Annotated Bibliography of Research in the Teaching of English

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Twice a year, in the May and November issues, RTE publishes a selected bibliography of recent research in the teaching of English. Most of the studies appeared during the six-month period preceding the compilation of the bibliography (January through June, 1998, for the present bibliography), but some studies that appeared earlier are occasionally included. The listing is selective; we make no attempt to include all research and research-related studies that appeared in the period under review. Comments on the bibliography and suggestions about items for inclusion may be directed to the bibliography editors. We encourage you to send your suggestions to brownd@oak.cats.ohiou.edu or mwhiting@ocean.st.usm.edu. You may also submit comments or recommend publications through the Annotated Bibliography page of RTE's World Wide Web site at http://www.ncte.org/rte/.

Arts in the Language Arts


Provides a summary of recent research on drama's role in language arts learning. Includes essays by the editor and contributions from researchers studying classroom uses of drama. Also provides an extensive bibliography of studies on classroom drama. Argues for more widespread use of drama in constructivist language arts classes.

Bilingual Education, Foreign Language Education


Investigates the effect of language distance on the attainment of English language literacy by testing the hypothesis that students whose first languages are closest to English will perform better on a VCE English exam than those whose first...
language is more distant. Uses correlational analyses and t-tests to analyze the data which include the participants’ performance on an Australian ESL end-of-school examination for non-English-speaking students and an exam in their first language. Finds that while language distance exists, it cannot be separated clearly enough from other variables to allow firm pedagogical implications to be drawn.


Reviews research that addresses how grammar can best be taught in terms of 4 theoretically motivated instructional options: (a) structure input, (b) explicit instruction, (c) production practice, and (d) negative feedback. Considers a number of possibilities for the pedagogic use of the information it makes available, based on the distinction between teachers’ practical knowledge and technical knowledge. Codes these possibilities as (a) treating the research findings as provisional specifications to be experimented with through teaching, (b) conducting action research, and (c) conducting participatory research involving teachers and researchers working collaboratively. Calls for more research that investigates how teachers integrate technical knowledge into their personal pedagogical systems.


Examines siblings’ roles as literacy mediators and the role of scaffolding in the reading process between older and younger siblings. Uses both ethnographic and ethnomethodological approaches to compare the home and school reading sessions of Bangladeshi students living in London. Finds that detailed knowledge about linguistic minority children’s home reading patterns enables teachers to build more successful learning strategies. Argues for the need to move beyond the current paradigm of parental involvement in reading that presently informs home/school reading programs for linguistic minority children in the UK.


Explores the moral dimension of ESL teaching to adults. Uses a theoretical framework based on the work of Jackson, Boostrom, and Hansen (1993) and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis to examine examples of classroom interactions in an Intensive English Program at a large midwestern university. Finds that classroom routines and exchanges can be viewed as having moral significance, that the “moral dimension of ESL teaching is complex and multi-valued,” and that the moral meanings of classroom interactions are often ambiguous. Argues that “morality is highly contextualized and is rooted in specific relations” and that teachers unavoidably act as moral agents.


Investigates the reading processes of three first-year university Spanish speakers who were identified as “underprepared” readers based on their scores on the reading skills section of the California State University English Placement Test and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Test. Uses the following data sources to create a profile of each participant: 1) a questionnaire to gather demographic information and patterns of the participants’ L1 and L2 use; 2) think-aloud protocols; and 3) a timed summary of the reading material each participant completed after the think-alouds. Finds that the three participants used some similar approaches to reading but that they also showed considerable variations in their reading strategies. Argues that reading teachers should use and build upon the reading strategies that individual L2 readers have and that think-aloud protocols would be helpful in reading classes for L2 readers in several ways.

Examines the relationship between nonverbal forms of expression and L2 private speech which is defined as “vocalized forms of speech for the self that function metacognitively to help the learner plan, guide, and monitor a course of activity.” Uses qualitative analysis to code videotapes of four Japanese and four Venezuelan university students retelling a story and narrating a story as depicted in six sequential drawings. Finds that the participants’ nonverbal forms of expression were an integral part of their cognitive/affective process, that gestures used in a “self-regulatory capacity after brief pauses” implied a possible connection to inner speech, and that nonverbal expressions illuminated “the private speech they accompanied.” Suggests that self-regulatory nonverbal forms may be related to cross-cultural and proficiency differences.


