

# LEARNERS' COMMENTS AS PEER FEEDBACK IN ENGLISH CONVERSATION CLASS

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## Abstract

English lesson taught for undergraduate level is aimed at boosting their English proficiency as well as their performance. This study is conducted at FBIB Unisbank Semarang. The subjects of the study are the first semester students who took Performative Spoken English Class for the academic year of 2016/2017. This subject is aimed at improving students' speaking skill especially in creating conversation using different speech events.

Students belong to English Department should know how to use the right speech functions in their talks but due to their low level of speaking mastery therefore they have difficulty in using English properly. This study is conducted in order to help the new students to improve their English speaking skill so that they will be motivated in talking using English in their speaking class.

Students as peer for their own classmates sometimes are not reluctant in giving comments though they realize that their peers need it. The teachers involve the students in giving their comments with the purpose to give positive feedback for their peers so that their English speaking skill will improve. Their comments are known as learners' comments because they are English learners who take English class.

The lecturers have the roles as the researchers therefore this study is called classroom reasearch. The researchers conducted research for one semester for the first semester students who belong to morning program. The number of students who are being observed is 20 students based on the list but in fact only 16 to 19 students who join the class. The researchers collected the data with the help of a student from regular morning program. The data are qualitative data in the form of learners' comments in peer review rubric, teacher's journals and teacher's interpretation. After the students read the comments from their peer their motivation increased and their speaking skill slowly but surely improve.

*Keywords: Performative Spoken English, Learners' comments, classroom research*

## 1. Introduction

Speaking is one of English skills that learners should master in TEFL. The discussion about speaking resulted in various topics such as instructional materials, instructional techniques, instructional media, language teachers, language learners, and also the speaking components (Manurung, 2015). Moreover Konder Manurung wrote that the instructional materials play the role to contextualize the language usage and to meet language learners' needs, instructional techniques hold an important role to motivate and activate learners, instructional media bring the teaching into real life situation, the teachers facilitate and ease the learning process, the learners manifest and produce meaningful and appropriate utterances such as an indicator of the instructional success, and the speaking components relate to which components of the speaking to be the emphasis in a speaking class activities (2015).

In English speaking class, teachers are encouraged to use English as the medium of instruction so that the learners will be influenced to use English in the class. Learners' ability can be measured by their ability to use English in their conversation. Harmer (2007) said that language learners use all language they know when they speak. In TEFL speaking class the learners are expected to use language as a means of communication and if they do this it shows that the students are success in learning English.

There are some research findings about how to improve students' speaking skill that enable students to communicate using the language being learnt. Based on Nunan's (1995) argument that speaking is an important aspect of language learning whether it is a second or foreign language and the success is measured by the ability of language learners to carry out conversation in the language being learnt. While Richards (2008) points out that speaking is an important skill in language learning that enable learners to communicate such as in expressing something and giving response. Nunan as well as Richards show that there is a productive activity in speaking class therefore some linguists like Harmer (1991), Burns and Joyce (1999), Brown (2001) said that speaking is a productive skill related to the students' ability to process information during the conversation.

The teaching method that supports the success of speaking is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as the realization of Communicative Approach. This approach appeared when educators finally realized that students can produce grammatical sentence in a lesson but they failed in using it correctly outside of classroom. According to Widdowson (1978) that students may know the rules of linguistic structure but unable to use the language. It shows that they master the rules of linguistics but they do not know how to use the language in communication. Before Widdowson wrote about it, Wilkins in 1976 wrote that communications required that students perform certain function such as promising, inviting and declining invitations within a social context.

The English speaking class in which English is used as the first foreign language, the teachers may involve students to be peer reviewer in order to improve students' communicative competence. Students are expected to participate actively in the classroom practices in order that they will get higher academic achievement compares to the passive ones. Krupa-Kwiatskowski (1998:33) wrote about her research that interaction involves participation, personal engagement, and the taking initiatives in some way, activities that in turn are hypothesized to trigger cognitive process conducive to learning. The interaction occurred in English speaking class is needed especially when the teachers invite students to be peer reviewer for their peer in order to help them improve speaking ability.

