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LANGUAGE AND POWER INTO THE 21ST CENTURY

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1. POWER IN LINGUISTICS

For most of those directly concerned with linguistics towards the end of the 20th century, the discipline was still the study of grammar, lexicon, phonology and (to a lesser extent) writing. On the outskirts of that discipline was sociolinguistics and on the outskirts of sociolinguistics the study of language and power. However, while those who inquired into the relationship between language and power were closer to the field of sociolinguistics than to the more 'traditional' body of linguistics, they did not necessarily subscribe to the conventions of sociolinguistics either: if anything, they were likely to claim that a sociolinguistics that did not give a proper place to the language/power relation should be condemned to the eternal fire.

I recognize the existence of a claim that postmodern thought does not support humanism. However, as I see it, the language/power argument arose out of the atmosphere of "humanism" that characterized the first period of postmodern ideologies. The emphasis was on helping the dominated, on reversing the balance of power in the outside world. In the 1980s this "humanism" was countered by a new wave of economic, social and cultural "rationalism" that at least partially tried to reverse the trends introduced in the previous period. Multiculturalism was questioned, languages of economic importance given precedence over those of internal communities, the problem of literacy (in various meanings) emphasized. However, the "humanistic" drift did not disappear altogether and I believe that it will remain one of the leading threads of the ideology of the beginning of this century. With it, we should expect that the language/power issue will stay with us and, perhaps, even increase its visibility.

2. TOWARDS A NEW THEORY

In the Summary of my paper, written a long time before this conference, I nominated a number of points that explain why it has been entitled as it has. However, the time available to me will only make it possible to develop the second part of what I wrote about in my Summary: the issue of the *analysis* of power within linguistics.

2.1. The Language Management Theory and the issue of interests

In this paper I shall particularly emphasize questions of the mechanism of the language/power relationship within the Language Management Theory.

The Language Management Theory grew out of the Language Correction Theory (Neustupný 1978). This theory was developed in the 1970s and 1980s principally by Neustupný and Jernudd. Virtually all features of the Language Management Theory were already included in Neustupný 1983 but the final touch was given to it in cooperation with Björn Jernudd in 1986.

I remember our meetings with Björn in a small corner meeting room at the East West Centre. The script of the new theory was already available, but we needed a name. On the basis of a list I brought to Honolulu we selected “management”. This term looks somewhat rationalistic today, but it had nothing to do with economic rationalism then: it just appeared to us to be the best name we could find. It still has nothing to do with rationalism today.

Björn, committed to going to a conference in May, was writing his paper, and we decided to write it jointly. He introduced the term “interest” which was in reaction to Brian Weinstein’s scheme presented to the same meeting (Weinstein 1987). We wanted to emphasize the line of thought that acknowledged the differences in concerns of various social groups towards the solution of language problems. This line began in my Airlie House conference paper (Neustupný 1968) and continued through my work as an explicit rejection of the “objectivity” of language planning (Neustupný 1970, 1983). This way of thinking was not unfamiliar to Björn, who, when I wrote about the matter in 1970, suggested a reference to Myrdal; he later criticized the one-sided defence of interests in the Jordanian English language policy survey (Jernudd 1975) and wrote an excellent paper in which he stood for the needs of the third world against anglo-american universities (Jernudd 1981).

In the joint paper (Jernudd & Neustupny 1987) we confirmed that there can be no language planning representing a whole society. We claimed that different groups thought and behaved differently. This was not a statement in the tradition of the Old Left. We did not lift banners to lead the dominated to a war against domination. However, in an atmosphere in which most “language planners” believed they represented society at large, it was a cheeky claim, a claim that at the same time created a space in which those who had been silent so far could conduct their maneuvers. We required that anyone who proposed policies should declare his/her interests.

It should be admitted that in the first instance, we did not go into the discussion of power. Perhaps I’ll be allowed to say that very few did. In 1996 Björn Jernudd surveyed the problems of macro-level power within a “power paradigm”: except that the theoretical background was that of the Language Management Theory and that he did not use the term power prolifically (Jernudd 1996). I myself made inroads into the power domain in 1994 (published as Neustupný 1996). The paper dealt with micro-level problems of power within intercultural contact situations and the issue of adjustment to a foreign culture.

