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Faculty of Letters and Languages
Department of English
Module: Methodology of Specialised Translation
Level Master 2
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Main Issues of Translation Studies

1. The concept of translation

Translation is an activity comprising the interpretation of the meaning of a text in one language (the source text) and the production, in another language, of a new, equivalent text (the target text), or translation.

Traditionally, translation has been a human activity, although attempts have been made to automate and computerize the translation of natural-language texts (machine translation) or to use computers as an aid to translation (computer-assisted translation).
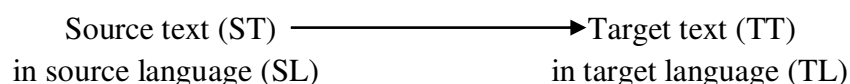
The goal of translation is to establish a relation of equivalence of intent between the source and target texts (that is to say, to ensure that both texts communicate the same message), while taking into account a number of constraints. These constraints include context, the rules of grammar of both languages, their writing conventions, their idioms, and the like.

"*Translation*" is, etymologically, a "carrying across" or "bringing across": the Latin *translatio* derives from *transferre* (trans, "across" + ferre, "to carry" or "to bring"). The modern European languages, Romance, Germanic and Slavic, have generally formed their own equivalent terms for this concept after the Latin model: after *transferre* or after the kindred *traducere* ("to lead across" or "to bring across"). Additionally, the Greek term for "*translation*," metaphrasis (a "speaking across"), has supplied English with "metaphrase," meaning a literal, or word-for-word, translation, as contrasted with "paraphrase" (a "saying in other words," from the Greek paraphrasis).

In the field of languages, translation today has several meanings:
>   **(1) The general subject field** or phenomenon ('I studied translation at university')
>   **(2) The product** – that is, the text that has been translated ('they published the
>   Arabic translation of the report')
>   **(3) The process of producing the translation**, otherwise known as translating
>   ('Translation service').

The process of translation between two different written languages involves the changing of an original written text (**the source text** or ST) in the original verbal language (**the source language** or SL) into a written text (**the target text** or TT) in a different verbal language (**the target language** or TL):

Source text (ST) ⟶ Target text (TT)
in source language (SL)   in target language (TL)

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Thus, when translating a product manual from Chinese into English, the ST is Chinese and the TT is English. This type corresponds to **'interlingual translation'** and is one of the three categories of translation described by the Russo-American structuralist Roman Jakobson (1896–1982) in his seminal paper *'On linguistic aspects of translation'*. Jakobson's categories are as follows:

> (1) **intralingual** translation, or 'rewording' – 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language'
>
> (2) **interlingual** translation, or 'translation proper' – 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language'
>
> (3) **intersemiotic** translation, or 'transmutation' – 'an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of non-verbal sign systems'. (Jakobson 1959/2004: 139)

These definitions draw on **semiotics** , the general science of communication through signs and sign systems. Its use is significant because translation is not always limited to verbal languages. **Intersemiotic translation** , for example, occurs when a written text is translated into a different mode, such as music, film or painting. **Intralingual translation** would occur when we produce a summary or otherwise rewrite a text in the same language, say a children's version of an encyclopedia. It also occurs when we rephrase an expression in the same language.

It is **interlingual translation** , between two different verbal sign systems, that has been the traditional focus of translation studies

However, the very notion of 'translation proper' and of the stability of source and target has been challenged. The question of what we mean by 'translation', and how it differs from 'adaptation', 'version', 'trans-creation' (the creative adaptation of video games and advertising in particular, 'localization' (the linguistic and cultural adaptation of a text for a new locale, and so on, is a very real one. Sandra Halverson (1999) claims that translation can be better considered as a **prototype** classification, that is, there are basic core features that we associate with a prototypical translation, and other translational forms which lie on the periphery.

Much of translation theory has also been written from a western perspective and initially derived from the study of Classical Greek and Latin and from Biblical practice. By contrast, Maria Tymoczko (2005, 2006, 2007: 68–77) discusses the very different words and metaphors for 'translation' in other cultures, indicative of a conceptual orientation where the goal of close lexical fidelity to an original may not therefore be shared, certainly in the practice of translation of sacred and literary texts.

