for **external or complying goals**, leaving the regulation of their learning in the hands of others rather than setting their own goals at the beginning of their MOOC-based learning.
3. MOOC authors and platform providers did not offer many opportunities for learners to set their own goals, thereby minimising the chances of self-regulated learning.
4. A shift from external goals to self-set goals occurred after the first week of MOOC engagement.

# Personal learning goals in MOOCs

## 1. Mastery (or learning) goals

- Improve their linguistic competencies and knowledge about their chosen subject
- *“the main objective was to practise and improve my French”* (INV2-Felix).
  - *“To understand more or less everything about each week because I think the MOOC was made for this, to understand everything about [a topic]”* (INV2-Erik).

## 2. Reinforcement goals

- Reinforce their knowledge
- “to revise reflexive verbs in Italian”* (WSURV2-Irene).

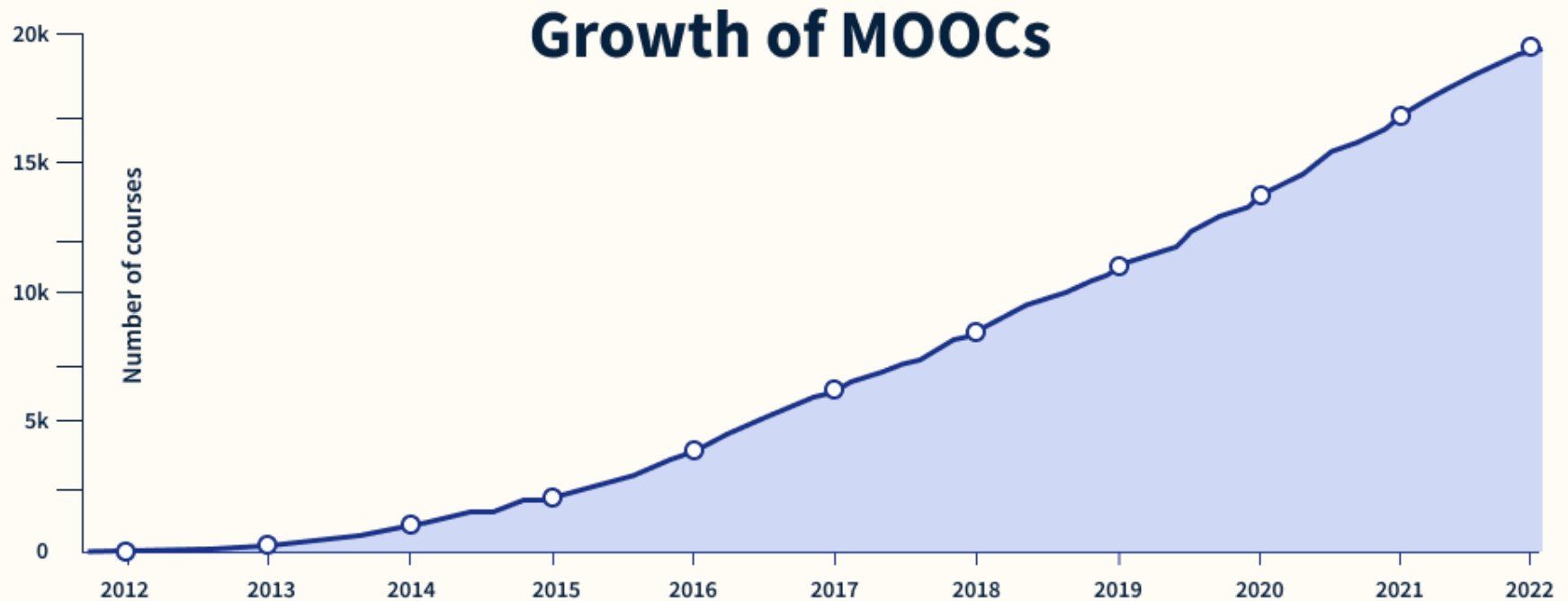
## 3. Ability goals

- Demonstrate their skills
- “The choice was for a topic quite known to me from a point of view of the contents, in order to address the effort in evaluating and improving the language and the methodology of teaching this topic used by another lecturer”* (RPHOCaption-Elliot).

