



Politeness on the Speech Act of Request and Refusal of Indonesian Trainees/Jisshusei in Japan (An Awareness on Japanese Politeness)

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Abstract. Japanese language politeness is essential for being understood by Japanese language students and people who work in Japan, such as Indonesian trainees (Jisshusei) currently in Japan. Recognizing Japanese politeness utterances by trainees will help facilitate harmonious relationships for speakers. Moreover, the interlocutors can be mutually respectful. So, the trainees can communicate with Japanese people. Based on our preliminary investigation, students in Universitas Negeri Semarang who had the opportunity to participate in an internship program in Japan between 2017–2021 still had difficulty using Japanese politeness in an actual situation. This was because, when learning in class, informal situations were conditioned through lecturer explanations, so students had difficulty imagining situations similar to the actual situation. Trainees or Jisshusei who are taking technical training in Japan should be aware of the Japanese politeness form they use because they will be able to respect each other among speakers in terms of social relations with coworkers and their superiors when they take the technical training in Japan. Furthermore, the awareness of using polite speech in their environment when participating in the training, both at the time of how to apply or refuse following the Japanese society's norms. Based on this context; it is believed that this study will be able to 1) identify the type of respect/politeness utilized by the trainees (Jisshusei) in the given situation, 2) identify the forms of speech acts of request used in specific situations, and 3) identify the forms of refusal speech acts used in specific situations. The findings of this study are expected to assist Indonesian trainees or Jisshusei in Japan, as well as Japanese language students who will work or participate in internships or work in Japan. In understanding the significance of the Japanese politeness utterances, which must be used following the rules that apply in Japanese society.

Keywords: politeness awareness · Jisshusei · speech-act of refusal · speech-act of request

1 Introduction

It is important for Japanese language learners, notably Jisshusei or Indonesian trainees in Japan, to comprehend Japanese politeness. This is because the Japanese value the attitude of respect for their interlocutor that is raised in the use of their language, specifically the use of a variety of Japanese respect to respect new people they know; people whose age is older than the speaker, and relationships between superiors and subordinates, among other things.

Japanese politeness is required not only by Japanese language learners but also by people who work as Jisshusei or trainees in Japanese companies, as well as other migrant workers in Japan. This is due to their requirement to interact interculturally with both Japanese and other foreigners as part of their job. As one of the cultures used in their daily lives, whether at work or home, Japanese culture is known to have a variety of polite speech behaviors. As a result, it is critical for these trainees or Jisshusei to comprehend and be cognizant of Japanese politeness.

Based on the study results of Supriatnaningsih et al. [1], there are still many students who find it challenging to use Japanese, especially when speaking polite Japanese language properly and correctly, namely speaking politely according to the situation when communicating or speaking politely correctly according to the function of using language according to partners. This is due, in part, to students' difficulty in associating or imagining situations in which communication must be used, mainly when speaking politely in Japanese, because in Japanese, to express politeness in Japanese, one must use polite language, particularly to new people, superiors, older people, and others. As a result, for students or Japanese language users to talk graciously, depending on the context of communication, they must first grasp and associate the scenario with polite language, aided by media use.

According to the findings of a study conducted by supriatnaningsih [2], Japanese language students participating in an internship or internship in Japan still have difficulty speaking politely in Japanese because of the situation when communication only uses an explanation of the situation from the lecturer, unlike in real situations. Similarly, Japanese language learners, so the findings of this study might provide information about politeness awareness in Japanese Jisshusei/Indonesian trainees in Japan based on socio-pragmatic manners that Jisshusei should be aware of in various workplace scenarios. Based on the background explained above, we find our research problem as follows: (1) what forms of respect/politeness are used by the kenshusei/trainees in the given situation? (2) what forms of speech acts are used by the kenshusei/trainees in certain situations? (3) what forms of speech acts of refusal are used by kenshusei/trainees in certain situations? and (4) what are the solutions so that the awareness of politeness in Japanese.

