Contact situations and language management*

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Abstract

This is a theoretical study of two important concepts in the area of intercultural communication: contact situations and language management. In the paper I argue that there are at least three types of contact situations in contemporary society, namely, 'cognate variety situations', 'partner variety situations' and 'third-party variety situations'. I further suggest that the amount of foreign factors involved and the processes of language management in the three types of contact situations are fundamentally different. The terms 'cognate management', 'host management', 'guest management' and 'third-party management' were coined for further study of the correction strategies manipulated by participants in contact situations.

1. Introduction

Contact situations and language management are two of the most important concepts for the study of intercultural communication. The term 'contact situation' is used in contrast with 'native situation', referring to the interaction between participants from different cultures (cf. Neustupný 1985a). The contact between a native speaker and a non-native speaker is always considered to be a typical contact situation and has been extensively studied during the last two decades.

However, native speaker–non-native speaker interaction is an important but not the only type of contact situation. In contemporary society native speakers also have ample opportunities to communicate with other native speakers who possess a different culture (e.g., Australian–American); and non-native speakers may interact even more often with other non-native speakers through a foreign language (e.g., Japanese–Chinese in English). Contact situations other than the native speaker–non-native speaker type should not be regarded as marginal cases and deserve equal attention.

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According to Neustupny, a typical contact situation is packed with communication problems and attempts are constantly made for their removal (Neustupný 1985a: 44). In his terminology, participants' efforts for a smooth conversation are assisted by 'correction strategies'. Correction is one of the 'language management processes' which occur in the course of interaction.

Departing from Neustupný's language management framework (Neustupný 1978, 1985a, 1985b, 1988), the present paper attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What factors differentiate contact situations from native situations?
2. What are other types of contact situations apart from the native speaker–non-native speaker type?
3. What factors determine participants' selection of correction strategies in contact situations?
4. How do participants apply correction strategies in different types of contact situations?

Most of the examples used in this paper are taken from Japanese–Australians and Japanese–Chinese contact situations.

2. Contact situations and native situations

Within the realm of sociolinguistics, the study of situations is fundamental since no communication act can be separated from its communicative situation (Hymes 1972: 56; Clyne 1984: 9; Neustupný 1985a: 44). However, as Hymes previously noted, we seldom ask what criteria there are for a situation, what kinds of situations there are and how many there are (Hymes 1972).

Among numerous dimensions to classify 'situations', the division into 'intracultural' and 'intercultural' is basic due to the substantially different communication patterns and problems involved in the two types of situations (Neustupný 1985a: 44). The former can be referred to as 'native' or 'internal' and the latter 'foreign' or 'contact'. According to Neustupný, when one or more of the constituent factors of a situation is foreign to the cultural system in question, communication in the situation differs substantially from communication in native situations.

Empirical investigations of phenomena occurring in 'language contact situations' had been carried out early in the 1950s following the pioneering work of Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1956). Weinreich indicated that 'two or more languages are said to be in contact if they are used alternately by the same persons' (Weinreich 1953: 1). It is quite clear that the focus of the 'languages-in-contact' theory lay primarily on the language use of bilinguals and multilinguals. 'Contact situations', as we refer to them nowadays, are intrinsically different from Weinreich's and Haugen's 'language contact situations'. The concept refers not only to language competence but to communicative and interactive competence in general. Also, the focus is on *processes* which evolve in the situations, not only on the *results* of such processes (Neustupný 1985a, 1985b).

Analyses of 'contact situations' are often conducted under the heading of cross-cultural or intercultural communication and have gained increasing attention during the last two decades. A contact situation is normally the interaction between participants from different cultures. A business meeting between Australian and Japanese businessmen, a farewell party for a group of Chinese exchange students organized by local students at an American university belong to this category.

However, the borderline between 'native' and 'contact' situations is not always clearcut. It is dangerous if we simply identify native situations as interactions between participants of the same nationality or those who speak the same language (cf. Neustupný 1985a: 48). For example, how do we deal with the interaction between English speakers from Australia and America, between Chinese from the mainland and overseas? In the former case, participants complain that it is not easy to achieve smooth communication due to their very different social values even though both of them use English as their native language.[1] On the other hand, Chinese who speak mutually unintelligible dialects in the second case can claim that they possess a large number of shared sociocultural rules.[2] In order to further our understanding of contact situations, I believe that it would be beneficial to specify participants in a contact situation as members of different 'speech communities'.