Each of these construes the process of translation differently and anticipates that the target text will show a substantial change of form compared to the source.

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2. Translation Studies

Many newcomers to translation wrongly believe it is an exact science, and mistakenly assume a firmly defined one-to-one correlation exists between the words and phrases in different languages which make translations fixed, much like cryptography. In that vein, many assume all one needs to translate a given passage is to decipher between the languages using a translation dictionary. On the contrary, such a fixed relationship would only exist were a new language synthesized and continually synchronized alongside an existing language in such a way that each word carried exactly the same scope and shades of meaning as the original, with careful attention to preserve the etymological roots, assuming they were even known with certainty. In addition, if the new language were ever to take on a life of its own apart from such a strict cryptographic use, each word would begin to take on new shades of meaning and cast off previous associations, making any such synthetic synchronization impossible. Suffice it to say, while equivalence is sought by the translators, less rigid and more analytical methods are required to arrive at a true translation.

There is also debate as to whether translation is an art or a craft. Literary translators, such as Gregory Rabassa in *"If This Be Treason"* argue convincingly that translation is an art, though he acknowledges that it is teachable. Other translators, mostly professionals working on technical, business, or legal documents, approach their task as a craft, one that can not only be taught but is subject to linguistic analysis and benefits from academic study. Most translators will agree that the truth lies somewhere between and depends on the text. A simple document, for instance a product brochure, can be quickly translated in many cases using simple techniques familiar to advanced language students. By contrast, a newspaper editorial, text of a speech by a politician, or book on almost any subject will require not only the craft of good language skills and research technique but also the art of good writing, cultural sensitivity, and communication.

The academic discipline which concerns itself with the study of translation has been known by different names at different times. Some scholars have proposed to refer to it as the 'science of translation' (Nida, Wilss), others as 'translatology' (Goffin), but the most widely used designation today is 'translation studies'. In his seminal article 'The Name and Nature of Translation Studies', James Holmes argued the adoption of 'translation studies' 'as the standard term for the discipline as a whole' and other scholars have since followed suit. At one time, the term 'translation studies' applied more emphasis on literary translation and less on other forms of translation, including interpreting, as well as a lack of interest in practical issues such as `pedagogy, but this is no longer the case. 'Translation studies' is now understood to refer to the academic discipline concerned with the study of translation at large, including literary and non-literary translation, various forms of oral interpreting, as well as dubbing and subtitling. 'Translation studies' is also understood to cover the whole spectrum of research and pedagogical activities, form developing theoretical frameworks to conducting

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individual case studies to engaging in practical matters such as training translators and developing criteria for translation assessment.

Interest in translation is practically as old as human civilization, and there is a vast body of literature on the subject which dates back at least to CICERO in the first century BC. However, as an academic discipline, translation studies is relatively young, no more than a few decades old. Although translation has been used and studied in the academy for much longer, mainly under the rubric of comparative literature or contrastive linguistics, it was not until the second half of the twenties century that scholars began to discuss the need to conduct systematic research on translation and to develop coherent theories of translation.

2.1.The Holmes/Toury 'map'

The mapping of the field of translation studies is an ongoing activity. James Holmes is credited with the first attempt to chart the territory of translation studies as an academic pursuit. His map of the discipline is now widely accepted as a solid framework for organizing academic activities within this domain.

Holmes divides the discipline into two major areas: **pure translation studies** and **applied translation studies**. Pure TS has the dual objective of describing translation phenomena as they occur and developing principles for describing and explaining such phenomena. The first objective falls within the remit of **descriptive TS**, and the second within the remit of **translation theory**, both being subdivisions of pure translation studies.