2 Research Methods

The descriptive qualitative research approach was employed in this study to describe the knowledge of politeness speech in Japanese Jisshusei/Indonesian trainees in Japan in terms of sociopragmatic. The qualitative research used in this study is then examined

from a sociopragmatic standpoint. Putrayasa [3] states that sociopragmatics investigates specific (particular) conditions in content accuracy, namely the extent to which certain communication functions, attitudes, and ideas are deemed appropriate in light of the prevailing situation in society. Connected with the accuracy of the contents of Indonesian Jisshusei/trainees’ politeness utterances in Japan with the normative principles of politeness use that apply in Japanese culture. This study employs descriptive qualitative research, which entails gathering data from questionnaire responses for kenshuusei / trainees now in Japan, which is then evaluated, classed, interpreted, and concluded. In data analysis activities, normative analysis methods are used. Data analysis in this study also refers to the opinion of Sudaryanto [4], namely using the referential equivalent method. The data analysis procedure is taken by collecting data from questionnaires from Indonesian Jisshusei/trainees, classifying awareness of speech forms and politeness, identifying awareness of forms of polite speech, requests, and refusal from certain situations, and transcribing the data from the questionnaires of the Jisshusei/trainees into written data. After that, it identifies the awareness of Japanese politeness speech from the form of polite and the form of requesting speech acts, and the speech acts of refusal used by the Jisshusei/trainees.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Strategy Politeness on the Speech Act of Request by the Jisshusei/Trainees

We asked the participant to select certain appropriate utterances in given situations for the speech act of request. There are sixth difference situations with different requests and with different interlocutors. Within this request, we seek to understand how they chose the appropriate utterance they should give, and we also could process whether they were aware of the given situation and how to respond to it. The first setting is a situation where the Jisshusei needs to ask their close co-worker to ask them to explain a new job description.

As we can see in Fig. 1, there are different ranges of answers on how they should give a request in this situation. Over 45.5% chose utterance d for “Sempai, sumimasen, shigoto ga owatta ato, shigoto no naiyou o kite mo iidesuka.” And other respondents chose different types of utterances. Even though over 55% do not become aware of how they should the appropriate sentences for the given situations. Some of them could choose and decide what they should ask in the situation given. If we further analyze their answers above, we can see that almost half of the trainees could request a strategy

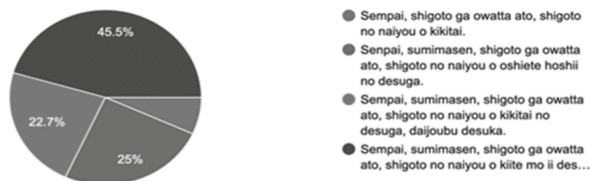


Fig. 1. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (request to explain about their new job description)

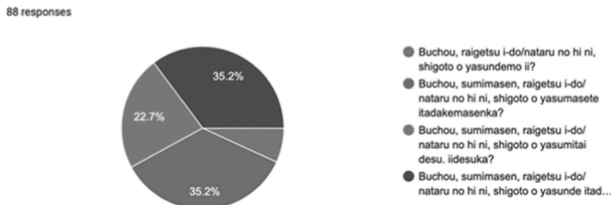


Fig. 2. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: request permission to take one day holiday next month)

from certain people in their work environment. In the second setting for the speech act of request, we give them a polite situation where the interlocutor their facing is their “buchou” or head of section. The given situation is somewhat different from the first one. The second situation is a request from the trainees to their supervisor (head of a section) to ask permission for one day holiday next month; the result is explained below.

In Fig. 2, we can see that the respondent chose different utterances for the given situation. We can see a similar proportion for the selected utterance, the second and the fourth. The second utterance for the request for permission to take a holiday to the “buchou” is the second one: “Buchou, sumimasen, raigetsu i-do/nataru no hi ni, shigoto o yasumasete itadakemasenka?”. And only 35.2% were aware of the different utterances within the given utterance, and the situation explained before. In this situation, they should use the honorific marker “kenjogo,” which means that they should talk to their head of section or “buchou” by lowering their position and asking for their permission. And some, around 22.7% ask with a different type of request which is a teineigo. We assume that most respondents were unaware of what they should choose as the appropriate type of Keigo in Japanese. Whether they should use teineigo, sonkeigo, or kenjogo, they only know in their daily lives. And most of them could not know the different usage of those types of Japanese honorific markers.

