

ISSN Online: 2327-4050 ISSN Print: 2327-4034

Students' and Teachers' Responses to the Course Entitled "History of English Language" and Its Effectiveness in the Perspective of Bangladeshi Universities

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How to cite this paper: Akter, F., Mojumder, B., & Rahman, M. (2021). Students' and Teachers' Responses to the Course Entitled "History of English Language" and Its Effectiveness in the Perspective of Bangladeshi Universities. *Advances in Literary Study*, *9*, 27-41.

https://doi.org/10.4236/als.2021.92005

Received: December 2, 2020 Accepted: February 6, 2021 Published: February 9, 2021

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the students' responses towards the course entitled "History of English Language" in the English Department, learning whether the course was effective or not and also identifying some teachers' views towards the course. In order to collect data for analysis, two separate questionnaires were distributed to English department students and teachers of Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU) and an interview was conducted with teachers in the English Department. The major findings of this study revealed that teachers and students provided similar views about the importance of knowing the history of English, the content of the course and the essentiality of the course in graduation level at non-native countries. Some differences between teachers' and students' opinions regarding the course including the effectiveness of the course have also been found in this study. Finally, some recommendations have been provided to fill the gap between the teachers' and the students' opinions in order to ensure the effectiveness of the course in the syllabus of English department in non-native countries like Bangladesh.

Keywords

History, English Language, Student's and Teachers' Response

1. Introduction

English has been spread as a global language because of colonization, communications technology and globalization. "On the one hand, the availability of Eng-

lish as a global language is accelerating globalisation. On the other, the globalisation is accelerating the use of English." (Graddol, 2006) As a result, English is taught and learned as an international language in most of the countries of the world. English is taught as a compulsory subject from class one to twelve in Bangladesh. In graduation level, the course "History of English Language" has been introduced in the curriculum of English Department by some public and private universities in Bangladesh. But most of the prominent universities like University of Dhaka, Jahangirnagar University and Rajshahi University have not included this course. From the above situation, this study was conducted to present students' and teachers' responses towards the course "History of English Language" and also the effectiveness of the course. Alacapinar (2016) puts it, "If students like their teacher and the course, they may adopt the desired behaviors more easily." So, learners' views and attitudes play a significant role in effective teaching and learning process. Curriculum designers can develop the programs to fulfill the objectives and improve the academic achievement by understanding the learners' motivation and attitudes (Viet, 2017). Besides identifying students' views, teachers' responses towards the course and the effectiveness of the course should also be addressed. As the course "History of English Language" is included in the curriculum of few universities including Noakhali Science and Technology University (NSTU) in Bangladesh, the responses of students and teachers towards the course and the effectiveness of the course are needed to be explored.

Though most of the public universities in Bangladesh do not have the course "History of the English Language" in graduation level, few universities have introduced it in their syllabus. The current research problem is determined by the identification of students' and teachers' responses towards the course and to find out the effectiveness of it in graduation level. Students have unique knowledge and perspectives that can improve learning but students are rarely asked to express their views. A key requirement to understand the impact of current reforms and to improve learning is careful listening to students' opinions (Levin, 2000). As students and teachers play the most important role in achieving the purpose and fulfilling the objectives of any course, their responses should be considered before introducing a course in the curriculum. Besides, little research has been conducted to find out the effectiveness of this course "History of English Language" in graduation level in non-native countries. Consequently, it was significant to exhibit how students' and teachers' respond towards the course and the effectiveness of this course in Bangladeshi universities. So, the study has great importance to the university teachers because it will guide them in designing their syllabus based on students' opinions regarding this course. Moreover, the study will help the planners to design university's curriculum considering teachers' and students' views.

The study was conducted to serve a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it aimed at exploring students' and teachers' responses towards the course "History of English Language". Secondly, it attempts to find out the effectiveness of the course in

graduation level. In accordance with the objectives, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1) How do students respond towards the course "History of English Language"?
- 2) What are the teachers' opinions regarding the course "History of English Language"?
- 3) What is the effectiveness of the course in graduation level in non-native countries like Bangladesh?

2. General History of the Development of English Language

English language has gone through many changes and development from the very beginning of its history. There are so many internal and external forces that have been the reason of the changes and development of English Language at different periods. "It is important to recognise that these differences between Old English and present-day English are not necessarily due to English having lost its essential Germanic structure (although there is a perfectly acceptable argument for claiming that is actually the case). These differences arise from many, often unrelated, sources. Their overall effect on the present-day reader, however, is indeed to disguise the genuine continuities which persist throughout all ages" (Hogg, 2002). The settlement of Jutes, Saxons and Angles in England during the 5th and the 6th centuries provided the foundation of English language's grammar and vocabulary. "The existence of the English language as a separate idiom began when Germanic tribes had occupied all the lowlands of Great Britain and when accordingly the invasions from the continent were discontinued, so that the settlers in their new homes were cut off from that steady intercourse with their continental relations which is 'an imperative' condition of linguistic unity." (Jespersen, 1905) In Middle English period, the Scandinavian invasion at the end of the 8th century and the Vikings' conquest of England during the 9th century have also great influences in developing English language. "During the later part of the Old English period, two different groups of non-English speakers invaded the country. Both groups were Scandinavian in origin, but whereas the first had retained its Scandinavian speech, the second had settled in northern France and become French-speaking. Both of their languages, Old Norse (ON) and Old French (OF), had a considerable influence on English." (Barber, Beal, & Shaw, 1993, 2000, 2009) English language went through a number of phonological, morphological, lexical, and syntactic changes during the Middle English period. English spelling was mostly standardized and pronunciation changed quite dramatically because of extensive sound changes. In the Early Modern English period, the rapid growth of the printing industry was one of the most important factors in the process of the standardization of the English language (Chamonikolasová, 2014). In the seventeenth century, the social, political, commercial, technological, religious, and intellectual forces had great influence on the English language. At that time, the English language started to spread as the influence of Dutch started declining. The eighteenth century desired to achieve the standard, modified and permanent form of English language. In the nineteenth century, the industrial and scientific revolution and the British colonization had contributed a lot to increase the vocabulary of English language. Even the British colonization of North America created a distinct American variety of English called American English which has been popular day by day. "English has become a world language because of its wide diffusion outside the British Isles, to all continents of the world, by trade, colonization and conquest". (Barber, Beal, & Shaw, 1993, 2000, 2009) By the twentieth century, English has been the global language but the future of his language is "complex" and uncertain. According to (Graddol, 1997) "Native speakers may feel the language belongs to them, but it will be those who speak English as a second or foreign language who will determine its world future."