Within descriptive TS, Holmes distinguishes between **product-oriented DTS** (text-focused studies which attempt to describe existing translations), **process-oriented DTS** (studies which attempt to investigate mental processes that take place in translation), and **function-oriented DTS** (studies which attempt to describe the function of translations in the recipient sociocultural context). Under the theoretical branch, or translation theory, he distinguishes between **general translation theory** and **partial translation theories**; the latter may be **medium restricted** (for example theories of human as opposed to machine translation or written translation as opposed to oral interpreting), **area-restricted** (i.e. restricted to specific linguistic or cultural groups), **rank-restricted** (dealing with specific linguistic ranks or levels), **text-type restricted** (for example theories of literary translation or Bible translation), **time-restricted** (dealing with translating texts from an older period as opposed to contemporary texts), or **problem restricted** (for example theories dealing with the translation of metaphor or idioms).
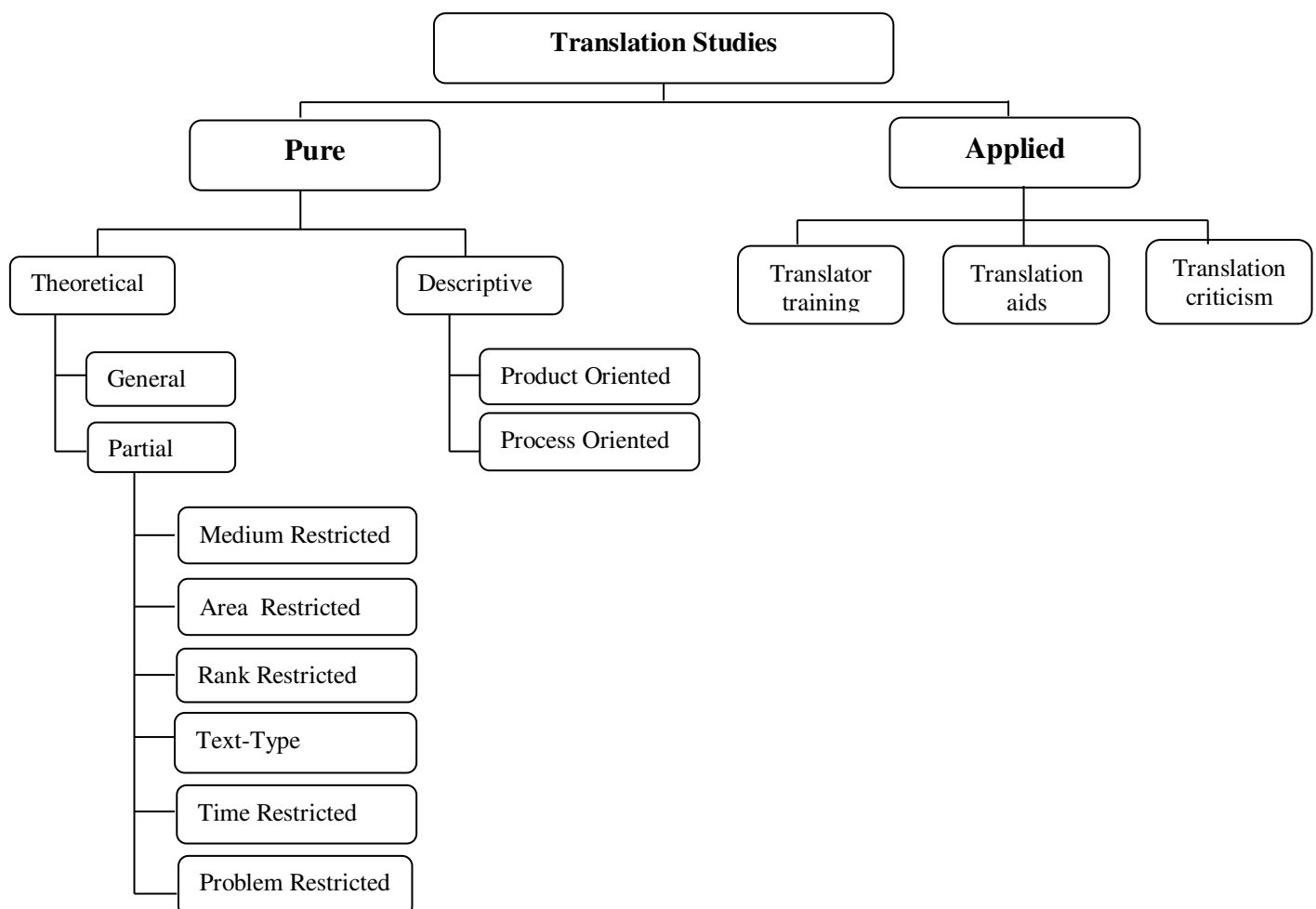
Applied translation studies, the second major division proposed by Holmes, covers activities which address specific practical applications, most notably **translator training** (teaching methods, testing techniques, curriculum design), **translation aids** such as