The third situation given on the speech act of request is that we asked them to choose the situation where they, as their leader (their direct in-line supervisor), asked permission for their next holiday; they wanted to spend the night out of town. Below is the result on how they ask permission in Japanese.

- 1) renkyuu: consecutive holidays
- 2) tomaru:stay/spend the night

Let’s look at the answers in Fig. 3. A given situation for this is that the trainees were to ask their direct supervisor (leader of the group) to give them permission to go out of town and stay the in their friend’s apartment during their “renkyuu” holiday. The trainees only have 19.3% to answer the appropriate request to their supervisor (leader), which is “Ri-da-, raishuu wa renkyuu nanode, tomodachi no apa-to ni tomatte ii desuka.” Looking at the diagram above, they mostly choose the third utterance, which is a polite way of saying a request, which is 46.6%. We assume that the trainees could not be aware of the situation and think they should speak politely regarding it. So, only below 20% chose the appropriate request form in Japanese. In this case, we can summarize that they know

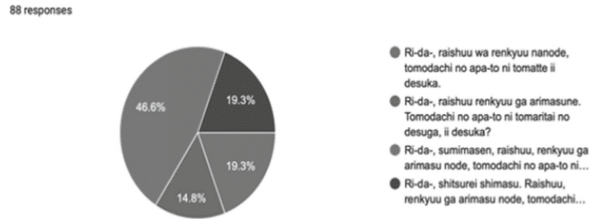


Fig. 3. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: ask for permission to go out of town)

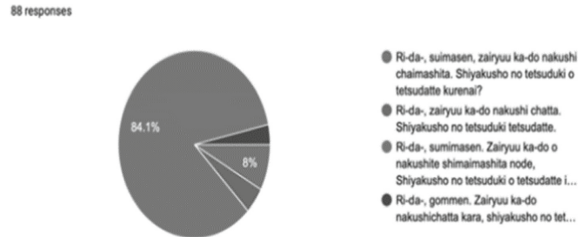


Fig. 4. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: ask for help to accompany them to the shiyakusho)

about the variation form of honorific markers or the use of polite forms in Japanese. However, most of the trainees could not use it appropriately in some cases.

We then give the respondent another different speech act of request situation. Below is the summary for the fourth situation. In this fourth situation, we asked them to choose the appropriate answer in the given situation. The situation is about the trainees wanting to ask their not-so-close leader to accompany them to the “shiyakusho”/ city hall office to report their missing residence card—the result on how they ask a request in Japanese as Fig. 4.

- 1) zairyuu kaado: residence card
- 2) shiyakusho: municipal office (city hall office)
- 3) tetsudzuki: procedure

As we can see on the diagram above, over 84% of the respondents choose the appropriate answer, which is “Ri-da, sumimasen. Zairyuu ka-do o nakushite shimaimashita node, shiyakusho no tetsuduki o tetsudatte itadakemasenka.” We can assume that they are aware of the polite form of this given situation, so they chose the most polite form among the subject of the selection. This fourth and third situation are similar; we use the supervisor (leader) as the interlocutor. However, we emphasize and using not such close leaders in this situation. We wanted to notice that different speakers’ opponents sometimes use polite forms differently. We can assume that the trainees could not become aware of the difference between those two interlocutors and chose the most polite form regardless of the people they were talking to (or making a request to). We conclude that the jishhusei or trainees don’t fully acknowledge the use of polite form or the Japanese

honorific markers. Their situation was mainly because they could not understand what they should use in certain situations. And could not know the difference. The fifth setting is where the Jisshusei needs to ask a train station officer or “eki in” about where the train for Akihabara station is bound. Below is the result on how they ask for a request in Japanese (Fig. 5).

1) Akihabara yuki: bound to Akihabara station

As we can see from the diagram above, the respondent who chose well in the given situation is only 47.7%, below 50% of the total. Some respondents chose the second option, “anou, sumimasen. Akihabara e ikitain desu. Akihabara eki no Densha o oshiete kuremasenka.”. And Option 'd' has a similar polite form but a different level of politeness. It might be different for the native speaker to choose whether to use the polite form of “ ~ oshiete kuremasenka” or “~oshiete itadakemasenka.” However, if we look at the interlocutor we are talking to, the station officer or “eki-in” is within the range of “soto”/outside group and people for the first time met category. Therefore, some trainees think that the “ ~ oshiete kuremasenka” is the appropriate, polite form in this situation. We can conclude that they are aware of Japan’s different forms of politeness. However, sometimes they could not use it appropriately. Our last given situation of the speech act of request is about the trainees were about to ask permission from their head of section or “buchou” to attend Japanese class every Saturday in a neighboring town. The result of how they ask permission for the “buchou” in Japanese is below in Fig. 6.