Halliday (1971) added that being able to communicate not only required linguistic competence but also communicative competence in order to help the students know when and how to say to whom. CLT is a set of principles how learner learns a language, the goals of language teaching, kinds of classroom activities and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006:2). This teaching methodology concerns to students' communicative competence rather than grammatical competence.

## **II. Problem Statement:**

- a. Can learners' comments become peer feedback for FBIB students in English Conversation Class?

## **III. Related Literature**

### **a. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**

Richards (2006:2) defines CLT as a set of principles about goals of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the kinds of classrooms activities that best facilitate learning, and the roles of teachers and learners in the classroom. It means that the focus of CLT is how to make language learners able to communicate using language that is being learnt in the classroom as well as outside of classroom. Those aspects will be explained below:

#### 1) The goals of language teaching

The goals of language teaching in CLT is learners' communicative competence. Besides communicative competence there is also another competence known as grammatical competence. There are two types of competences in ELT namely grammatical competence and communicative competence. According to Richards (2006:3) grammatical competence refers to the knowledge we have of a language that accounts for our ability to produce sentences in a language. It refers to the knowledge of the building blocks of sentences (e.g. parts of speech, tenses, phrases, clauses, sentence patterns) and how sentences are formed. Communicative competence includes the following aspects of language knowledge:

- Knowing how to use language for a range of different purposes and functions
- Knowing how to vary our use of language according to the setting and the participants (e.g., knowing when to use formal and informal speech or when to use language appropriately for written as opposed to spoken communication)
- Knowing how to produce and understand different types of texts (e.g., narratives, reports, interviews, conversations)
- Knowing how to maintain communicative despite having limitations in one's language knowledge (e.g., through using different kinds of communication strategies)

#### 2) How learners learnt a language

Language learning is developed and there are some changes made to it. It is used to be viewed learning as a mechanical habit formation by making students produce correct sentences and errors are to be avoided by controlling production but now it changed. Now there is a new perspective in language learning which seen it as resulting from processes as the following:

- Interaction between the learner and the users of the language
- Collaborative creation of meaning
- Creating meaningful and purposeful interaction through language
- Negotiation of meaning as the learner and his or her interlocutor arrive at understanding
- Learning through attending to the feedback learners get when they use the language

- Paying attention to the language one hears (the input) and trying to incorporate new forms into one's developing communicative competence
  - Trying out and experimenting with different ways of saying things
- 3) The kinds of classroom activities that best facilitate learning
- There is a movement from traditional ELT format which the focus is on the mastery of different grammatical items and controlled activities such as memorization of dialogs and drills towards the use of pair work activities, role plays, group work activities and project work.
- 4) The roles of teachers and learners in the classroom
- CLT resulted a new role for teachers and learners in ELT. Learners now had to participate in classroom activities based on cooperative rather than individual approach to learning. They had to be comfortable with listening to their peers in group work or pair work tasks rather than relying on the teacher as a model. On the other hand, teachers now had to be facilitator and monitor in the classroom.

### **Current CLT**

The goal of language teaching of CLT is communicative competence and in order to achieve the goal communicative syllabus and methodology are implemented. The current CLT is the development of Classic CLT around 1970s to 1990s. There are ten core assumptions current CLT as follows (Richards, 2006:22-23)

1. Second language learning is facilitated when learners are engaged in interaction and meaningful communication
2. Effective classroom learning tasks and exercises provide opportunities for students to negotiate meaning, expand their language resources, notice how language is used, and take part in meaningful interpersonal exchange
3. Meaningful communication results from students processing content that is relevant, purposeful, interesting, and engaging
4. Communication is a holistic process that often calls upon the use of several language skills or modalities
5. Language learning is facilitated both by activities that involve inductive or discovery learning of underlying rules of language use and organization, as well as by those involving language analysis and reflection
6. Language learning is a gradual process that involves creative use of language, trial and error. Although errors are a normal product of learning, the ultimate goal of learning is to be able to use the new language both accurately and fluently
7. Learners develop their own routes to language learning, progress at different rates, have different needs and motivations for language learning
8. Successful language learning involves the use of effective learning and communication strategies
9. The role of the teacher in the language classroom is that of a facilitator, who creates a classroom climate conducive to language learning and provides opportunity for students to use and practice the language and to reflect on language use and language learning