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dictionaries and term banks, and **translation criticism** (the evaluation of translations, including the marking of student translations and the reviews of published translations).

Another area Holmes mentions is **translation policy,** where he sees the translation scholar advising on the place of translation in society. This should include what place, if any, it should occupy in the language teaching and learning curriculum.

In addition to these basic divisions, Holmes also makes a brief mention of two important types of research: **the study of translation studies itself** (for example history of translation theory and the history of translator training) and **the study of the methods and models which are best suited to particular types of research in the discipline**. Both these areas of study have been receiving more attention in recent years.

Holmes' framework of translation studies was subsequently presented by the leading Israeli translation scholar Gideon Toury as in Figure 1:

Figure 1.1 Holmes's 'map' of translation studies (from Toury 1995: 10)

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Finally, Holmes stresses that the relationship between theoretical, descriptive and applied translation studies is dialectical rather than unidirectional, with each branch both providing insights for and using insights from the other two. Holmes therefore concludes that 'though the needs of a given moment may vary, attention to all three branches is required if the discipline is to grow and flourish'. It is interesting to compare this position with that of Toury, where it is clear that applied activities such as translator training and translation criticism are not seen as the central component of translation studies but rather as 'extensions' of the discipline. Moreover, by contrast to Holmes' insistence on the dialectical relationship between all three areas, Toury seems to see the relationship between theoretical and descriptive translation studies on the one hand and what he calls the "Applied Extensions" of the discipline on the other as strictly unidirectional.

2.2. The van Doorslaer 'map'

In order to deal with such a breadth of work, a new conceptual tool was developed for the Benjamins *Translation Studies Bibliography* , as explained by van Doorslaer (2007). In the new maps, a distinction is drawn between 'translation' and 'translation studies', reflecting the different centres of interest of research. [10]

'Translation' looks at the act of translating and, in the new map, is subdivided into:

- Lingual mode (interlingual, intralingual);
- Media (printed, audiovisual, electronic);
- Mode (covert/overt translation, direct/indirect translation, mother tongue/ other tongue translation, pseudo-translation, retranslation, self-translation, sight translation, etc.);
- Field (political, journalistic, technical, literary, religious, scientific, commercial).

Translation studies is subdivided into:

- Approaches (e.g. cultural approach, linguistic approach);
- Theories (e.g. general translation theory, polysystem theory);
- Research methods (e.g. descriptive, empirical);
- Applied translation studies (criticism, didactics, institutional environment).

Alongside these is a 'basic transfer map' of terminology to describe the linguistic manoeuvres that, despite the cultural turn, remain central to the concrete translating process. This consists of strategies, procedures/ techniques, 'errors', rules/norms/conventions/laws/universals and translation tools. The distinction is an important one, even if it is sometimes blurred in the

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literature: a strategy is the overall orientation of a translated text (e.g. literal translation) while a procedure is a specific technique used at a given point in a text (e.g. borrowing, calque,).

Linguistic transfer of course still occurs within a sociocultural and historical context and institutional environment that place their own constraints on the process.