2.2. What is power?

I see *interests* and *power* as two closely related concepts. Interests are aspirations for a certain state of affairs that is favourable to the subject. Power operates on interests. Power is the capacity to implement one’s interests, the same capacity that Tollefson (1991) calls “the ability to achieve one’s goals” - except that in Tollefson’s account the category of “interests” is not given prominence.

Like *interests*, *power* is not necessarily conscious. Agents may not be aware that a certain policy is in their interest and none of the agents in a management act may realize that power is being used. As Fairclough (2001:28) has emphasized, there is power by coercion, but there is also power by consent, working with the help of ideology. The implication, which sometimes appears in power studies, that the existence of interests and power are something sinister and conspiratorial, is obviously false. There may be conspiracy and deception, but normally participants in language management work on the assumption that what they are doing is the only natural, objective and correct course of action they can take and that it is beneficial “to all”.

While all participants possess their own interests (although they may not be aware of them), not all agents in language management possess the same power; or they possess it but do not use it.

Power is economic, political, social, cultural, communicative... There are many types of power. It is therefore of little help to say that A has more power than B. For example, we want to know in detail what kind of power it is that allows certain members of a minority community to realize their language interests.

I am not aware of an explicit typology of issues resulting from the language/power relationship and cannot provide one at this moment. A preliminary listing should include at least the following:

- (1) Assignment of power to individual participants in discourse
- (2) The use of power in shaping the language system. Orwell's Newspeak is an example, but power shapes language means for a number of purposes: to create power distance (politeness) relations, to support totalitarianism (Takahashi, forthcoming), to support war/peace (Clyne 1987), to influence the environment (Liddicoat and Bryant 2000), and in many other cases.
- (3) The use of the language created under (2).
- (4) The use of power in other situations:
 - To conduct networks (determine pivots, distribute roles, include or exclude participants, etc.)
 - To regulate content (women must speak more carefully than men, foreigners must register, etc.)
 - To set agenda for speech encounters and make decisions
 - The use of power as a part of the "foreigner problem"
 - The use of power in educationetc.

The management of power aims at issues such as above. The basic problem is the assignment of power, and it is this problem that I shall mainly keep in mind in this paper.

2.3. How does power appear? Generation and management

Two basic processes of using language are the process of generation and the process of management. The same is true for power. In the course of generation, power is

assigned to individual interactants on the basis of sociocultural strategies. However, the results of this process may appear in conflict with individual interactants' interests. Such interactants may mark the power assignment negatively and initiate a management process. For example it may be in the interest of each of two speakers to speak their respective native language, but the power strategies within the situation may assign more power to A than to B. There is then a possibility (but not a certainty) that B may initiate a management process.

2.4. Micro- and macro-level of the analysis of power

The investigation of all interests and power relations requires the micro-level analysis of interaction in the first instance. Macro-level issues are sometimes introduced from ideologies but they, too, ultimately derive from micro-level considerations.

The micro-level management can also be called SIMPLE, while macro-level management can be called ORGANIZED. The same goes for power. Power is exercised at the micro-level, as when in an intercultural contact situation it is the native speaker who decides about a topic of conversation, or at the macro-level, in cases such as a Ministry of Education deciding about the language that all students should acquire.

The “problem of power” means that the assignment and operation of power is “managed”. In other words, power becomes the object of participants’ attention.

2.5. Management of power: micro-level

The process passes through several stages: deviation from norms, noting, evaluation, adjustment design and implementation (cf. Neustupny 1985, Jernudd & Neustupny 1987).

2.5.1. Norms and deviations

The “problem of power” commences from the fact that the assignment of power within an interaction act does not conform with norms or, in other words, with the “expectations” of the participants. Not all participants possess the same norms concerning the distribution of power and it is this differential in norms that furnishes the prerequisite for the management process. Norms are flexible but they do exist both within the

community and in the individuals in question, and are evoked when interaction acts are generated.

In Japanese company situations (as in most other company situations) the section head commands a considerable degree of power. This is a sociocultural norm accepted by most participants and it is often (but not always) reflected in communication acts by the fact that honorific forms are used towards him, while he uses plain forms to (most) others. However, the validity of this power assignment, as far as communication is concerned, may not agree with the norm (“expectation”) of a newly arrived employee.