A basic question arises from my definition: what is a speech community? In his pioneering work, Hymes defined speech community in the following way:

> A speech community is defined as a community sharing rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech, and rules for the interpretation of at least one linguistic variety. (Hymes 1972: 54)

Various definitions of speech community have been proposed by scholars in many areas (cf. Hudson 1980: 25–30; Saville-Troike 1982: 17–22). Although there may be some marginal cases, I suggest that the criteria for belonging to the same speech community primarily include:

1. Shared language code(s):
   e.g., the mastery of grammar, phonology and lexicon.
2. Shared communication norms:
   e.g., communication strategies such as the selection of appropriate topics, settings and participants.

3. Shared sociocultural norms:
   e.g., the interpretation of social values, attitudes.

It should be emphasized that only those speakers who satisfy all these criteria can be regarded as members of the same speech community. According to this definition, the two cases raised previously (Australian–American; mainland Chinese–overseas Chinese) are not necessarily 'native situations'.

In summary, interaction between members of the same speech community constitutes 'native situations', while those between members of different speech communities are referred to as 'contact situations'. The principal determinant that makes contact situations stand apart from native situations is, according to Neustupný, the presence of 'foreign factors' in the situations (Neustupný 1985a: 48).

3. The foreign factors

Foreign factors are the differences between members of different speech communities within a contact situation. The differences of their language codes, communication and sociocultural norms directly lead to three types of foreignness existing in contact situations, namely linguistic foreignness, communicative foreignness and sociocultural foreignness.

As far as linguistic foreignness is concerned, we are interested in the distance between the native languages of the participants. Studies of structural similarities between varieties of language, regardless of their history, can be included in typological linguistics or typology, which is a branch of traditional linguistics. According to Neustupný, at least six categories of linguistic types can be distinguished: the areal, genetic, interferential, accidental, grammatical–typological and developmental type (Neustupný 1978: 101–112). As for the areal type, it has been reported that historically unrelated languages spoken in the same geographical area may exhibit grammatical (syntactic, lexical, phonological) correspondences. Languages which share the same areal type are usually said to belong to the same 'linguistic area'. It can be assumed that linguistic foreignness between speakers from the same linguistic area appears to be minimal. In the cases of Japanese–Australian and Japanese–Chinese contact situations, we believe that the linguistic foreignness existing in the former is much stronger than in the latter because the Japanese language is more distant from English than from Chinese both structurally and areally (Neustupný 1985a: 41–53).

By communicative foreignness, we mean the differences between those communication rules which govern the selection of addressees, settings, language varieties, topics, forms, channels and other strategies employed to maintain smooth communication (cf. Hymes 1962, 1972; Neustupný 1982).

As suggested by Clyne, some cultures are more linear in orientation than others; some are more formal than others; some are more verbal while some are more literate; again, the rhythm of discourse is structured differently in different cultures (Clyne 1980: 6–8). In analyzing the areal types of language, Neustupný argued further that 'area resemblances are found not merely in the central part of the system of linguistic competence (that is, in grammar), but also on its periphery. In other words, areal isoglosses cut across the whole sphere of communicative competence' (Neustupný 1978: 101–102). The term 'communicative area' was coined to account for this phenomenon. The communication between speakers of the same communicative area is facilitated in many facets by their less prominent communicative foreignness. Japanese often find it easier to communicate with the Chinese than with Westerners not only because the Japanese and Chinese languages belong to the same linguistic area (Budge 1980), but also, and more importantly, because they share a large number of communication rules. For instance, it is acceptable for a student to address his university lecturer by first name in Australia but not in Japan or in China.

Apart from language codes and communication rules, many participants in contact situations also possess different sociocultural norms, such as hairdress (e.g., an Indian's turban), costume (e.g., Chinese tunic suits) and other accessories (e.g., Arabic women's veils). Informal discussions with Hong Kong Chinese suggest that Japanese in kimonos are more foreign than those in Western clothing. Some Japanese informants also pointed out in the interviews that fishermen wearing traditional Chinese suits and hats in Aberdeen, a fishing port in Hong Kong, are very 'Chinese'. It is true that a large number of foreign factors are derived from sociocultural norms. If we accept the notions of 'linguistic area' and 'communicative area', we should also admit the existence of 'cultural area' since speakers of geographically close languages often share a certain number of sociocultural norms.