10. The classroom is a community where learners learn through collaboration and sharing

**a. Communicative Approach**

Murcia wrote in her book entitled Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language 3<sup>rd</sup> edition in 2007 about communicative approach. She said that communicative approach is based on the work of Dell Hymes in 1972 and Halliday in 1973 that both of them view language as a system for communication (p.3). There are some important points in CA as the followings:

1. It is assumed that the goal of language teaching is learner ability to communicate in the target language
2. It is assumed that the content of a language course will include semantic notions and social functions, not just linguistic structures
3. Students regularly work in groups or pairs to transfer (and, if necessary, negotiate) meaning in a situations in which one person has information that the other(s) lack
4. Student often engage in role play or dramatization to adjust their use of the target language to different social contexts
5. Classroom materials and activities are often authentic to reflect real life situations and demands
6. Skills are integrated from the beginning; a given activity might involve reading, speaking, listening, and also writing (this assumes the learners are educated and literate)
7. The teacher's role is primarily to facilitate communication and only secondarily to correct errors
8. The teacher should be able to use the target language fluently and appropriately

**b. Vygotsky Theory of ZPD**

The idea of peer review or peer evaluation is based on the Vygotsky's ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development). This reflects the condition where the area of certain thing that can be done by the person alone and certain things that are to be done with others in furthering learning and development (Jacob, 1989). Based on Vygotsky's idea students can improve their performance with the presence of their peers because the feedback given by their peers can stimulate them not only to work alone but also with their peers.

**c. Nunan Theory of Language Learning**

Another opinion about learner's speaking ability is from Nunan (1995) who argued that speaking is an important aspect of language learning whether it is as a foreign or second language and the success of learning a language is measured with the ability of language learners to carry out conversation in the language being learnt. This idea is in line with Richard's idea (2008) that speaking is an important skill in language learning that enable language learners to communicate not only in expressing view point but also in giving responses.

**d. Participation Instruction Approach**

Some research have proven that there is relationship between student's participation in the classroom with the student's academic. In accordance to Lim's idea (1992) that the linkage between student's classroom participation and their academic achievement is undeniable (Wudong, 1994 and Zhou, 1991). Krupa-Kwiatkowsky (1998:133) wrote that interaction involves participation, personal engagement, and the taking of initiative in some ways, activities that in turn are hypothesized to trigger cognitive processes conducive to language learning. This shows that if the students are actively taking part in the speaking class, their academic achievement will improve.

#### IV. Method of the Study

Classroom Action Research (CAR) involves a cyclical process of questioning, planning, acting, observing and reflecting. There are some steps to implement classroom action research (this study is based on CAR cycle but the researchers only applied 1 (one) cycle, namely:

**1) The first stage is developing a plan of action to understand and improve what is already happening. In this sense planning is already strategic.**

The researchers have planned to conduct a research about learners comments applied for the first semester students of FBIB Unisbank (University of Stikubank Semarang) of the academic year 2016/2017. The subject of the study is the morning program of FBIB students. There are 16-19 students and all of them are observed during one semester. They were observed when they have subject called Performative Spoken English. The teachers want to find out a way that can help the students improve their communicative competence performed in their spoken ability. The students' spoken ability is being reviewed in the written form as peer comments therefore the teachers decided to apply learners' comments. *Then the teachers have formulated a research question namely: Can learners' comments become peer feedback for FBIB students in English Conversation Class?*

**2) The second stage is to act to implement the plan. Action is both deliberate and controlled but at the same time dynamic. It requires spontaneous decisions and practical judgement. (see the appendix for peer rubric)**

After formulating a research question, the next step is asking for a student from the class to be an assistant to help teachers gathered the data. Only one student was chosen among twenty students. The research was conducted for one semester, on the first semester. The semester began in September 2016 and ended on January 2017. Three topics and two different classroom activities are chosen to observe for one semester. They are as follows: 1) In group activity (story telling) about Indonesian Local Heroes; 2) In group activity about movie review (presentation) and 3) Individual activity (presentation) about book review. The teachers have designed a peer evaluation sheet for each topic. The student assistant helped the teachers copied and distributed the peer evaluation sheet and gathered it and submitted to the teachers when the class is over.