## 4. Process goals

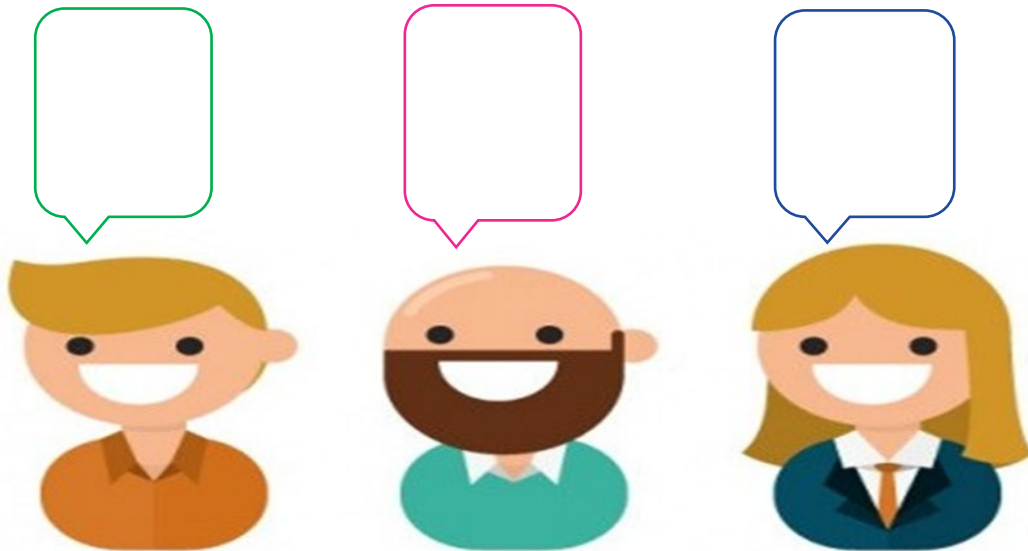
- Practice strategies to achieve bigger goals
- “Summarise in writing what I read, as [teacher's name] advised”* (WSURV3-Emily).

# Next steps: goal-setting support

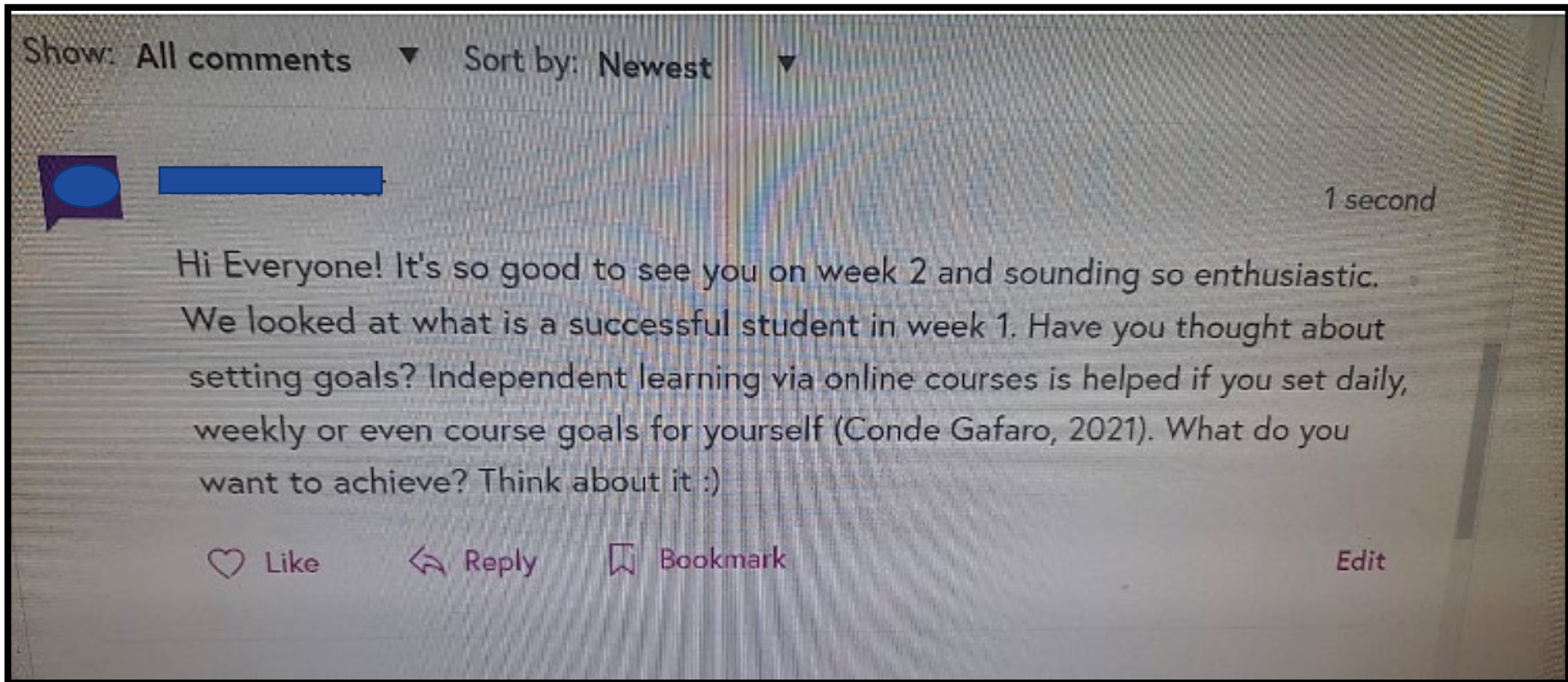


# Next steps: goal-setting support

What ideas do researchers, educators and instructional designers have in mind to help learners define, monitor & attain personal learning goals in MOOCs?



# Next steps: goal-setting support



English for academic study by Coventry University-  
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# Next steps: goal-setting support

- Write specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound goals (SMART) during the course design process. Although learners' personal goals may or may not resonate with those goals (Henderikx et al., 2019), offer these as good examples that learners may follow when writing their own goals.

Feel free to submit your ideas to the following AnswerGarden:  
<https://answergarden.ch/2491880>





**THANK YOU!**

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