Examines three classroom practices that were observed during an ethnographic study in a Grade 1 classroom enrolling L2 learners and Anglophones. Uses a “community-of-practice perspective” to analyze three classroom practices: (1) the location of the participants in the classroom setting, (2) the management of the material, and (3) the source of the intellectual resources needed to complete school tasks. Finds that the three classroom practices contributed to the construction of L2 learners as individuals and that the three practices differentiated participants from one another and contributed to community stratification. Argues that in classrooms in which the stratification becomes visible, some students “become defined as deficient and are thus systematically excluded” from practices that might otherwise help them “appropriate identities and practices of growing competence and expertise.”

Discourse Processes


Investigates 4th and 6th graders’ strategies for processing informational texts in order to understand and remember new information and how think-aloud protocols might change the students’ processing of the texts. Uses statistical tests to analyze the think-aloud protocols and the dictated recall reports by children who did and did not produce think-aloud protocols as they read two passages, one easier than the other. Finds that providing think-aloud protocols hampered the younger readers and helped the older readers, that the think-aloud protocols showed students were flexible as they explained the texts, and that readers tended to focus on the sentence level as they explained the texts and noted problems with understanding.


Explores gendered classroom talk and literary interpretations in a 12th grade Advanced Placement English class. Uses social enactment theory as the theoretical basis to analyze three videotaped class discussions and three videotaped interviews about the discussions with one male and one female class member. Finds that the power the students exercised over their literacy practices illustrates the complexity of gendered talk about texts and that “gender as a deterministic external force is problematic” because students both “accepted and contested traditional gender expectations.” Argues that reporting characterizations of groups may miss individual exceptions and that students should be viewed as individual decision makers.

Family and Workplace Literacy


Explores notions of audience and differences between non-sexist and gender-neutral writing in two home sewing machine manuals published before the Civil War. Uses text analysis to examine a document by Grover & Baker and one by I. M. Singer & Co. Finds that while the
Grover & Baker manual focuses on the needs and knowledge of women users, it is an example of sexism in technical writing, and the Singer publication is an example of gender-neutral communication although it uses a male machinist voice of authority and denies feminine expertise. Concludes that eliminating sexism from technical writing is "only possible to the extent that gender does not serve in our culture as a primary vehicle for demarcating its citizens, their capabilities, and the tools they use for work."


Focuses on six low-income, high achieving African American adolescents who expressed an acute recognition of how race and class operated to constrain the life chances of people like themselves. Uses observation and interviews to study the six participants. Finds that although their knowledge of struggle did not curtail the adolescents' academic success, it may have contributed to their sense of human agency and facilitated their academic motivation. Maintains that the meanings arising from immediate experiences and discourses are essential for understanding the diverse ways by which cultural minorities interpret and respond to their subjugation.


Examines the relationships between parenting beliefs and practices and the school performance of fourth and fifth grade children in 75 Asian American, 109 Hispanic American, and 91 European American families. Uses statistical tests to analyze questionnaires completed by the parents and the children's end-of-year grades and achievement test scores. Finds that parents' beliefs and behaviors differed across the ethnic groups, that parental beliefs and behaviors were related to children's school achievement within each ethnic group, and that the relations between parental beliefs and school achievement differ across the three ethnic groups. Argues that teachers should consider parents' beliefs and goals for their children when they work with parents in facilitating children's school experiences.


Investigates the use of passive and active voice verbs in 185 documents written by 28 civilian and military members of the U.S. Air Force. Uses quantitative methods to determine the frequency of active and passive voice verbs in the documents and qualitative methods to analyze discourse-based interviews with the writers to determine reasons for their choices. Finds that the ratio of passive to active verbs was approximately one to two and that agency was the most significant factor in the writers' choices of verbs. Recommends that on-the-job writing instructors and handbooks advocate general principles for the appropriate use of both the voices and that organizations use in-house writing experts when possible.


