



Is Students' Speaking Participation Related to Students' Personality and Gender?: Observations at an Indonesian University

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ABSTRACT

Key Words:

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Pedagogically, students will gain more when they engage in a discussion actively rather than as passive observers. Therefore, active participation in class is a prominent aspect of enhancing students' competencies. Additionally, there are several studies of personality traits and gender differences proven to influence students' participation, which encourage the author to observe the relationship between students' speaking participation, personality traits, and gender differences. The author also investigated other factors that influence students' participation in classroom discussions based on the students' perspectives. Using mixed methods empirical research, the results of this study reveal that introverted students have a slightly higher participation rate than extroverted students which contradicts findings of some previous research. Meanwhile, investigation of gender shows that the average of male students' speaking participation is relatively higher than females. Further investigation of factors that possibly influence students' engagement indicates a strong relationship between English education background and students' speaking participation. These findings are expected to contribute to the literature for higher education researchers interested in understanding factors influencing students' participation and as a consideration for higher education practitioners to enhance students' engagement in class activities.

ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci:

Bahasa Inggris
 Berbicara
 Partisipasi
 Keperibadian
 Gender
 Universitas
 Indonesia

Secara pedagogis, mahasiswa banyak terlibat dalam diskusi kelas secara aktif dibanding sebagai pengamat pasif. Oleh karena itu, partisipasi aktif merupakan aspek utama dalam meningkatkan kompetensi mahasiswa. Banyak penelitian tentang keperibadian dan gender terbukti mempengaruhi partisipasi pembelajar yang kemudian menggerakkan penulis untuk mengamati hubungan antara partisipasi mahasiswa dengan perbedaan jenis keperibadian dan gender. Penulis juga menginvestigasi faktor berpengaruh lainnya yang mungkin mempengaruhi partisipasi pembelajar dalam diskusi kelas berdasarkan perspektif mahasiswa. Menggunakan metode penelitian empirik gabungan, penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pembelajar introvert memiliki intensitas partisipasi sedikit lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan para ekstrovert yang bertentangan dengan temuan pada penelitian-penelitian sebelumnya. Sementara itu, investigasi pada gender menunjukkan bahwa partisipasi rata-rata mahasiswa relatif lebih tinggi dibanding mahasiswi. Dalam investigasi lebih lanjut pada faktor-faktor yang mungkin mempengaruhi keikutsertaan mahasiswa, hubungan antara latar belakang pendidikan bahasa Inggris dan partisipasi bicara mengindikasikan hubungan yang kuat.

Introduction

The Ministry of Religious Affairs founded Sunan Ampel State Islamic University of Surabaya (UINSA) and other state Islamic higher education institutions all over Indonesia to provide education with both Islamic values and modernity. This type of education is believed to prepare Indonesian Muslims transforming into professionals in response to societal needs (Syarif Hidayatullah). As one of the institution's efforts to achieve this goal, UINSA organizes its English Intensive Program, within the flagship of Centre for Language Development, for students from all faculties with the purpose of improving the students' English basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP) during the first-year academic program (Laila). Moreover, the university is currently attempting to become a world-class university (Sunan Ampel).

To enhance the students' BICS, all teachers in the Centre for Language Development are obliged to speak full English during classes. However, several teachers, including the author, assume that this method is difficult to employ because not many students participate in the learning process. An English teacher in the Faculty of Science and Technology said, "I tried to speak English based on the level of the students and asked my students to get involved in the classroom discussion. Yet in fact, I just got a few students who dared to speak, and the remains just kept silent." (Dewi).

Pedagogically, students will gain more meaningful learning when they engage in a discussion actively rather than they being passive observers (Romano; Czekanski and Wolf; Dancer and Kamvounias). For that reason, most teachers believe that active participation in class is a prominent aspect for enhancing students' language competencies. In addition, speaking, as a productive skill, seems intuitively the most important of all four language skills because it can noticeably show the accuracy and language errors that a language learner makes (Khamkhien).

Before starting the program, students undergo a placement test to measure their English communication skills. The Centre for Language Development uses the test results to classify students into three levels: Basic, Intermediate, and Advance. This placement is expected to avoid the competency gap among the students so they can learn actively with peers on the same level.