The components of foreign factors can be summarized in Figure 1 below:

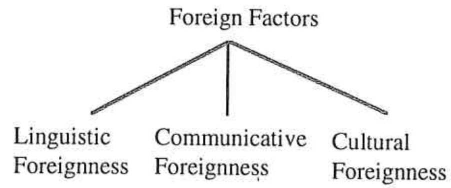

Figure 1. *Components of foreign factors*

There is no doubt that from the typological point of view, Japanese and Chinese are really related. Many resemblances can be found in their language codes, communication rules and sociocultural norms. This, however, does not imply that foreign factors between Japanese and Chinese are absent. For instance, although characters are used in both Japanese and Chinese, they have different pronunciations and sometimes different meanings (linguistic foreignness); although both Japanese and Chinese avoid physical contact with their interactants, their non-verbal behavior, particularly that used in greetings and leave-taking, is not the same (communicative foreignness); although both Japanese and Chinese use chopsticks and bowls, Chinese chopsticks are somewhat different, the bowls have a different design, the Chinese do not use the floor mat (*tatami*) and the overall design and furnishing of rooms is different (cultural foreignness). Comparative studies on the Japanese and Chinese languages have been carried out throughout the past few decades, but the similarities and differences of the two countries' communicative rules and sociocultural rules still require further investigation.

4. Types of contact situations

In the previous section, I have defined contact situations as interaction involving members of different speech communities. Participants involved in such situations may not be able to communicate successfully although they share components of language code(s), interactive skills or cultural knowledge. I have also pointed out that differences between them result in various types of foreignness.

Among the various ways to achieve communication goals, language is no doubt the basic medium. Therefore, linguistic foreignness in contact situations always appears to be more prominent than other foreign factors. This perhaps explains why interaction between native speakers and non-native speakers of a language has become the main, if not the only, concern of many contact situation analysts.

As noted in my discussion so far, contact situations do not necessarily equate with 'native speaker–non-native speaker interaction'. Obviously, there is no native speaker in Japanese–Chinese interaction if the contact language is English and no non-native speakers in Australian–American interaction since both participants communicate in their native languages.

In view of the fact that just one type of contact situation is insufficient to exhaust all contact situations existing in contemporary society, I shall classify contact situations into three, in terms of the origin of the contact language. They are 'cognate variety contact situations' (CS), 'partner variety contact situations' (PS) and 'third-party variety contact situations' (TPS). The relationship between participants in each of these types of contact situations is illustrated as follows:

Table 1. *Types of contact situations*

	Participant 1		Contact language	Participant 2	
Type	Speech communiy	Native language		Speech communiy	Native language
1. CS	A	LA	LA	B	LB
2. PS	A	LA	LA/LB	B	LB
3. TPS	A	LA	LC	B	LB

'LA' denotes the native language spoken in speech community 'A';
'LB' denotes the native language spoken in speech community 'B'.

In cognate variety contact situations, participants communicate in their native languages despite the existence of other factors. Apart from the Australian–American contact mentioned above, interaction between Chinese speakers from Hong Kong and Malaysia, between Spanish speakers from Texas and Argentina, between French speakers from France and Canada, and between any native speakers of the same language from different countries belong to this type.

Contact situations which involve participants who speak the same language but possess different sociocultural rules are not uncommon in the present world. For instance, Taiwanese who were educated during the period of Japanese domination have almost perfect mastery of the Japanese language, and mainland and overseas Chinese can only be regarded as cognate situations, not native situations, since participants in both cases have shared communication and sociocultural norms.

It should be pointed out that participants in contact situations cannot normally communicate in their native languages. If the contact language in a contact situation is the native language of either participant, the situation is called 'partner variety contact situation'. In other words, this type of contact situation is the most frequently analyzed 'native speaker–non-native speaker interaction'. Foreign language acquisition or locals–migrants contacts are typical examples of this type. Except for some cases, such as speakers of mutually unintelligible dialects of Chinese often claiming that they are members of the same speech community, most types of foreign factors are significant in partner situations.