- 3) **The next phase is to observe the effects of the action in the context in which it occurred. Careful documentation of the effects of the action is critical as this will help teachers to better understand what is happening and lead to a more informed strategic action. (see the appendix for teacher's journals)**

All the data (field notes) are documented by the researchers and then they were analyzed into the peer rubric. From the data, the new students are more encourage to be better if they were reviewed by their own peer instead of the teachers. Perhaps they can reduce their anxiety and overcome nervousness in front of the class because they know that their peer (classmates) will be the evaluator. Reading from the documented data the teachers found out that the peer review is quite effective to improve students' speaking skill because they do their job better than before (when they are evaluated by the teachers). They have positive motivation in doing their job therefore they are encouraged by their peer to perform better.

- 4) **The final procedure is to reflect on these effects as a basis for further planning and subsequent action. Reflection which is integral with to the process of action research, is the ability to step back and critically analyze teacher's actions, decisions or products by focusing on what we did or are doing and learning lessons that can be applied to new situations. (see the appendix for teacher's interpretation)**

The peer review rubric and teacher's journals are compared and analyzed based on the theory. Sometimes the teachers found that their classmate are a little bit prejudice in reviewing their friends, it might be some inconvenience situations at that time for example between the examiner and examinee they do not have a good relationship due to many reasons, they have different point of views, etc. On the contrary if they have to review their best friends they are generous in giving their comments. This situation will influence their review therefore teacher's journals are used as a triangulation. The teachers who were teaching Performative Spoken English class also asked her colleagues about the performance of some students in other classes and noted the information. The information given by the colleagues will be considered as a means for data triangulation too.

## **V. Findings and discussion of the findings**

### **Findings**

The findings in this study are the reviews given by the peer in Performative Spoken English class. The subject of the study is the first semester students of FBIB Unisbank of the academic year 2016/2017. There are 17 students join the class for the morning program.

### **Discussion of the findings**

The data analysis in this study are as follows:

- 1. Peer rubric, for example as follows:**

**Table 5.3 Peer Review Rubric for group activity about Story Telling**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Questions</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Performance</b>
G1	The War of Javanese Heroes	1. Why Iron man and Spiderman become antagonist characters? 2. Why did you choose local names like Paijo, Budi and Sukijah? 3. Why you did not choose Indonesian local heroes?	1. The pronunciation need to be improved. 2. The performance is very interesting. 3. The story is very good.	Group : VG Members: S1 : VG S2 : G S3 : F
G2	Tania and Tooth Fairy	1. What is the name and characteristics of the characters? 2. Why a fairy can fly? 3. What is the character of Tanis?	1. The story is good. 2. They are nervous. 3. They are very fast in speaking.	Group : G Members: S4 : G S5 : G S6 : G
G3	Five Idiots	1. Why did you choose banana as the first figure? 2. Why did you choose fruits as characters in your story? 3. In your opinion, what are the characters of avocado and orange?	1. You are nervous and you did not remember your story. 2. You look nervous and did not speak clearly. 3. I think you must speak louder.	Group : G Members: S7 : F S8 : G S9 : F
G4	The Secret of Beauty Witch	1. What is the moral value of the story? 2. Who is Steven? 3. Aren't they become couple in the end of the story?	1. Give a climax for the story. 2. The story is very good.	Group : VG Members: S10 : VG S11 : VG S12 : VG
G5	The Untruthful Elephant	1. Why did you choose elephant? 2. Why they live in the forest?	1. The story is interesting. 2. Good job.	Group : VG Members: S13 : VG S14:VG S15:VG
G6	The Princess and the Golden Ball	1. Who is Adele? 2. Why Adele needs help to her parents? 3. Who married to Adel?	1. Funny, very interesting. 2. Good performance. 3. Good	Group : G S16:G S17:G



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**2. Teacher's journals, for example as follows:**