Nevertheless, this treatment is inadequate to stimulate all the students to speak actively during the class.

Meanwhile, several studies state that personality is intimately related to fluency in second-language production (Blau and Barak). An extrovert, who is open, needing companionship, and acting impulsively (Eysenck and Eysenck), have significantly higher fluency than an introvert (Blau & Barak, 2012) who is quiet, reflective, and does not enjoy large social events (Eysenck and Eysenck). From this finding, extroverted people seem to create opportunities and social situations for taking part in conversations in the target language more easily.

Blau and Barak found that extroversion affects the degree of engagement in a discussion. From their observations, extroverts engaged more actively in some discussions compared to the introverts. The extroverts seemed to express a greater readiness to participate in a spoken discussion (Blau and Barak).

Furthermore, the research on short-term memory conducted by Dewaele and Furnham shows that brain capacity correlates with fluency. Their research shows that second-language production is more challenging than the first-language production because it needs more conscious interventions by the speakers which risks overloading their working memory. Studies by personality psychologists show that extraverts have a better short-term memory, are more stress-resistant, and are less anxious in second-language production (Dewaele and Furnham). In this case, extroverts are superior to introverts in speaking a second language because their better short-term memory helps them to reduce anxiety, which frequently hinders people speaking smoothly.

On the other hand, Caspi, Chajut, and Saporta,(2008) found that men spoke over-regularly in conventional classroom discussions, whereas woman over-regularly posted in Web conferences. This pattern is similar to (Blau and Barak) finding that extroverts express a greater readiness to participate in spoken discussions and introverts express a greater readiness to participate in written discussions.

Women report more distress over public speaking than men do (Morreale, Osborn and Pearson). Also, Salomone () states that “men tend to have a more competitive style of talking,

are willing to take risks, and are more prone to respond spontaneously; women are more vulnerable to interruptions, are more comfortable speaking in small groups, or need time to prepare a reasoned response”(p. 13)

Those styles of speaking, to some extent, reflect different ways of thinking. While females tend to listen and appreciate other’s ideas, males tend to debate and judge each other’s ideas. This aligns with a study of participation which observed that males asked questions at a public conference more frequently than females (Hinsley, Sutherland and Johnston). Therefore, males are more likely to be comfortable with the traditional classroom atmosphere which is built on the model of public speaking used to debate and to judge the worth ideas (Vandrick; Moosmayer, Borgia and Man).

From the discussion above, this study adresses the relationship between students’ speaking participation during the English Intensive Program at UINSA and their introversion-extraversion traits and gender differences. Specifically, the author hypothesizes that personality has a strong relationship with students’ speaking participation where extroverts will dominantly engage in discussions over introverts. Similarly, the author expects gender to show a close relationship with speaking participation because the literature establishes that female students are prone to talk less when they engage in classroom activities with male students. As a consideration for teachers to improve students’ involvement in classroom activity, this research further investigates on other influential factors that are likely to motivate students’ engagement in the classroom discussions based on students’ perspectives and some cases found during observation.

All the findings in this study are expected to contribute to the literature for higher education researchers who are interested in understanding the influence of gender and personality-trait differences on higher education students, particularly in Indonesia’s context as a developing country that has been called “one of Asia Pacific’s most vibrant democracies” (World Bank). Likewise, the study hopefully benefits higher education practitioners who attempt to improve students’ engagement in classroom activities by considering genders, personality traits, or other influential factors which are discussed in this article.

Facts About the English Intensive Program

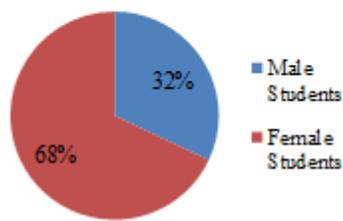
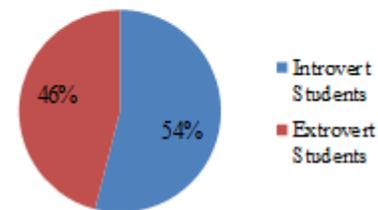
UINSA's English Intensive Program is a compulsory program for first-year students and is a prerequisite course to fulfilling some credits for a final assignment before graduation. During the first semester, the program occurs twice a week from September to December with materials focused on English BICS using the book "English for Islamic Studies" (Rohmah, 2014). The teacher allocates the first meeting of a week for reading comprehension and discussion. For the other meeting in the same week, the teacher delivers materials of structure, daily conversation, and written expressions. The book English for Islamic Studies provides 15 topics.