3. Translation Studies and Other Disciplines

In the early 1950s and throughout the 1960s, **translation studies was largely treated as a branch of applied linguistics**, and indeed linguistics in general was seen as the main discipline which is capable of informing the study of translation. In the 1970s, and particularly during the 1980s, translation scholars began to draw more heavily on theoretical frameworks and methodologies borrowed from other disciplines, including psychology, communication theory, literary theory, anthropology, philosophy and, more recently, cultural studies.

There are now distinct theoretical perspectives from which translation can be studied. The study of translation has gone far beyond the confines of any one discipline **and it has become clear that research requirements in this area catered for by any existing field of study**. Although some scholars see translation studies as interdisciplinary by nature, this does not mean that the discipline is not developing or cannot develop a coherent research methodology of its own. Indeed, the various methodologies and theoretical frameworks borrowed from different disciplines are increasingly being adapted and reassessed to meet the specific needs of translation scholars.

In the course of attempting to find its place among other academic disciplines and to synthesize the insights it has gazed from other fields of knowledge, translation studies has occasionally experienced periods of fragmentation: of approaches, schools, methodologies, and even sub-fields within the discipline (for example translation and interpreting). But splitting the discipline into smaller factions can only weaken the position of the science in the academy.

Similarly, the threat of fragmentation sometimes looms high in the kind of literature which deliberately sets different theoretical approaches or research programs in opposition. This is particularly evident in the case of approaches informed by cultural studies and those informed by the well-established but by no means flawless models derived from linguistics. In recent years, a number of scholars began to talk about **'the cultural turn in translation studies'** and to argue that an approach derived from cultural studies and stressing the role of ideology must replace **the traditional linguistically derived models**. Such discussions often misrepresent and caricature the paradigms they attack in a way that is not necessarily in the interest of the discipline as a whole.

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Translation scholars must recognize that no approach, however sophisticated, can provide the answer to all the questions raised in the discipline nor the tools and methodology required for conducting research in all areas of translation studies. There can be no benefit in setting various approaches either in opposition to each other or in resisting the integration of insights through the application of various tools of research, whatever their origin. Fortunately, more and more scholars are beginning to celebrate the plurality of perspective that characterizes the discipline.

It is important to point out that the relationship of translation studies to other disciplines is not fixed. This explains the changes over the years, from a strong link to contrastive linguistics in the 1960s to the present focus on more cultural studies perspectives and even the recent shift towards areas such as computing and media. Other, secondary, **relationships come to the fore when dealing with the area of <u>applied translation studies</u>**, such as **translator training**. For instance, specialized translation courses should have an element of instruction in the disciplines in which the trainees are planning to translate – such as law, politics, medicine, finance, science – as well as an ever increasing input from information technology to cover computer-assisted translation.

As any observable phenomenon, **translation can be the object of a scientific study aimed at understanding its nature**, **its components and their interaction as well as various factors `influencing it or linked with it in a meaningful way**. The science of translation or translatology is concerned both with theoretical and applied aspects of translation studies. A theoretical description of the translation phenomenon is the task of the theory of translation. Theoretical research is to discover what translation is, to find out what objective factors underline the translator's intuition, to describe the way and methods by which the identity of the communicative value of source text ST and target text TT is achieved. The objective knowledge obtained can then be used to help the translator to improve his performance as well as to train future translators.

The theory of translation provides the translator with the appropriate tools of analysis and synthesis that makes him aware of what he is to look for in the original text, what type of information he must convey in TT and how he should act to achieve his goal.

The core of the translation theory is the general theory of translation which is concerned with the fundamental aspects of translation inherent in the nature of bilingual communication and therefore common to all translation events, irrespective of what languages are involved or what kind of text and under what circumstances was translated. Basically, replacement of ST by TT of the same communicative value is possible because both texts are produced in human speech governed by the same rules and implying the same relationships between language, reality and the human mind. All languages are means of communication, each language is used to externalize and shape human thinking, all language units are meaningful entities

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related to non-linguistic realities, all speech units convey information to the communicants. In any language communication is made possible through a complicated logical interpretation by the users of the speech units, involving an assessment of the meaning of the language signs against the information derived from the contextual situation, general knowledge, previous experience, various associations and other factors. The general theory of translation deals, so to speak, with translation universals and is the basis for all other theoretical study in this area, since it describes what translation is and what makes it possible.