**Table 5.7 Teacher's journal for work in group activity about Story Telling**

<b>Group/Title</b>	<b>Teacher's Comments</b>	<b>Teacher's Performance</b>
G1/The War of Javanese Heroes	There are three students as group members but only one among two who can speak fluently. The other two need to improve their pronunciation. The student examiners said that they have created interesting by using some heroes as the characters but on the other hand they have to practice pronouncing English words correctly and practice using English words to help them more fluent in speaking English. They can answer the question quite good but their English is not as good as the way they answer the question.	Good
G2/Tania and the Tooth Fairy	Three students, two girls and a boy are the members of this group. They create the story about tooth fairy. The story is a kind of fairy tale for kids but they tried hard to tell about it in interesting way but they failed because they are nervous. Though the student examiners said that their story is good but their nervousness made them speak very fast but they did not speak clearly. They are able to answer the questions but the only boy in this group is so nervous and it made him have difficulty in answering the question.	Good
G3/Five Idiots	These three boys are the members of this group. Although all of them are boys but they cannot work together well. They speak soft and it made the student examiners cannot listen to their story well. Furthermore they are nervous and it made them forgot some parts of the story. According to the examiners their story is quite interesting but since they cannot work well somehow they have difficulty in answering the questions. They just give a very short answer without explaining more.	Good
G4/The Secret of Beauty Witch	Three girls are the members of this group. They can work well among them therefore they can tell the story fluently. The student examiners told them that their story is a very good story to tell. They are enthusiastic in telling the story but it made them forget to stop for a second telling about the climax of the story. But the rest of the story they can handle it well. They can answer the	Very Good

	questions well and take turn in answering the questions.	
G5/An Untruthful Elephant	There are two girls and a boy as the group members. They can divide their work well as a team. The student examiners said that their performance is good. Moreover their story is also interesting. The group members can answer the questions given by the student examiners well. They know how to use English properly.	Very Good
S6/The Princess and the Golden Ball	There are only two girls belong to this group. They can tell the story quite good and it made them tell it fluently and they speak louder. The student examiners said that they know how to give correct answer using proper English. They can apply correct English grammar in telling the story and it made them perform well in the class.	Very Good

### 3. Teacher's interpretation, for example as follows:

**Table 5.10 Teacher's interpretation for work in group activity about Story Telling**

Students	Interpretation of Linguistics components	Students' Performance
G1=S1/S2/S3	<p>S1, she is fluent in speaking English and she can pronounce English words well. She is the first person who tells the story and she can do it. The class knows about the beginning of the story well.</p> <p>S2, his English is influenced by his vernacular and he paused his talk quite often because he forgot the plot of the story. He needs to improve his English vocabulary. He sometimes reads his text if he paused for such a long time.</p> <p>S3, she speaks softly. She is the least confident person in her group. She code switched and mixed a lot during her talk. She needs to improve her English vocabulary.</p>	<p>S1, I agree that she has good English skill but she still needs to develop her skill to be better than before.</p> <p>S2, I believe that he needs to do more practice in speaking English and improve his English vocabulary.</p> <p>S3, I think she needs to improve her English vocabulary to help her become more confident if she has to speak in front of her class.</p>
G2=S4/S5/S6	S4, he is the leader of the group therefore he has the first chance to begin the story.	S4, In my opinion he needs more time to

	<p>He sometimes looks confused and uncertain about the words, for example he is confused either using begin or start in telling about an event as part of the story.</p> <p>S5, she speaks English quite fluent but the way she pronounces English is a little bit influenced with Javanese.</p> <p>S6, she speaks softly but her English pronunciation is good. She can end the story interestingly because she knows how to use the tone in her talk.</p>	<p>practice so that later he can improve his English and know how to use the right words contextually.</p> <p>S5, I think she needs to do more practice in speaking English so that her Javanese dialect will disappear.</p> <p>S6, I believe she should improve her English to be better.</p>
G3=S7/S8/S9	<p>S7, he speaks Javanese English because his English is influenced with Javanese dialect. The way he pronounces English is also in Javanese tone.</p> <p>S8, he speaks English quite good but his vocabulary is limited. He is quite often repeat the same words in his talk like ..so....and then...</p> <p>S9, he can speak English fluently though he produces simple talk in this job. His English pronunciation is also good.</p>	<p>S7, I agree he must do more practice in speaking English and practice pronouncing English words properly.</p> <p>S8, I think he should practice English especially in different situation so that he is learning by doing using English words.</p> <p>S9, In my opinion he should practice in speaking longer utterance in English.</p>
G4=S10/S11/12	<p>S10, she speaks and pronounce English well. Her English skill especially in speaking is very good for the first semester student. She knows how to get attention from the class as she begins the story. And she did it interestingly.</p> <p>S11, she needs to reduce her laughing in telling the story. She can speak English good enough but she needs to improve her pronunciation in order to pronounce English properly.</p> <p>S12, she is energetic enough and always</p>	<p>S10, I think she should practice in speaking English to improve her speaking skill to be better.</p> <p>S11, I agree that she needs to improve her English vocabulary so that she know how to say English words properly.</p> <p>S12, I believe that her</p>