Participants in the third type interact with the aid of a third-party language due to the absence of a cognate language and the inability to speak their partners' native language. So-called 'international language' (cf. Smith 1976, 1981, 1984) can easily become a third-party language. Evidently, non-native speakers of English have more chances to interact with non-native speakers from other countries rather than with native English speakers in contemporary society. A large number of Japanese–Chinese contact situations in Hong Kong belong to this type because participants involved can only interact in their second language: English. Generally speaking, no communication act will be switched on unless both parties are able to select a common third-party language, since non-verbal expressions can only maintain a brief and unstable interaction.

While the emphasis of intercultural studies has so far been placed on how native speakers interact with non-native speakers, a large amount of contact situations between native speakers of different national varieties, and between non-native speakers who communicate through an international language have been overlooked. My claim here is that all three types of contact situations outlined above deserve equal attention and that empirical studies on the first and the third types are particularly necessary.

5. Language correction, language management and contact situations

Communication problems may exist in any communication act (Neustupný 1978, 1985a, 1985b, 1988; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Gumperz 1978) and they are particularly significant in contact situations. For the removal of possible communication problems, participants employ various types of 'correction strategies' (cf. Neustupný 1985a; Jernudd and Thuan 1983).

The 'language correction' theory has been developed by Neustupný and Jernudd over the last two decades for the study of 'contact linguistics' as well as a tool of language planning (Neustupný 1978, 1985a, 1985b, 1988; Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; Jernudd and Thuan 1983). According to this theory, 'deviations' from norms appear in contact situations. Some of the deviations are noted by other participants while some are not. The noted deviations become 'violations'. Participants may disregard the violations or make an evaluation. Negatively evaluated violations are called 'inadequacies'. At this stage, participants may disregard these or take action to 'correct' the inadequacies. As Neustupný believes, 'all communication problems in contact situations can be related to various stages of the correction process' (Neustupný 1985a: 45). This theory can be illustrated by the Figure 2 (p. 245).

The theory was further developed in the late 1980s (Jernudd and Neustupný 1987; Neustupný 1988). The most significant modification was the restrictions imposed on the use of the term 'correction'. Neustupný gave four reasons to explain why the terminology might not be the most suitable description of the whole communication processes taking place in contact situations:

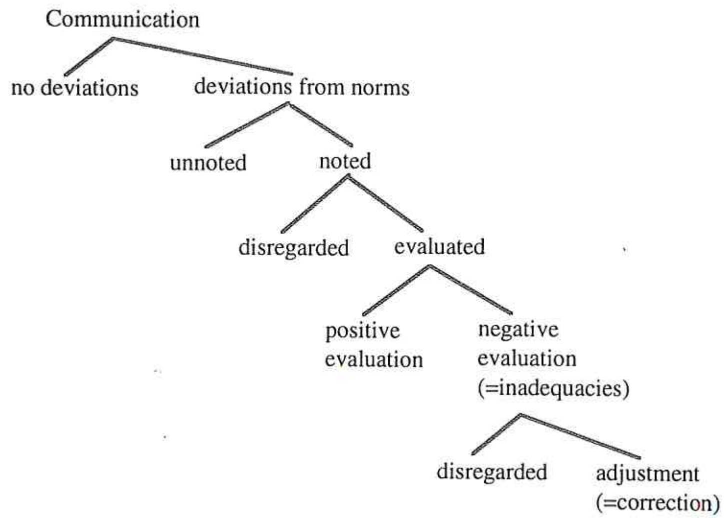

Figure 2. *Correction processes*

1. Only the last stage in the correction processes (adjustment) would be called 'correction' in everyday language;
2. There will be no correction (in the narrow sense of the word) if inadequacies are disregarded;
3. The term 'correction' places too much emphasis upon the negative evaluations of language; and,
4. The technical use and the everyday use of the term 'correction' may lead to confusion (Neustupný 1988).

To remove all these problems, Jernudd and Neustupný (1987) introduced a wider concept, 'language management', which 'covers all overt notings of language, attitudes assumed, and all subsequent behaviour towards language' (Neustupný 1988). 'Language correction' in the old version of the theory should be treated as one type of management process.