Examines whether reading storybooks and home instruction in reading and writing as reported by middle-class parents in Canada were related to the oral and written language skills of 100 kindergartners and 47 first graders. Uses several statistical analyses such as hierarchical regression and fixed-order regression to analyze data that included questionnaires completed by parents and standardized tests completed by students to measure their vocabulary, listening comprehension, and knowledge of print concepts. Finds that parents who frequently read storybooks to their children did not necessarily report teaching reading and writing, that storybook reading predicted only oral-language skills, and that
parent teaching predicted only written-language skills. Argues the findings imply that storybook reading and parent teaching “may be independent experiences, with different links to early skills and, ultimately, to reading acquisition.”

Professional Development


Investigates what teacher educators are learning from using portfolios. Uses an open-ended survey with five questions and the constant comparative method to analyze twenty-four completed questionnaires. Finds that the respondents used portfolios for multiple purposes; that 92 percent of respondents felt portfolio use made their practice more student-centered, more defined by professional standards, and more reflective; and that portfolio use created several tensions related to time and assessment. Concludes that the full value of portfolios has yet to be recognized.


Describes how the metaphors and images one elementary language arts pre-service teacher used to describe his practice helped him and his university supervisor discuss his difficulties in the classroom. Uses qualitative methods of data collection including field notes made when observing the participant teach, videotapes of his teaching, and conversations with participant. Finds that the participant’s “two-way street” metaphor for teaching indicated he wanted to replace the teacher-centered approach he knew as a student but specific images that support the metaphor were problematic. Argues that teacher educators can use metaphor and image analysis to foster future teachers' thinking about their beliefs and assumptions about teaching.


Investigates the use of literature case studies with literature logs and literature circle discussions in one undergraduate reading/language arts methods class. Uses qualitative/inductive analysis to examine the literature logs' content and benefits. Finds the preservice teachers’ responses fell into three broad categories: responses about self, responses about children, and responses about society/ethics. Proposes several benefits of the literature case studies including these: (1) the novels included many positive examples of teachers’ practical knowledge; (2) the literature response format encouraged risk taking and self-reflection; and (3) the literature case studies enabled students to contextualize content from their teacher education courses.


Reports on research conducted through the Teacher Education and Learning to Teach study aimed at understanding how teachers learn to teach writing through both preservice and inservice programs. Finds that across teachers and programs, learning to teach writing was “piecemeal and uneven.” Concludes that rather than expecting teachers to adopt whole new sets of practices, teacher educators should attempt to persuade them to temper their initial ideas with attention to other ideas.


Investigates five preservice elementary teachers’ perceptions of electronic portfolios in literacy education classes. Uses qualitative methods to analyze portfolios, questionnaires, and focus group interviews. Finds that each student displayed and organized portfolio material in unique ways, that all five students thought the portfolios helped them make connections between classes and field experiences, and that they

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viewed the effect of technology on portfolio process as positive. Concludes that integration of technology into portfolios has potential but needs further study to determine effectiveness and the best use of time.

**Reading**


Investigates how the texts of teen magazines shape a group of girls’ images and esteem and ways to disrupt the seemingly gender biased social order. Uses interviews with an ethnically diverse group of sixth and seventh grade girls in a Toronto Public School. Finds that introducing a critical feminist perspective to a group of girls whose own desires seemed to include the reproduction of media forms that reinforce power relationships, stereotypes, and the objectification of women was difficult. Concludes that new story lines are needed to successfully invert and break the bounds of the old structures and discourses while still attracting girls as readers.


Examines the role of reading instruction in five science classrooms of a middle school serving 800 students. Uses a “continuous time device” designed to account for the time devoted to content reading instruction, content instruction using activities other than reading, and no instruction; the coding process separated content reading instruction into three categories: active, passive, and oblique. Finds that 73% of the classroom time was spent in teacher directed activities that included “active reading instruction (16%), oblique reading instruction (33%), and content instruction (16%)” and that the majority of reading instruction seemed to have little in common with strategies supported by research. Argues that a thorough examination of the way content area reading instruction is presented to secondary teachers is needed.