In seven meetings during October and November 2016, the students focused on 14 topics mainly addressing Islam and its applications in science and society : 1). Some Basic Islamic Beliefs. 2). The Five Pillars of Islam. 3). The Simple Life of Muhammad. 4). Halal and Haram Foods in Islam. 5). Islam and Technology. 6). Mathematics (1). 7). Mathematics (2). 8). The Basis of Islamic Education. 9). Out Reach for Islam. 10). Islam and Culture. 11). Kind of Disease. 12). E-Commerce in Islamic Perspective. 13). Transcultural Nursing Care of Muslim Patients. 14). Women in Islam.

In each meeting, two groups presented two topics from English for Islamic Studies in front of the class. The presenters were allowed to take references from other sources that were in line with the topic. Meanwhile, the other students asked and answered questions or gave opinions related to the topics.

Facts About the Students

The purposive sample of this research involved 50 students who were categorized into advanced level by the placement test, which examined their competences in vocabulary and grammatical range by asking them several general questions regarding their personal information, such as name, date of birth, address, etc. After being tested with MBTI during the first meeting in September 2016, the 16 male students (32%) and 34 female students (68%) students were identified as 27 students (54%) introvert and 23 students (46%) extravert. See Figures 1 and 2.

Chart 1.
Students on Gender**Figure 1.** Percentage of students by gender.**Chart 2.**
Students on Trait**Figure 2.** Percentage of introverted and extroverted students per MBTI results.

Based on a survey conducted in the last meeting in December 2016, 58% of the students assumed that they were placed in the wrong level. In the final test, which assessed the students' competencies on structure, written expression, and reading comprehension, scores range between a low of 48 and high of 92, with the average score being 66.76 (Table 1). From the average, 64% of the total students are categorized into the high-score group, while the rest 36% are included in the low-score group (Table 2). The data indicate that student results do not show a level equal to the placement test. This fact leads to a conjecture that the placement test and the program's study aim are uncorrelated, and this may explain the students' assumption of the wrong placement level.

Mean	66.76
Median	68.00
Mode	66 ^a
Minimum	44
Maximum	92

Table 1. Final Score Statistics

		Frequen cy	Percent
Valid	High	32	64
	Low	18	36
	Total	50	100

Table 2. Final Score Frequency and Percentages in High-Low Categories

In addition, 47 (94%) of the students stated that they have high motivation and an eagerness to learn English, because they need to compile academic papers with English references. Some of students intend either to undertake higher education overseas with English as the language of instruction or to pursue careers in international companies that require English. Meanwhile, three students (6%), who said that they are unmotivated, merely joined the class to fulfill the first-year prerequisite course.

Regarding English education background, 38 (76%) students had experienced extra English classes, which varied in duration from 3 months to 2 years. For the other 12 (24%) students, they only experienced studying English at school within the national curriculum governed by the Ministry of Education.

Facts About Students' Speaking Participation

The students' speaking participation in the English Intensive Program is still below expectations. From the seven meetings, only 2 (4%) students who successfully participated in six of seven total discussions. In addition, there were three (6%) students who never engaged in any discussion at all, although in fact they actually have good motivation. The participation mode of the students is 2, which means that most of the students only spoke in two meetings and remained silent in the other five meetings.

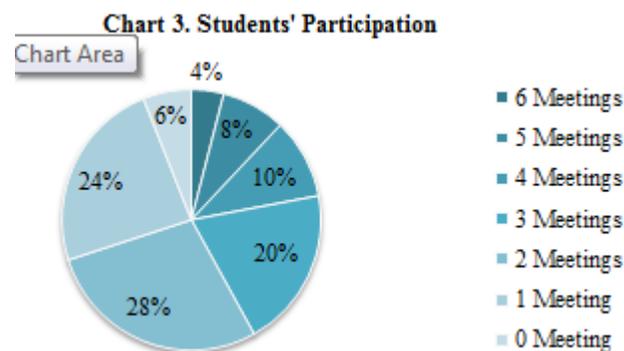


Figure 3. The Relationship between Introversion-Extraversion Traits and Speaking Participation