Participants who possess norms or expectations different from those of the majority of their society often voluntarily assimilate to the majority norms (for example, speak a different language), and this may also be true of power norms. In this case, minority groups accept the assignment of power as determined by norms common within the majority society. Within a society members are socialized into a certain power assignment environment and normally accept it. For example, children accept that parents possess power over their behaviour in general and also over their verbal interaction: for example parents decide what encounters the children will participate in (what subjects at school they will take, etc.), when they are allowed to speak within home encounters and parents also keep the power to direct their children’s language acquisition.

This is not to say that the responsibility of linguistics is relieved and that cases of assimilated norms do not require any consideration. However, we equally must not ignore the fact that voluntary norm assimilation is not an exception.

2.5.2. Noting

It is essential for a deviation to be noted before it can become a problem. One of the weaknesses of many language/power studies is their assumption that any deviation from a participant’s norms concerning power assignment constitutes a problem in itself. This is not so. There are many cases where norms differ but deviations remain unnoted. In these cases the power issue simply does not exist.

The reasons why deviations remain unnoted vary. I shall not go into these reasons in detail here but just point out that this happens because of the inability of the participants to process more than a certain number of stimuli (for example, when there are too many

deviations at the same time) or when other strong stimuli intervene (a “life danger” situation). A deviation of course also remains unnoted if the participant concerned lacks the ability to decode markers of power. For example, in a study to be discussed in detail in 3.1, Ko (forthcoming) has identified markers of power in the speech of a Japanese participant who interviewed a young Indo-Chinese worker. The interactive competence of the Indo-Chinese participant was not developed to the extent that he could detect the delicate markers of the power the Japanese participant generated.

Power deviation can be noted and the process may finish there, without evaluation of the deviation. For example, when an old person notices that he is labeled as old (and hence with diminished power), but doesn’t mind.

2.5.3. Evaluation

As a result of noting, deviations from norms may be *evaluated*, negatively or positively. A negative evaluation constitutes a problem. For example, a Japanese employee who is not used to being called *kimi* “you (junior)” (such address does not agree with his norms) may notice that his superior has used such an address, and may evaluate the usage negatively.

However, we must acknowledge that at the micro-level not all power is evaluated negatively. Fairclough (2001) gives an example of a police interview that indeed reveals repeated generation of power. However, some of the features, such as questions in the form of words rather than full sentences, or lack of acknowledgment after each answer, will also occur in the presentation of neighbourhood questionnaires that do not normally imply the imposition of power, and are not necessarily negatively evaluated. An airport routine security investigation generates power features but many passengers are grateful to the police if they use their power to the full extent.

Power can be evaluated positively. For example, in Australia children are in principle obliged to receive their education in English, because of the power of the State. However, some immigrants evaluate such a regulation positively.

2.5.4. Adjustment plan

Although the management sequence may end at the evaluation level, following the

evaluation stage an *adjustment plan* may be selected. In the case of power such plans normally fit the category of “empowerment” or “disempowerment”.

Adjustment plans can be classified into a pre-adjustment, in-adjustment or post-adjustment category. Pre-adjustment is based on previous experience and prevents the occurrence of a power inadequacy. For example, an individual adopts his/her own policy of gender-equality in language. In-adjustment responds to evaluations as they appear in the chain of speech under generation. On the other hand, post-adjustment repairs chains that have already been completed. An example is an apology for a statement based on power.

2.5.5. Implementation

Adjustment plans are not necessarily implemented. One reason can be that the participant concerned lacks the power to adjust. For example, a speaker may wish to use his own variety of speech but that may be connected with sanctions he/she may not afford to carry. A participant may not be given the chance to implement a turn or he/she may voluntarily decide not to implement such a turn.

It is an important issue to research under what conditions micro-level adjustment of language/power inadequacies can be and are adjusted.

2.5.6 Significance of the process

All these stages are important for the processes of power management. We want to know whether deviations from norms of power are noted or not – irrespective of whether they are evaluated or not. And if they are evaluated, we want to know how. Frequently deviations from power norms are posited as problems, on the basis of noting by observers/researchers. Admittedly, the management of language/power relationship cannot be simply based on micro-level analysis alone; however, the most important processes are not evaluations by researchers but by participants in interaction acts. We must know more about how power is actually noted and evaluated by participants. (The problem of unilateral attention to evaluations by act-outsiders has been a problem, at the micro-level, in “error analysis”, and at the macro-level in almost the whole of language policy and planning.)