Examines the effectiveness of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies for First-Grade Readers (First-Grade PALS) as a tool for enhancing reading achievement. Uses statistical tests to compare pre and post tests of readers who were and were not in classes where the First-Grade PALS was used and to analyze a question given to teachers about their use of First-Grade PALS. Finds that the teachers and students found great reading gains and satisfaction when using First-Grade PALS, particularly those with previous low-achievement in reading. Offers several explanations for the success of First-Grade PALS including efficient use of classroom time, the integration of research, the “relative simplicity of the tutoring routines,” and the teacher friendly materials.


Examines relationships among teachers’ perceptions of literacy acquisition, children’s involvement in literacy events, and classroom literacy materials. Uses the Literacy Acquisition Profile to label 12 teachers’ perceptions as representing either a reading readiness or emergent literacy perspective, the Inventory of Literacy Indicators to assess the classroom materials, and classroom observation of 16 students’ involvement in literacy events. Finds that children in classrooms of teachers with an emergent literacy perspective participated in a higher number and greater variety of literacy events than did children with teachers representing the reading readiness perspective and that literacy materials in classrooms of teachers with the emergent literacy perspective were higher in quantity and quality than were the materials in the reading readiness classrooms.
Teaching and Learning of Literature


Investigates the impact of an ethnic literature curriculum in two urban and ethnically diverse 10th grade English classes. Uses data collected in a year-long ethnographic study of both classes and retrospective surveys and conversations with students from one of the classes two years after the year-long study. Finds that the literature and open class discussions about culture and identity led to discoveries about diversity and stereotypes, that the students identified with literary characters across racial, ethnic, and gender lines, and that when students identified with characters and texts, they talked about personal concerns including "family nostalgia and loss" and adolescent challenges.


Investigates how four upper elementary girls imagine the "world of a story," situate themselves in that fictional world, create images, and interpret relationships. Uses Symbolic Representation Interviews to gather information about the participants' ways of engaging with their favorite book and "feminist interpretations of good and bad girl subject positions" to analyze excerpts from the interview. Finds that the girls used the book, other familiar storylines, and their own socio-historical and personal meanings of good and bad girl to position themselves in their own worlds. Argues that the Symbolic Representation Interview can be used as a pedagogy to help children consider the possibility of alternative positions.


Reports a five-year ethnography of life and learning in an urban middle-school English class, using interviews, observations, artifacts of teaching and learning, and other data sources. Re-examines assumptions behind constructivist teaching practices through analysis of the social and cultural dynamics of classroom processes. Argues that teachers need to reflect on the social consequences of their teaching practices by adopting a sociopolitical perspective that enables them to make the social structure that undergirds teaching and learning more visible.


Examines the collaborative processes of five high school seniors as they interpreted Hamlet and produced a multimedia interpretive text representing their understanding of the character Laertes. Uses a coding system derived from tenets of cultural-historical activity theory to analyze the transcript of the group's discussions as they produced their interpretation. Finds that the participants' meaning-making was grounded in their cultural values and practices, limited by contextual constraints, and influenced by the social processes in which the participants engaged and the intertextual connections they made. Argues that reading and composing processes are on-going processes that are continually being mediated into new interpretive texts that in turn serve as the basis for continued reflection and development of thinking.

Technology and Literacy


Examines the study of current events in three high schools that use the Channel One television news program and three that do not in order to investigate effects on motivation and knowledge when viewing news in supportive environments.
Uses statistical analysis to analyze a current events knowledge test given to all students in February, 1993 and another current events test and the motivation and self-reported news-seeking behavior questionnaires three months later. Finds that students with greater prior knowledge reported more out-of-school news-seeking behaviors than did other students and that a number of factors influenced current events knowledge including watching television news in a supportive environment, grade point average, gender, and socioeconomic status.


Explores how computer networking affects the development of voice in six college women who participated in an electronic discussion of gender issues with students in urban and suburban high schools. Uses ethnographic methodology modified by the goals of feminist research to analyze data that included the six-week computer discussion, questionnaires, and interviews with the six college women and three of the secondary students. Finds that computer networking provided an effective medium for practicing critical literacy. Concludes that using computers to extend classroom borders to diverse populations can contribute to participants' learning.


Investigates what and how three adolescents learn about their identities, focusing on television culture. Uses a cultural studies approach to examine the adolescents' home, neighborhood, school, and peer cultures; their comments about a favorite television persona; and their uses of television. Finds that how the adolescents "learn within local cultures (home and peer, in particular) is qualitatively different from how they learn within television culture, even though most of what they learn about themselves and the social world in these cultures is complementary."