The language management of native speakers in partner situations is commonly known as 'foreigner talk' Long (1983b) suggests that five possibilities 'trigger' foreigner talk. They are:

1. physical appearance of the non-native speakers;
2. linguistic features of the non-native speakers' interlanguage (IL);[3]
3. the NS's assessment of how much the NNS is understanding;
4. the degree of comprehensibility; and,

5. combination of two or more from 1 to 4.
These 'triggers' are comparable to the foreign factors discussed above.

The term 'foreigner talk' was first used by Ferguson in 1968 as a parallel expression to 'baby talk' since both of them are a conventional variety of 'simplified speech' (Ferguson 1971, 1975, 1981).

A number of studies devoted to foreigner talk in different languages have been carried out, and works which deal with English foreigner talk are significant in both quantity and quality.

In Ferguson's interpretation, the term 'foreigner talk' is 'nicely ambiguous' in that it not only refers to the particular register used by native speakers to address non-native speakers, but also the kind of language used by non-native speakers (Ferguson 1975: 2; 1981: 10). However, investigators such as Meisel (1980) argue that foreigner talk is not simply a native speaker's imitation of non-native speaker speech as claimed by Bloomfield (1933) and Whinnom (1971).

Neustupný queries the validity of the concept of foreigner talk. He argues that 'if we proceed step by step, broadening it to include correction processes other than simplification and behaviour other than language in the narrow sense of word, does it not simply become a synonym for "correction by native speakers in a contact situation"?' (Neustupný 1985a: 58). foreigner talk is doubtless an important feature in contact situations but its two connotations (i.e., native speakers' input and non-native speakers' output) suggested by Ferguson merit separate investigation. In fact, most studies under the heading foreigner talk have so far primarily focused on the form of speech addressed to non-native speakers, and the discussions of non-native speakers' linguistic output can only be found in the study of interlanguage studies, error analysis or second language acquisition.

Native speakers' motivation for using foreigner talk has been widely accepted as 'to promote comprehension and/or language learning' (Hatch 1979), 'to optimise the non-native speaker's comprehension and sense of communication effectiveness' (Snow et al. 1981: 82) and 'to lighten the non-native speakers' interactional burden' (Long 1981).

In this context, we are interested in why native speakers assume the responsibility for establishing understanding. I suggest that speakers' selection of correction strategies is affected by their attitudes towards the other party, and their attitudes are determined by the role they play in the situation.

Determinants of roles in native situations are culture specific. Participants can normally identify their roles according to social variables such as class, status, sex, or age. The relationship between the native speaker and the non-native speaker in partner situations is special in the sense that they are not superior–inferior,[4] but rather, host–guest.

Being a linguistic host, the native speaker is the authority on the contact language and his/her norms will serve as the 'base norms' (Neustupný 1985a, 1988). It has been observed that the more competent speaker (socially, cognitively or linguistically) generally assumes a greater responsibility for sustaining the conversation and establishing understanding (Scarcella and Higa 1981: 410). Correction strategies used by native speakers for this purpose as reported in the existing foreigner talk literature include: selection of basic vocabulary and short and well-formed sentences (Henzl 1973); decomposition of a word into a phrase (Ferguson 1975); giving definitions and compliments (Hatch et al. 1978); the use of imperatives (Long 1981) and rhetorical questions (Scarcella and Higa 1981); the insertion of a large amount of stereotyped stock expressions (e.g., 'Really?') and fragments, e.g., 'The what?' (Freed 1981). I will call all native speaker correction 'host management'.

It should be pointed out here that host management is not equal to foreigner talk but includes foreigner talk. It is the whole set of corrective strategies manipulated by the native speakers in partner situations, including modification of the interactional structure of conversation such as control of topics, comprehension checking and tolerance of ambiguity (Long 1983a: 132) and secondary adjustments such as avoidance of interference (Neustupný 1985a: 56).