When the author identified the students' personality traits using MBTI, all the students showed a very good response. The students (100%) agreed that the results exactly described themselves. The author then observed the students' speaking participation by tabulating students' involvement in discussions (i.e. asking questions, answering questions, or giving

opinions related to the topics). The introvert students had a slightly higher participation average (2.48) than the extrovert students' participation average (2.39). Furthermore, two (4%) of the introvert students got the highest participation number, which no extroverts achieved it (see Figures 4 and 5). Even so, all extrovert students got involved in the discussion at least once. In contrast with the introvert group, there were three (6%) introvert students who did not engage in any discussions. With the significance value $0.836 > 0.05$ (Table 3), the interaction between personality traits and speaking participation, statistically, does not indicate a strong relationship.

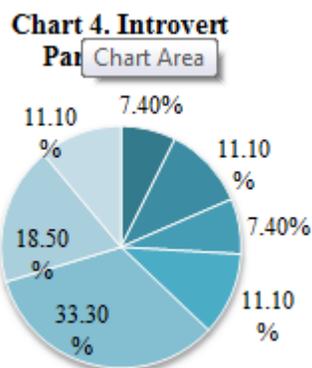


Figure 4. Introvert participation in discussions.

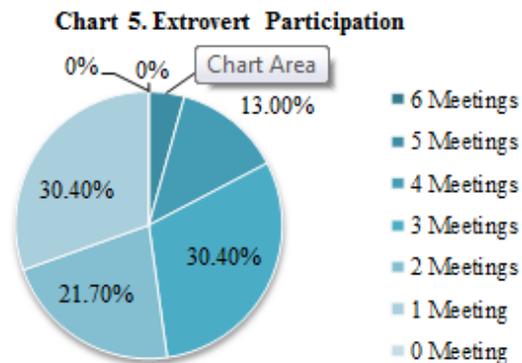


Figure 5. Extrovert participation in discussions.

Participation	N	Mean	Min	Max	Sig.
Introvert	27	2.48	0	6	.836
Extrovert	23	2.39	1	5	
Total	50	2.44	0	6	

Table 3. Personality Traits and Participation One-Way ANOVA Significance

This finding contradicts the previous study of Blau and Barak () which stated that extroverts participate more actively in discussions than introverts. However, the author could not reject the null hypothesis since the significance level is higher than 0.5.

The author then conducted a further investigation, using collected data, on the introverts who got the highest score and the introverts who did not get involved in any discussions. The two introvert students who got the highest participation number in the discussion are one male and one female. Based on the questionnaire, both of them have extra English education background and good motivation to learn English. Their final scores are also categorized into high-score group with the value more than the average. On the other hand, the three introverts

who did not participate in any discussions are female. Two of them had extra English education background and good motivation, and only one student of the three had no extra English education background and scored below the average in the final examination. This information shows that introversion might have effects on this scenario, because two of students in fact have good English education background and have good motivation, which are supposed to have association with speaking participation.

This finding then inspired the author to interview the introverts on how they countered their anxiety related to speaking in public. They did not deny that they had such anxiety; yet their motivation to learn more defeated their fear and even encouraged them to always perform their best in the learning process.

The Relationship Between Gender (Male-Female) and Speaking Participation

The average of male students' speaking participation is 2.93. This is relatively higher than the females, who average 2.25 (Table 4). From the observation data, the male students spoke at least once during seven total discussions, while there were three females who never got involved in any discussions. With a significance value $0.157 > 0.05$ (Table 4), the relationship between gender and speaking participation only shows a trend toward significance.

Chart 6. Male Participation

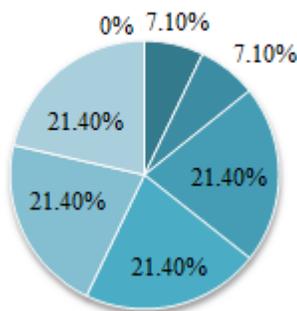


Figure 6. Male students' speaking participation.