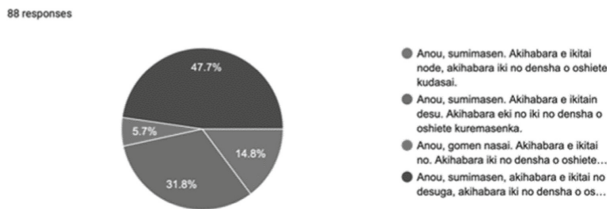


Fig. 5. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: ask for help to locate the train to Akihabara station)

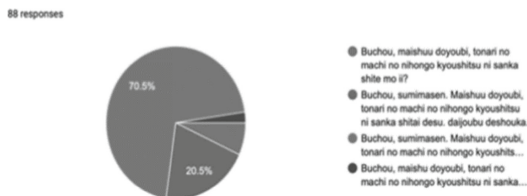


Fig. 6. Diagram of the speech act request usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: ask for permission to attend Japanese class)

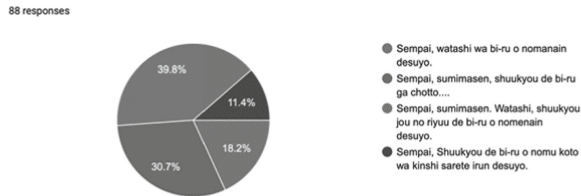


Fig. 7. Diagram of the speech act refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (refuse to go and join the “nomikai”).

1) tonari no machi: neighboring town

As we can see from the result, 70.5% of the trainees choose the c option utterance, “Buchou, sumimasen. Maishuu doyoubi, tonari no machi no nihongo kyoushitsu ni sanka shite mo yoroshii deshouka.” In this given situation, the respondent is aware of the different types of utterances, so they would be able to choose the most appropriate polite form for the situation explained. Only 20% of the respondents choose option b, “buchou, sumimasen. Maishuu doyoubi, tonari no machi no nihongo kyoushitsu ni sanka shitai desu. Daijoubu deshouka.” In this utterance, they use a teineigo; however, because the interlocutor is their above supervisor, in a hierarchy, they should use a more polite form, so it is suitable to use sonkeigo or a more level of polite form. With “yoroshii deshouka” and “daijoubu deshouka,” most trainees would be aware of the different usage in the Japanese situation.

3.2 Politeness Strategy on the Speech Act of Refusal by the Jisshusei/Trainees

We set a particular situation on how polite form is used in the speech act of refusal in Japanese. There are six different interlocutors and different situations that we use in this study. We asked the participant to select certain appropriate utterances in given situations for the speech act of refusal. We set a request to be refused by the participant; we seek to understand whether the trainees are aware of what they should choose for the given situation. The first setting is a situation where the Jisshusei must refuse their senior at work or “sempai” request to join their “nomikai” on the weekend (Fig. 7).

1) shuukyou de: religious reason

As shown in the diagram above, about 39.8% of respondents choose option c, “sempai, sumimasen. Watashi, shuukyou jou no riyuu de bi-ru o nomenain desuyo”. However, the percentage of the appropriate, polite utterance where this situation given was not high. However, the percentage is relatively high compared to the other option. We also assume that some of the trainees confuse about the answer to option b, which is “sempai, sumimasen, shuukyou de bi-ru ga chotto...” So, it is still an acceptable refusal form, but when it comes to the appropriate one, the option c, is the most suitable on this given situation. We conclude that they are aware of different kinds of polite forms for this situation. And, they feel and choose the form they mostly like to hear daily. We then give the respondent