3. TWO MICRO-LEVEL EXAMPLES

3.1. Generation and management of power: Example 1 (Intercultural contact encounter)

Let me give an example of how power is generated and managed in discourse. Data for this process derive from Ko (forthcoming), the analysis of a first-encounter meeting between a young Japanese public servant (J1, in his thirties) and a young Indo-Chinese man (C1, in his twenties) who arrived in Japan 3 years prior to the conversation and was working in a small Japanese factory. The conversation was held in Japanese and the section I shall refer to occurs at the beginning of the conversation, next the introductions and greetings.

- 1J1 *xx san wa, donna shigoto shite irassharu n desu ka ?* "What work do you do?"
2C1 *ma, ano · amari, abunai shigoto da keredomo, ano · nan dake, senban toka shite imasu.* Well, yes, not much, it is a risky work, but, what do you call it, working at a lathe.
3J1 *A, senban ↑* "Oh, a lathe?"
4C1 *Hai, senban toka, supuraisu(=furaisu)toka, booringu* "Yes, a lathe, milling cutter, or boring"
5J1 *Booringu toka, kikai no anaake|toka, kakoo ↑* "Boring, or making mechanically holes, processing?"
6C1 *Ana kakoo · soo yuu shigoto.* "Holes processing, such work."

On the surface of this conversation there is nothing unusual. C1's Japanese is far from being perfect, but it is workable. In turn 1 the Japanese participant asks about his interlocutor's work, a "natural" question in this situation. However, from the follow-up interview (Neustupny 1990, 1999, 2002) it becomes clear that J1's question was far from being a conversation routine. It was intended to define the status of the interlocutor within the social space of his company and indirectly the question of the interactant's power relationship vis-a-vis others. Such assignment is important in Japanese verbal encounters because it governs the form of address as well as other features of discourse. Apparently, the outward appearance of C1 was shabby and there was no doubt that he was a manual worker but this was not sufficient information for J1 to proceed with any further interaction in the encounter.

Turn 1 is purely a generation process which adheres to the Japanese strategies of ascertaining the position of the participants (or the participant with the lower status/power). However, the follow-up interview revealed that J1 was unsatisfied with C1's answer in turn 2. In the interview he reported „I expected that he would answer by saying whether he was working in transport or in a an office position, but since he said ‚I am working at a lathe‘ I understood more or less the content of his work, but not how to call [categorize] his work.“ Obviously, „a latheman/turner“ was not sufficiently status-category-like for C1.

Having failed at establishing C1's category at his first attempt, J1 evaluates C1's answer in turn 2 negatively and commences a complicated management process. In turns 7 to 14 the conversation diverges to C1's training. Of this J1 says in the follow-up interview that he wanted to ascertain first his interactant's competence in the job. Turns 15 to 31 contain another diversion to check in what way C1's Japanese competence and the assistance of his parent (who worked in the same company) were involved and a direct question as to whether his apprenticeship has been completed. The Japanese participant stated in the follow-up interview that following this exchange he understood that C1 was not a *minarai* „apprentice“ but a full status employee. After these two diversions J1 makes the final series of direct questions resulting at turn 43 in his conclusion that C1 is a *koojin* „factory worker“. In the follow-up interview he stated: „At this stage, I felt that finally I got the answer to what I wanted to ask in my first question“.

This process is covert: J1's real intention to generate status/power assignment is not visible on the surface. It could only be unearthed thanks to the fact that Ko used the technique of the follow-up interview. In the follow-up interview J1 provided a detailed account of his management strategies which finally led to the establishment of the category *koojin* „a factory worker“. The example shows the importance of introspective methods such as the follow-up interview in working on the issue of language and power.

In her analysis of the data, Ko emphasizes two points.

- (1) The management process executed by J1 is covert. Turn 1-6 contain conversation about the content of C1's work, but J1's intention to identify his status is hidden.
- (2) At the same time, it also reveals another dimension of power: it is highly unlikely that the same management process would be applied in the case of an interlocutor who is a native speaker of Japanese or a high status foreigner. It is the fact that C1 is a low status immigrant that makes the management process possible. Power, granted in intercultural contact situations to native speakers, is thus employed to establish further

power relationships.