Chart 7. Female Participation

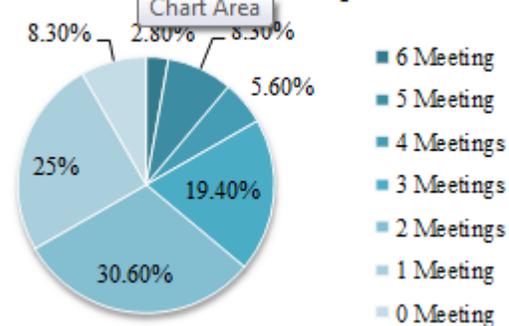


Figure 7. Female students' speaking participation.

Participation	N	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Sig.
Male	14	2.93	1	6	.157
Female	36	2.25	0	6	
Total	50	2.44	0	6	

Table 4. Gender and Participation One-Way ANOVA Significance

The author was surprised to find that the unmotivated students, who are all male, had participated in the classroom discussions at least once. When the author asked about this phenomenon in a deeper interview with the students, they answered that they were interested in the topic, which triggered them to express their opinion at that time.

Furthermore, there was a meeting in which females did not get involved as members of the discussion. The topic was "Women in Islam." At that moment, all females remained silent when the males who participated in the discussion argued that women are not supposed to work outside the house unless they have completed all household chores. This finding agrees with (Salomone) study which mention that male students are prone to declare their authority, while females tend to be vulnerable.

The Relationship Between Genders and Personality Traits on Students' Speaking Participation

To obtain a better understanding of the relationship between personality traits within gender, the author examined the collected data statistically using two-way ANOVA. From the data, the male-introvert students participated more often than the male-extrovert students with the average 3.43 for the male-introverts and 2.43 for the male-extroverts (Table 5). In contrast, the female-extrovert students have a higher level of participation with the average 2.38 to 2.15 (Table 5). Nevertheless, there are no statistically significant relationships between all variables, because all the p-values are greater than 0.05 (Table 6).

Gender	Traits	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Male	Introvert	3.43	1.813	7
	Extrovert	2.43	1.134	7
	Total	2.93	1.542	14
Female	Introvert	2.15	1.663	20
	Extrovert	2.38	1.258	16
	Total	2.25	1.481	36
Total	Introvert	2.48	1.762	27
	Extrovert	2.39	1.196	23
	Total	2.44	1.514	50

Table 5. Genders-Personality Traits on Participation Descriptive Statistics

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	8.591 ^a	3	2.864	1.270	.296
Intercept	270.681	1	270.681	120.037	.000
Gender	4.456	1	4.456	1.976	.167
Traits	1.508	1	1.508	.669	.418
Gender * Traits	3.768	1	3.768	1.671	.203
Error	103.729	46	2.255		
Total	410.000	50			
Corrected Total	112.320	49			

Table 6. Genders-Personality Traits on Participation Two-Ways ANOVA (Univariate Test)

Influential Factors That Possibly Affect Students' Speaking Participation Based on a case found during investigation

When the author found that the introvert students have a slightly higher average in speaking participation compared to the extroverts (Table 7), the author then investigated further the introverts who got the highest score and the introverts who did not get involved in any discussion by checking the documents, questionnaires, and interviews related to them. Through the investigation, the author found that two students who got the highest participation number in the discussion have extra English education background. Their final scores are also categorized into high score category with the value more than the average. On the other hand, 2 out of 3 students who did not participate in any discussion also have extra English education. Only 1 out of 3 students has no extra English education background and e score below the average in the final examination.

This finding motivated the author to examine the relationship between the students' English education background, final program score, and their speaking participation. Using one-way ANOVA, the author found that the students with extra English education background had a higher level of participation with the average 2.79 which is larger than students who do not have extra English education who averaged 1.33. This statistic also describes a strong interaction between English education background and speaking participation with significance value $0.003 < 0.05$ (Table 7).

English Education Background	N	Mean Participation	Minimum Participation	Maximum Participation	Sig.
Yes	38	2.79	0	6	.003
No	12	1.33	0	2	
Total	50	2.44	0	6	

Table 7. English Background and Participation Descriptives

A slightly similar trend also appears in the relationship between students' final scores and speaking participation (Table 8). From the table, the positive value (0.277) indicates that when the student's participation increases in value, the student's score also increases in value. It also describes a statistically significant correlation between score and participation with the sig (2-tailed) value 0.052, which means that the increases in the students' final score are close to being significantly related to the increases in the students' speaking participation.