Argues that further studies of individual adolescents and other media such as music, films, video games, computer software, and online services would help anthropologists and educators understand more about adolescents and how they learn within and across different cultures.


Examines strategies used by four adult learners in a "Technology for Teachers" course when they searched the World Wide Web for information for a personal research topic. Uses both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather and analyze data such as presearch surveys, think-aloud protocols, and post-search questionnaires. Finds that the four participants used a variety of strategies and that self-reported knowledge and perceptions of disorientation and perceived self-efficacy influenced the strategies used. Concludes that helping learners reduce discomfort and disorientation prior to their using open-ended hypermedia information systems may be critical.


Examines the writing processes of 82 first-year and 58 upper-level college students when they composed on screen. Uses a variety of methods including statistical tests to analyze pre- and post-course questionnaires about composing behavior, qualitative analysis of participants' informal writing process reports, and a five-point scale to rate the participants' first and final drafts of their final essays for their classes. Finds that when composing on screen, many first-year students expanded their writing processes by making discourse-level revisions and many upper-level students tended to abbreviate their writing process. Discusses possible reasons for findings and concludes that students can learn and adopt various writing strategies when using a computer.

Upitis, R. (1998). From hackers to luddites,

Examines responses to computer and video technology both at home and school in a year-long study of 7th and 8th graders in a low- to middle-income school in an Ontario city. Uses qualitative analysis of observations, interviews, concept maps, and journals to categorize the 29 students’ “computer personalities.” Finds seven categories that characterized the students’ use of computer and video technology: hackers, game players, game creators, reluctant users, luddites, eager users, and sporadic users. Also finds that both boys and girls felt included in some ways but not at all times or for all purposes. Recommends several ways teachers can use the categories to create classroom environments that are more inclusionary with regard to technology use in classrooms.


Investigates the effectiveness of television and print to transmit news to children and whether the effectiveness depends upon the children’s reading proficiency. Uses standardized reading comprehension tests to assess reading proficiency of 144 fourth and sixth grade participants in Leiden, The Netherlands, and various statistical tests to analyze the children’s recall tests after they watched a TV news broadcast of a daily news program designed specifically for children or read one of three print versions of the same news stories. Finds the children who watched TV news recalled the information better than those who read print versions. Argues that the extra mnemonic support provided by redundant pictorial information influences the children’s recall of TV news, but also offers three other possible factors that might have contributed to the findings.


Investigates the relationship of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and in-class discourse in two undergraduate writing classes at Purdue University. Uses both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection and analysis including qualitative analysis of field notes and interviews and quantitative analysis of newsgroup and listserv messages and student surveys. Finds that student participation in online discussions related more to the ways instructors structured, managed, and evaluated online discussions as course assignments than to the in-class discourse and that student participation online also related to their perspectives of CMC and their roles as students in traditionally organized courses. Argues that more inquiry about how CMC influences and relates to more traditional discursive spaces of teachers and students is needed.

Writing


Investigates how four European American and four African American teachers rated the same formal and informal writings by children of different ethnic backgrounds. Uses the teachers’ ratings and structured interviews with the African American teachers as data. Finds the ratings of the two different groups of teachers proved substantially different. Offers the comments and suggestions given by the African American teachers about teaching writing to, and assessing the work of, culturally different students.


Examines sentences from papers on a college English proficiency examination that a reader might label as “awkward.” Uses a coding system
that included four syntactic problems (embedding, syntax shift, parallel structure, and direct/indirect object) to categorize the sentences. Finds that the most common syntactic problem was a problem in embedding that occurred when students mismanaged dependent clauses and that other problems in order of frequency were syntax shift, parallel structure, and direct/indirect object. Analyzes many sentences in some detail, discussing the reasons for the awkwardness and how the problems might be corrected and offers suggestions for instruction.