J1's intention (as appears clearly from the rest of the conversation) was to establish a power relationship through categorizing his interlocutor. Note that the focus of the interaction for J1 is not the content of his interlocutor's work which was already revealed in turns 2 to 6 and which did not attract much of J1's attention. His aim was the establishment of a status category such as *kooiin* „factory worker“. Not all Japanese speakers proceed in this way, but for J1 it was obviously a matter of high importance to establish the status of C1 in his company and in this way, his status in the social space in general. On the other hand we cannot deny that J1's behaviour was not totally directed to the power relationship. The kind of categorization that was performed here is not only used for assigning status/power. Although not evident throughout the 43 turns analyzed here, J1 was also interested in C1's role in his company. Power is not the only social relation that matters.

3.2. Generation and management of power: Example 2 (Classroom discourse)

The existence of power in classrooms is obvious, and has been the object of attention in language/power studies (Fairclough 2001, 38). The more traditional a classroom, the more physical structural features support the power/status of the teacher. There is a platform, on the platform a lofty desk, all other desks face the teacher, etc. The teacher commands a number of privileges, such as moving freely in the classroom and speaking whenever he/she wants. In the past we used to believe that this all was “natural”. However, with the overall changes of the communicative style towards less power/status, the platform was removed, students' desks got close to the teacher's, the nails fixing student's desks to the floor disappeared, and students could go and check with their friends, and speak to other students when this was needed.

The data I have used originate from a survey conducted by Han Jianhui in seven university classrooms in China, where Japanese language was taught. Han (in preparation) identified the following features that could be connected with the teacher's “authority/power”:

- (1) The teacher holds absolute power with regard to the commencement and termination of classes.
- (2) Teachers have the power to nominate students
- (3) Teachers have the power to decide on the language to be used (Japanese or Chinese)

- (4) Teachers have the power to determine when and how students will be evaluated (praised or criticized)
- (5) Teachers have the power to answer or not to answer students questions
- (6) Teachers have the power to control student's behaviour
- (7) They have the power to decide about the range of activities
- (8) They have the power to give vent to sentiments such as anger.

Han's list is wider but not substantially different from the inventory which resulted from Fairclough's (2001:38) analysis of a medical class. In Han's data T1 arrives in the classroom and says:

T1 *hai, jugyoo o hajimemashoo. Peeji 46 o hiraite kudasai . . . koko de naze "ni" wo tsukatte imasu ka*

OK, let's start the class. Open your books on page 46. . . . Why is "ni" being used here?

Notice that, unlike in 3.1, there is no need for a special discourse to assign power/status to individual participants. The power has already been assigned within the social system, once and for all. The teacher uses the power assigned to him to implement the points (1) to (8) given above. For example, in the following extract he expresses his indignation concerning the students' inability to distinguish between the Japanese words *kenkyuusei* "research student" and *daigakuinsei* "postgraduate student":

S1 *Kenkyuusei* "a research student"

T7 *Kenkyuusei, kenkyuusei desu ka, wo gei nimen jiang guo ma? (looks angry) kenkyuusei desu ka, kenkyuusei desu ka. Minasan. "A research student, is it a research student? (In Chinese) did I tell you before? (looks angry) Is it a research student? Is it a research student? Everyone!"*

The teacher sometimes appears to manage his own power assignment. In other words, he notes his power, evaluates it negatively, and attempts an adjustment by turning it over to the students. For example, he says:

T: *...naze desu ka. Kurdejitto kaado, iroirona kaado ga arimasu ne, soo deshoo*
 ↑ "Why is that? Credit cards, various credit cards exist, isn't that so?"

By using *soo deshoo* ↑ "isn't that so?", he marks the act of exercising his power to hold the floor negatively and attempts to release it. However, this phrase remains covert unless there is a real release of power, accompanied by handing over the turn to the students. According to Han, this does indeed happen in some activities where the role of the teacher

becomes secondary and the students are given sufficient time to complete their sentences.