The language management of the non-native speakers in partner situations can be called 'guest management'. Several hypotheses have been proposed for the study of non-native speakers' linguistic output. For instance, the 'contrastive analysis hypothesis' assumes that many features of non-native speaker speech can be explained by interference from the learner's native language and culture (cf. Weinreich 1953). The 'error analysis hypothesis' emphasizes the characteristics of errors made by learners (cf. Corder 1967, 1975, 1978, 1981). The 'interlanguage hypothesis', which was proposed by Selinker in 1972, suggests that non-native speaker speech is neither a translated version of the learner's native language nor an accepted version of the target language, but a series of 'approximative systems'.

Non-native speaker correction at the communicative level did not receive sufficient attention until the late 1970s. Basically speaking, two types of strategies used by non-native speakers to achieve communication with native speakers can be distinguished, namely: risk-avoiding strategies and risk-taking strategies. The former are used to avoid trouble while the latter are used to tackle trouble. These strategies are referred to as 'message adjustment' and 'resource expansion' in Corder (1978); 'reduction' and 'achievement' in Faerch and Kasper (1980); 'strategies' and 'tactics' in Long (1983a). Non-native speaker correction is also categorized as avoidance, paraphrase, conscious transfer, appeal for assistance and mime in the model proposed by Tarone (1977, 1980), and L1 based and L2 based strategies[5] in Bialystok

(1983). Janicki (1985) provides a general discussion on non-native speaker speech from a sociolinguistic perspective.

While analysts' interest has so far been limited to the characteristics of native speaker–non-native speaker interaction, the amount of work analyzing cognate situations and third-party situations is negligible, not to mention the language management processes in such situations.

As noted previously, cognate situations involve only native speakers and third-party situations involve only non-native speakers. If we extend the concept of host and guest management, the management processes in cognate situations and those in third-party situations can be referred to as 'cognate management' and 'third-party management' respectively. Due to the absence of a 'host', it is predictable that negotiation work in these contact situations is very complicated. What is the relationship between the participants involved? What attitude do they hold towards their partners? What are the base norms for communication in such situations? What kind of corrective adjustments do they use to promote mutual understanding? Only through empirical research can these questions be answered.

Although at this stage very little is known about the management processes in cognate situations and third-party situations, it can be assumed that they are different from the management processes in partner situations. This assumption is based on the observation that unlike in partner situations, participants in cognate situations and third-party situations do not normally establish a clearcut host–guest relationship according to their competence in the contact system. Quite obviously, although one of the participants in such situations may be more competent than the other (culturally or linguistically), s/he does not normally authorize her/himself, nor is authorized by her/his partner, as the host in the situation. Consequently, s/he will not take the role of a pivot in the situation and may feel offended if her/his partner does so.

6. Conclusion

Based on the foregoing discussion, we can answer the questions posed at the beginning of this paper.

1. The factor that differentiates contact situations and native situations is the presence of foreign factors.
2. In contemporary society, there are at least three types of contact situations, namely, cognate variety situations, partner variety situations and third-party variety situations.
3. In contact situations, a speaker's selection of correction strategies is basically determined by his role.

4. In partner situations, native speakers use 'host management' and non-native speakers use 'guest management'. In spite of the lack of supporting information, I hypothesized that the use of host management and guest management may be inappropriate in other types of contact situations.

While analysts have so far focused on the speech modifications of native speakers and non-native speakers in partner situations, research efforts in the future should be devoted to analyses such as the norms in contact situations which involve different amounts of foreign factors and the whole series of management processes in each type of contact situation.

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Notes

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1. Discussions on varieties of English can be found in Smith, Kachru and Quirk (1981), Kachru (1982, Lowenberg (1986).
2. The fact that mutually unintelligible languages spoken in mainland China are all referred to as 'Chinese' is the result of political, ethnic and historical pressures, rather than of synchronic linguistic considerations (Halliday et al. 1964).
3. The term 'interlanguage' (IL) was first used by Selinker in 1972 to refer to the type of language produced by second- and foreign-language learners who are in the process of learning a language (cf. Richards et al. 1985: 145).
4. Valdman (1981: 43) reported that foreigner talk is generally believed to be a means to maintain the social distance between native speakers and foreign learners considered inferior or subservient. 'Talking down' to foreigners can keep them at arm's length (Hall 1966: 8).
5. In Bialystok (1983), L1 based strategies include language switch, foreignization and transliteration. L2 based strategies include semantic contiguity, description and word coinage.

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