		Participation	Score
Participation	Pearson Correlation	1	.277
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.052
	N	50	50
Score	Pearson Correlation	.277	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.052	
	N	50	50

Table 8. Final Score and Participation Correlation Significance

The most influential factor based on students' assumptions in an open-ended questionnaire

The author used an open-ended questionnaire to investigate the factors that made the students feel comfortable or uncomfortable with getting get involved in discussions. The students explained one aspect as the most influential factor affecting their participation. To make the data easier to summarize, the author classified the students' descriptions that are likely to have similar meaning into three categories: topic, language, and feeling. From the open-ended questionnaire, 76% of students stated that topic is the most influential factor which affects them to speak. Meanwhile, the other students stated that language and feeling also contributed to their willingness to get involved with the percentage 14% and 10% respectively (Figure 8). From the open-ended questionnaire, most of the students stated that the topics were too heavy and they need topics better related to their studies. For students who chose feeling as the most

influential factor, they stated that sometimes they were not in a good mood so they preferred to keep silent. A few of them also stated that the presenters of the topic occasionally presented the materials with different perspectives from their own which made speaking more uncomfortable. Meanwhile, several students who picked language as the most influential factor stated that they had difficulty finding proper words to speak, and they were also afraid of grammatical errors. This result is in line with the previous discussion, which stated that English education background has a significant relationship with students' participation.

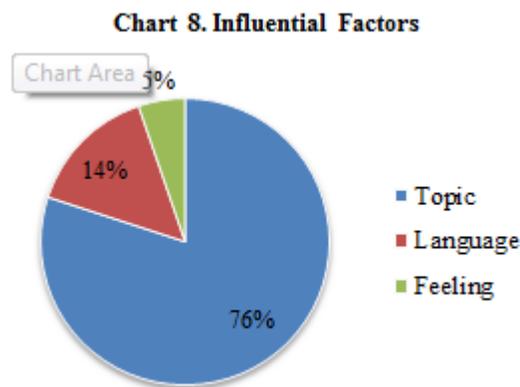


Figure 8.

Conclusion

Students' speaking participation during UINSA's English Intensive Program is still below expectations. From the seven meetings, most of the students only spoke in two unsystematic-various meetings and remained silent in the other five meetings. Based on the investigation on students' personality traits, the introvert students have a slightly higher participation rate than the extroverts. This finding contradicts the previous study of Blau and Barak () which stated that extroverts participate more actively in discussions than introverts.

Meanwhile, investigation on gender shows that the average of male students' speaking participation is relatively higher than the females. There was also a meeting that did not involve any women due to sexist comments brought by the males. This finding is an indication that male students are prone to declare their superiority while females tend to be vulnerable as (Salomone) noted.

Further investigation on the relationship between personality traits within genders found that the male-introvert students participated more often than the male-extrovert students.

In contrast, the female-extrovert students had a higher rate of participation. Nevertheless, there are no statistically significant relationships between all variables.

Under a further investigation of factors that possibly influence students' engagement, the interaction between English education background and students' speaking participation indicates a strong relationship. A similar trend also appears in the relationship between students' final scores and speaking participation.

Based on the open-ended questionnaire, 76% of students stated that topic is the most influential factor that encourages them to speak, while the other students stated that language and feeling also contribute to their willingness to participate at 14% and 10% respectively.

Suggestions

Teachers need to build students' internal motivation of the students because this motivation prompts students' involvement in discussions. Sexist treatment should be avoided by giving all students opportunity to speak and by avoiding anyone who presents an idea that attacks certain groups, especially women. Another recommendation to encourage further student participation in classroom discussions, the Centre for Language Development to select a new textbook for English Intensive Program that provides easier topics and includes material related to the students' area of study. The Centre might also improve the placement test and avoid the competency-gap level between students by considering the extra English education background of the students.

Further studies are needed relating to the motivation of introverted-extroverted students in learning foreign languages, and the attempts of Indonesian universities to deal with sexist treatment in language classrooms.

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