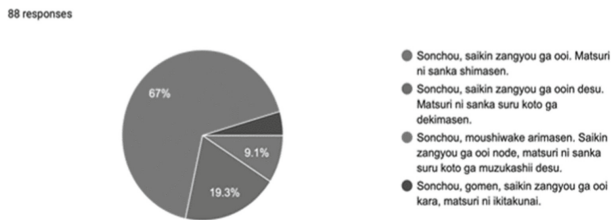


Fig. 8. Diagram of the speech act of refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: refuse the invitation to participate in the culture festival)

another different speech act of refusal situation. Below is the summary for the second situation. In this second situation, we asked them to choose the appropriate answer in the given situation. The situation given is about the trainees wanting to refuse the invitation from the village chief or “sonchou” to participate in their culture festival/ “matsuri” next week. Because the trainees busy with their workload and must over time, so they need to refuse the invitation. The result on how they ask for a request in Japanese as below Fig. 8.

- 1) saikin: Recently
- 2) matsuri: festival

Let’s look at the answers in Fig. 8. A given situation for this is that the trainees were to ask refuse to the village chief or sonchou about their invitation to participate in a culture festival/matsuri next week. The respondent chooses 67% for the option, which is “Sonchou, moushiwake arimasen. Saikin zangyou ga ooi node, matsuri ni sanku suru koto ga muzukashii desu.” We can see from the diagram above, we assume that almost half of the respondents could understand the given situation and choose the appropriate answers for the level of politeness they should choose. So, we can conclude that some of the respondents are aware of which level of politeness form they should use in a given situation. And 19.3% choose option b, which is “Sonchou, saikin zangyou ga ooin desu. Matsuri ni sanku suru koto ga dekimasen.” This is proved that they are mainly based on which utterance they choose in a given situation. The third set of the speech act of refusal is a situation where the Jisshusei needs to refuse a request from their senior or “sempai” to buy them cigarettes from Indonesia. It is because against their company policy. Below is the result of how they ask for a refusal in Japanese (Fig. 9).

- 1) kinshi sareru: forbidden

As we can see from the diagram above, how the respondent chooses the appropriate level of polite form for the given situation. Almost half of the respondents in this study, about 55.7%, choose option b, which is “Sempai, moushiwke arimasen. Kinshi saremasu node, Indonesia no tabako wa kau koto ga dekimasen.” So, most of them understand how to give refusal in Japanese. However, they are still not aware of the given situation. So the appropriate answer should be option d, which is “Sempai, sumimasen. Kinshisareterukara, Indonesia no tabako wa kau koto ga dekinai.” So, if their opponent

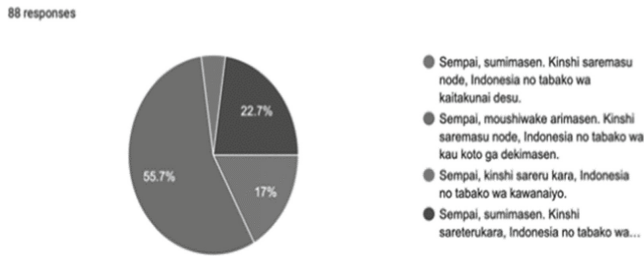


Fig. 9. Diagram of the speech act of refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: refuse for the request to buy them cigarettes from Indonesia)

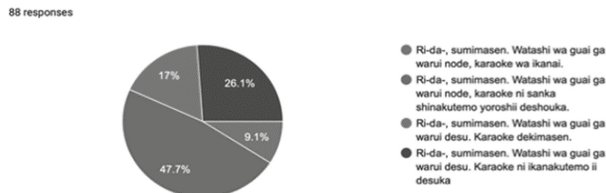


Fig. 10. Diagram of the speech act of refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: refuse the invitation to join them to go to Karaoke)

is someone there are familiar with, it is okay to use the casual form, not the polite form such as option b, even though they are still aware to not give refusal in the form of option a dan option c because it is not a proper refusal form. The fourth situation in the speech act of refusal is that the trainees were asked to refuse the invitation from not so close supervisor (leader of the group) to join them to go to Karaoke after work because they were not feeling well. Below is the result of how they refused the invitation in Japanese (Fig. 10).