An important part of the general theory of translation is **the theory of equivalence** aimed at studying **semantic relationships between ST and TT**. It has been noted that there is a presumption of semantic identity between the translation and its ST. At the same time it is easily demonstrable that there is, in fact, no such identity for even a cursory examination of any translation reveals in_e_vitable losses, increments or changes of the information transmitted (*The student is reading a book.*). The theory of equivalence is concerned with factors which prevent such an identity, it strives to discover how close ST and TT can be and how close they are in each particular case.

Contemporary translation activities are characterized by a great variety of types, forms and levels of responsibility. The translator has to deal with works of great authors of the past and of the leading authors of today, with intricacies of science fiction and the accepted stereotypes of detective stories. **He must be able to cope with the `elegancy of expression of the best masters of literary style**. The translator has to preserve and fit into a different linguistic and social context a gamut of shades of meaning and stylistic nuances expressed in the original text by a great variety of **language devices**.

The original text may deal with any subject from general philosophical principles or postulates to minute technicalities in some obscure field of human endeavour. **The translator has to tackle complicated specialized descriptions and reports on new discoveries in science or technology for which** <u>appropriate terms have not yet been invented</u>. His duty is to translate diplomatic representations and policy statements, scientific dissertations and after-dinner speeches, etc.

Each type of translation has its own combination of factors influencing the translating process. The general theory of translation should be supplemented by a number of **special translation theories identifying major types of translation activities** and describing the predominant features of each type.

Another important branch of the theory of translation is concerned with **the study of ST and TT <u>units</u> which can replace each other in the translating process**. The creation of equivalent texts results in, and in part is dependent on, **the equivalence of correlated language units which are of identical or similar communicative value** and can replace

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each other in translation. The communicative value of a language element depends both on its own semantics and on the way it is used in speech. Therefore translation equivalence may be established between units occupying dissimilar places in the system of respective languages. **It follows that equivalent units cannot be discovered with confidence before a certain amount of TT's have been compared with their ST's.**

It is obvious that a description of translation equivalents, as opposed to the methods of the general theory of translation, should be bilingual, that is, it should always relate to a definite pair of languages. Moreover, a bilingual theory of translation should study two separate sets of equivalents, with either language considered, in turn, as SL and the other as TL. Nevertheless all bilingual theories of translation proceed from the identical basic assumptions as to the classification of equivalents and their role in the translating process.

Of particular interest is that branch of the theory of translation which is concerned with the translating process itself, that is, with the operations required for passing over from ST to TT. It is a great challenge to the translation theory to discover how the translator does the trick, what are his mental processes which ensure production in TL of a text of identical communicative value with the given ST. True, these processes are not directly observable but they can be studied, even though with a certain degree of approximation, in various indirect ways. This direction of the translation theory is of considerable practical value for it makes possible the description of particular methods of translation that can be used by the translator to ensure equivalence between ST and TT. **The study of the translating process reveals both <u>the translator's general strategy</u> and <u>specific techniques</u> used to solve typical translation problems.**

In conclusion, mention should be made of one more branch of the theory of translation which deals with **the pragmatic aspects** of the translating process. The communicants involved in interlingual communication <u>speak different languages</u> but they also belong to <u>different cultures</u>, have <u>different general knowledge</u>, <u>different social and historical background</u>. This fact has a considerable impact on the translator's strategy since the most truthful rendering of ST contents may sometime be partially or fully misunderstood by the receptors of the translation or fail to produce a similar effect upon them. The translator has to assess the possible communicative effect of TT and take pains to ensure an adequate understanding of its message by TR. This may necessitate expanding or modifying the original message to make it more meaningful to the members of a different language community.

A further pragmatic adaptation may be imperative if TT is addressed to some specific social or professional group of people or if the translation event has some additional pragmatic purpose. In some cases the pragmatic value is the major fact in assessing the quality of the translator's performance.

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