	repeats her utterances if she mispronounced or forgot in telling the story though. Finally she can end the story interestingly.	English is good enough but she has to improve it so that her English skill will be better in the future.
G5=S13/S14/S15	<p>S13, he is the best student in this class because he speaks English fluently and his pronunciation is really good. Though he is a polyglot but he can manage to speak English very well.</p> <p>S14, she is the second person in her group to tell more events. She seems to speak slowly because she gradually feels confident and it influences her performance. She speaks English fluently.</p> <p>S15, she speaks English fluently and she ends the story very well. She knows how to end the story without losing the attention from the class.</p>	<p>S13, I think even he is the best student in the class somehow he should practice with the purpose to be more fluent in speaking English.</p> <p>S14, I agree if she needs to practice more in order to help her to be better in speaking English.</p> <p>S15, In my opinion she has good English speaking skill. Practice will make her improve her skill.</p>
G6=S16/S17	<p>S16, she has to improve her English vocabulary so that her English words will increase. She can speak English but quite often she adds yes in her talk.</p> <p>S17, her English is good though she speaks softly. She can pronounce English good.</p>	<p>S16, In my opinion she needs to do more practice in speaking English so that her skill will be improved.</p> <p>S17, I think she also needs to improve her English skill by doing more practice.</p>

**4. Teacher's triangulation for Story Telling as follows:**

Students	Peer Review	Teacher Review	Final Performance
G1	Group : VG Members: S1 : VG S2 : G S3 : F	Group : G Members: S1 : VG S2 : G S3 : G	Group : G Members : S1 : VG S2 : G S3 : G
G2	Group : G Members: S4 : G S5 : G	Group : VG Members : S4 : G S5 : G	Group : G Members : S4 : G S5 : G

	S6 : G	S6 : G	S6 : G
G3	Group : G Members: S7 : F S8 : G S9 : F	Group : G Members : S7 : G S8 : G S9 : G	Group : G Members : S7 : G S8 : G S9 : G
G4	Group : VG Members: S10 : VG S11 : VG S12 : VG	Group : VG Members : S10 : VG S11 : VG S12 : VG	Group : VG Members : S10 : VG S11 : VG S12 : VG
G5	Group : VG Members: S13 : VG S14 : VG S15 : VG	Group : VG Members : S13 : VG S14 : VG S15 : VG	Group : VG Members : S13 : VG S14 : VG S15 : VG
G6	Group : G S16 : G S17 : G	Group : G S16 : G S17 : G	Group : G S16 : G S17 : G

The students have two types of peer review sheet (evaluation sheet depend on the activity that they have to do) as follows:

**Figure 1: Evaluation sheet for group performance**

EVALUATION SHEET

Examiner	:						
Examinee	:						
1. Group Performance	:	VG	G	F	P	VP	
2. Group Members' Performance	:						
a.....		VG	G	F	P	VP	
b.....		VG	G	F	P	VP	
c.....		VG	G	F	P	VP	
3. Topic	:						
4. Questions	:						
5. Comments	:						

**Figure 2. Evaluation sheet for individual activity**

EVALUATION SHEET

Examiner	:					
Examinee	:					
Individual Performance:		VG	G	P	G	VP
Presentation						

a. Topic	VG	G	P	G	VP
b. Content	VG	G	P	G	VP
c. Ways of Presenting	VG	G	P	G	VP
Comments	:				
Questions	:				

## VI. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the researchers can draw some conclusions as follows:

1. The new students as the peer review can practice how to review their peers by giving comments in Performative Spoken English class.
2. Most of new students can improve their speaking skill after being reviewed by their peer in the Performative Spoken English class while a few of them are still need to work harder to be better.

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