- 1) guai ga warui: sick
- 2) sankka: participate

We can see on the diagram above that the results show that the respondent chooses the polite form option b for 47.7%, which is the appropriate utterance for the given situation. In this utterance, they use “~ yoroshii deshouka” to the not-so-close supervisor (leader) to refuse their invitation to go to Karaoke. Some trainees know that they have to use a polite form to the leader that is not close to them as a form of politeness. Over 26% of the respondents also choose option d, “ri-da, sumimasen. Watashi wa guai ga warui desu. Karaoke ni ikanakutemo ii desuka.” This utterance seems logically correct at some point, but they should also consider whom they are talking to and responding to. Therefore, option b is much more polite. And not many of the trainees understand the given situation. The fifth set of the speech act of refusal is a situation where the Jisshusei were asked to refuse the request from not so close leader for tomorrow’s overtime. Because they had already planned out with their friends to go to the city. Below is the result of how they ask for a refusal in Japanese.

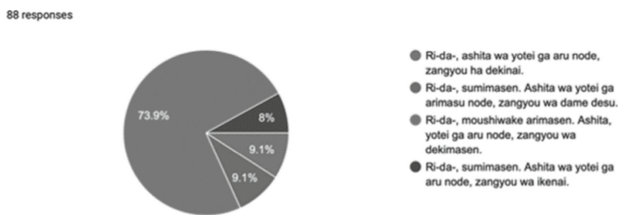


Fig. 11. Diagram of the speech act of refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: refuse the request to do overtime tomorrow)

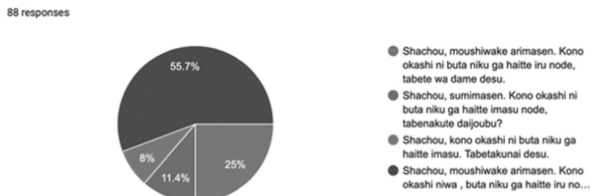


Fig. 12. Diagram of the speech act of refusal usage on each answer by the trainees (situation: refuse to eat the snack from shachou because of religious matter)

If we look at the answers in Fig. 11, a given situation for this is that the trainees were asked to refuse the request from not so close leader for overtime tomorrow. Most of the respondents, around 73.9%, could answer appropriately to the given situation: “ri-da, moushiwake arimasen. Ashita, yotei ga aru node, zangyou wa dekimasen.” And another option of utterance has less percentage below 10%. Therefore we conclude that the trainees know how to give refusal accordingly and understand the situation given. They seem to understand and choose the appropriate, polite form. Our last given situation of the speech act of refusal is about the trainees were about refused to eat snacks or “okashi” because they were afraid the food contained pork or other kinds that were forbidden by the religion. The result of how they refused to eat the snack from the “shachou” in Japanese is below in Fig. 12.

1) okashi: snack

Furthermore, the speech act of refusal when receiving an offer to taste snack souvenirs from a company director or “shachou” who is not very familiar. Because the food contains pork or ingredients that should not be consumed. As we can see from the result, as much as 55.7% answered using indirect refusal by asking permission first by using the expression “~tabenakutemo yoroshii deshouka.” In Japanese, the expression “dantei o sakeru hyogen,” or the expression of avoiding certainty, as in the expression “.....deshouka”, is used mainly by Japanese people with the aim of not hurting or offending the feelings of the interlocutor.

4 Conclusion

This study attempted to demonstrate how trainees or Jisshusei chose which polite form or utterance would be appropriate for the given situations. As a result, we aim to comprehend their Japanese language knowledge and consciousness activities to produce varying degrees of politeness depending on the context. Different ways of making requests and giving refusals in Japanese make it difficult for second language learners to decide which polite form to use in different situations. Politeness is a communication strategy used to maintain and develop relationships. As a result, it is the strategy for the speakers to maintain the relationship with the interlocutors. Therefore, people tend to think about what they will say and the techniques they will use in requesting the speech act of request and refusal, especially if they are making a request or refusing someone of higher status. The amount of Japanese they were exposed to and their time living in Japan may have influenced their selections and knowledge of their usage of speech acts and politeness. However, individual variances may influence the respondent's request or refusal approach choice. Understanding social standards and knowing exactly where to put words in proper contexts would benefit Jisshusei. Furthermore, understanding politeness across cultures extends beyond the everyday manners of requesting, refusing, and others.

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