Examines the uses and development of argument structures in argument essays written in class by students in grades six, eight, and ten and by a group of professional writers. Uses an elaborated model of argument based on Toulmin to identify and analyze the structural complexity and extent to which argument structures were used in the essays. Finds that argument structure was the predominant organizational framework in both the experts' and the students' writing, that the professional writers used argument more extensively than students, and that the complexity of arguments increased with age and knowledge about audiences. Recommends that students be given opportunities to write persuasively about topics on which they have some expertise and that teachers facilitate the inclusion of "rhetorically significant structures" in their students' persuasive essays.


Investigates how three raters solved the problems of applying the Vermont Writing Assessment Analytic Assessment Guide to the rating of students' portfolios. Uses think-aloud protocols to study the raters' processes. Finds that the raters construed the rating task differently.


Explores the effectiveness of a program for teaching writing to learn and learning to write in a math class of 24 fifth graders studying probability. Uses qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze pre- and postassessments on probability writing and thinking, classroom observations, and the journals of eight students. Finds that students showed gains in writing and thinking about probability. Argues that teachers should be aware that some students may prefer writing dominated by mathematical symbols and that regular written feedback and follow-up prompts from teachers can improve students' thinking and writing about math.


Examines in a case study format writings from three fields in the humanities and social sciences. Focuses on the ways in which the writers go about knowledge-making and on the styles of language employed by the writers. Connects this research to the growing interest in writing across the curriculum.


Examines the grammatical features in 128 pieces written by seventh and eighth grade students in response to an assignment given in science class to describe a plant or animal. Uses functional grammars of English that focus on how meanings are expressed by particular forms to analyze the grammatical structures in the students' responses. Identifies the grammatical features that are functional for describing and the grammatical difficulties that the task presented the students. Argues that students be taught the features of grammar that contribute to establishing the genre of the paper and the language register to help them expand and develop their writing skills.

Reports a longitudinal study, carried on over six years, of students classified on entry into college as "underprepared." Through examination of students' tests and essays written in various courses, through observations and interviews, and through consideration of social and personal factors, tracks the progress of these students in developing their thinking and writing abilities.


Studies an Advanced Placement History class, focusing on five students' development in learning discourse of the discipline and the Document-Based Question task to determine its potential to reveal history and engage students in acts of historical reasoning and writing. Uses several aspects of the course for examination including: (1) the ways history was represented and enacted in the class; (2) the Document-Based Question as presented by the teacher in both spoken and written comments; and (3) the students' responses to four document-based questions over a year. Finds that the teacher modeled ways of knowing valued in the discipline and in Advanced Placement standards and that the students moved from knowledge telling to knowledge transformation.

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English Education Programs Meet NCATE and NCTE Teacher Preparation Guidelines

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) has adopted the NCTE curriculum guidelines for undergraduate programs for teacher education in English Language Arts for middle/junior and senior high schools. These guidelines were derived from NCTE's Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts. Institutions seeking NCATE accreditation are required to submit curriculum folios showing how their programs meet the NCTE guidelines. The Council's folio review process is carried out by over 100 reviewers. All are members of NCATE and CEE (Conference on English Education) who have attended folio review training workshops. The NCTE folio review program is directed by Charles Duke, Appalachian State University, with Sandra E. Gibbs as the staff liaison. Since our last listing, the nineteen institutions below have submitted curriculum folios which show their English education programs to be in compliance with the NCTE/NCATE Guidelines.

Delaware: Delaware State University-Dover; Illinois: Augustana College-Rock Island, Northeastern Illinois University-Chicago (MAT-Language Arts), Roosevelt University-Chicago (English-Undergraduate), Western Illinois University-Macomb; Louisiana: Grambling State University; Ohio: Ashland University (Combined 7-12 English Language Arts), Ohio State University-Columbus, University of Cincinnati (Middle School/High School); South Carolina: Coastal Carolina University-Conway, Francis Marion University-Florence, Lander University-Greenwood, South Carolina State University-Orangeburg (MAT), University of South Carolina-Spartanburg, Winthrop University-Rock Hill (MAT); Virginia: Longwood College-Farmville West Virginia: Fairmont State College, Marshall University-Huntington (English Language Arts 5-8, English Language Arts 5-12), West Virginia Wesleyan College-Buckhannon.

For more information on NCTE's participation in the folio review process write to Sandra E. Gibbs, Director of Special Programs, NCTE, 1111 West Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801.

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