The power/status space within the classroom is also managed by the students. Han conducted follow-up interviews with the students and as a result he concluded that students evaluated the teachers' exercise of power negatively in situations where the teachers were simply repeating already acquired information and where power was divorced from any positive meaning. However, students reacted positively in situations where the teachers were providing new information (such as location of the accent, meaning of new words, etc.). Two conclusions can be derived from this. Firstly, students see clearly that the classroom serves as a location for power relations and on occasions give such relations a very negative evaluation. On the other hand, the classroom is not only considered as a space where power is exercised.

Auerbach (1995) painted a world of language teaching with two opposing extremes. One was an "ends-means" model which "serves as a mechanism of social control, disempowering for both students and teachers" and where "learners should assimilate into preexisting structures and practices without questioning the power relations inherent in them" (p.14). The alternative extreme was a "participatory" approach which "aims not to fit learners into the existing order, but to enable them to critically examine it and become active in shaping their own roles in it" (p.15).

However admirable the alternative models may be, at the micro-level we must question the assumption that all power is illegitimate. In the classroom situation some forms of power must be opposed. Nevertheless, there is power that connects with knowledge beneficial to the learners, and in the management process the learners do not evaluate such power negatively. It may be tempting to say that such learners have been misled or deceived by those in power. However, should we go this far in our mistrust and disdain for the learners?

In other words, the issue of power must take into account management of power at the micro-level. We should not ignore how individual participants actually behave toward language and power, and we should not succumb to the temptation to brand all power as bad. However, this statement is clearly not an exhortation to those in power to use it against the powerless.

Furthermore, Han's data also demonstrates another point. It is most likely that power and role are closely connected. Apart from power being sometimes legitimate, what appears to be power may be dictated by the role of the teacher as an educator. However, more data will be necessary to elaborate on this issue.

4. POWER AT THE MACRO-LEVEL

The language/power relationship is subject not only to simple (micro-level) but also to organized (macro-level) management. Individuals, primary groups, social groupings, and governments manage the occurrence of power in discourse. For example, individuals decide about their policies with regard to the use of address, universities formulate guidelines for the treatment of gender, teacher trainers induce classroom behaviour patterns, and governments regulate the teaching of foreign languages. All this management has very clear power content.

What is the mechanism of the language/power problems at the macro-level?

Firstly, the base for the macro-level is the micro-level management. Power is assigned in individual interaction acts and it can be assumed that the experience of those acts accumulates and forms the basis of organized management. For example, university regulations to remove sex-oriented power from university language are based on individual cases of management of gender differences in discourse.

However, organized management cannot all be explained as the piling up of simple management acts. While simple management is frequently unconscious or semi-conscious, organized management is always conscious. From this comes the fact that it is accompanied by attitudes, ideologies and theories. In the case of power, ideologies (e.g. political) naturally play an important role. In the networks where organized management is conducted, social power, including the power of the state networks, stands out and we can witness complicated processes of negotiation.

The process of organized management is a complicated version of the basic simple management process. This is also true for power management. There is:

- (1) Deviations from norms, norms being in this case the variety of language management (conscious norms that ultimately derive from simple management but are further shaped by the factors given above),

- (2) Noting of such deviations that takes the form of discussion in management networks,
- (3) Evaluation that also develops through discourse conducted in management networks,
- (4) Adjustment plans, i.e. recommendations of individuals, committees or academies,
- (5) Implementation by implementation bodies, often established for that purpose, but sometimes primarily serving other aims (as when the whole organization implements gender regulations).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The question is what can linguists do in order to take language management beyond mere identification of the participants with one of the interest groups involved.

The issue of interests is basic. We must realize that we possess differential interests. We also must be looking for joint interests with other participants, and perhaps for universal interests – without committing ourselves to finding them.

Power is the capacity to realize one's interests. The principal claim of this paper is the recognition that the issue of power within our context is the issue of the MANAGEMENT of power as it appears in language. This recognition places the study of power on a firmer theoretical basis and enables us to behave in a more analytical way. This understanding does not, of course solve the question of where to place ourselves with regard to various solutions of the language/power issue. This matter cannot be solved except in reference to the participants' interests. I wish to repeat here again what I said in 1983 in my paper *Towards a Paradigm for Language Planning*: "I cannot see how language planners, working within a rigorous theoretical framework, could be barred from supporting particular values and political aims". Whatever they may be. However, whenever this happens, we should clearly say *what* it is that we support, and should not claim that it is us who propose the *right* policy.

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