From more than one hundred years ago, the history of English language has regularly been taught as an academic subject at the university level. This course helps students develop a "new perspective" on the language because it makes the students aware of the connection of language with "politics, economics, culture, technology, and religion—any area of human experience in which language plays a role" (Matto & Momma, 2008).

In 1755, Samuel Johnson wrote a dictionary of the English Language which included a perfunctory "History of the English Language" but the history was just a selection of older texts. The foundation of the study of "History of English Language" was provided by Rasmus Rask, Jacob Grimm, Franz Bopp, and other philologists in Continental Europe in 1818. Noah Webster (1828), Latham (1841), Bosworth (1836), Marsh (1862), Koch (1863) and Mätzner (1860) are the philologists who contributed in the 19th century. But Lounsbury (1879) provided the shape of the history of the English language where he divided his book into Part I, General History and Part II, History of Inflections. Emerson (1894), Bradley (1904), Jespersen (1905), Wyld (1906), and Smith (1912) also conducted similar surveys after three decades (Cable, 2009).

In the first edition of Albert Baugh's famous textbook "A History of the English Language", he stated, "The present book... aims to present the historical development of English in such a way as to preserve a proper balance between what may be called internal history—sounds and inflections—and external history—the political, social, and intellectual forces that have determined the course of that development at different periods." (Baugh & Cable, 1951) In his book, the "History of the English Language" has been seen as a cultural subject.

Strang (1970) started his book describing Modern English first including the different stages of the language and he also introduced phonetics. The external history was more focused in some new textbooks like Gerry Knowles' A Cultural History of the English Language in 1979, and Dick Leith's A Social History of English in 1983. The second model was not about internal and external history but it includes the chronological development of language where the history was

divided into Old, Middle, and Modern English. Because of the global spread and multidimensional changes in the world' English, this "single straight-line trajectory" was not enough to describe the history of English language (Matto & Momma, 2008).

Braj B. Kachru introduced a new model called "Concentric Circles Model" which provided three circles named the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. There are now three types of English-using speech fellowships: norm-providing, norm-developing, and norm-dependent. The Inner Circle is inner with reference to the origin and spread of the language. In the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle, the ecstasy generated by the power of English has several dimensions: demographic, ideological, societal, and attitudinal (Kachru, 1996).

The introduction of "corpus linguistics" is the final achievement where computer technology is used in interpreting the different aspects of the English language (Curzan, 2008).

As English has been the world language and it has been spread worldwide, "History of English Language" is also taught as a course in English programs in many universities of the world.

"The historical investigation of the Indo-European languages dominated the nineteenth century and set the standard for the investigation of all other language families" (Fischer, 1999). History helps learners to acknowledge the past, understand the present better and foresee the future. Teaching history improves students' ability to view the past from different angles by increasing their knowledge. John Algeo, Based on the original work of Thomas Pyles, described the reasons why the history of English language should be studied. Firstly, like psychologists need to know a person's origins and development to understand his behavior; similarly, the history of English language needs to be studied for better understanding of English language. Secondly, studying the history of English will make the learners aware that many of the irregularities in today's language are the remnants of earlier, quite regular patterns. Studying the history of English language helps to understand the anomalies of Modern English spelling and present-day pronunciation. History also helps to explain the meaning of words for example, why the meaning of "cupboard" do not mean "a board for cups". Therefore, we need history to answer so many questions like this. Another reason for studying the history of English language is that it can help to understand the literature of earlier times. Knowing about the history of the language can help us to answer these and many similar questions. Knowledge of the history of English is will not act as "panacea" for solving all the linguistic problems but obviously it will "alleviate" some of them (Algeo, 2005).

This course is taught in the undergraduate program of English department in some universities in Bangladesh. It is a three credit hour compulsory course with three lectures a week. It introduces students to the history of English language and shows them the connection between history and language.

The objectives of the course are following:

- To enable students to get a clear understanding of the major historical events responsible for the birth of English language;
- To provide students with an understanding of the chronological development of English language through ages by the influence of different other languages;
- To introduce them to the different distinctive features of English language in Old English, Middle English and Modern English period;
- To give students the opportunity to understand how the internal change of the language takes place by the influence of external social, political and intellectual forces:
- To make them informed about how English became world's most spread language and why it is so important to learn it;
- To encourage them to think critically about the future of English language and its influence on literature in general;
- To widen the students' outlook on history, geography and language.

Content of the course "History of English Language"

The course contents include all the historical events which had an impact on the development of English language. In the university level of Bangladesh, this course covers the origin of English language in old English period which was influenced by the rule of the Roman Empire from 43 to 409 AD, the settlement of Anglo-Saxons in England during the 5th and the 6th centuries and the gradual Christianization of the country in the 7th century. It also includes the history of the Scandinavian invasion at the end of the 8th century and the Vikings' conquest of England during the 9th century which had a great impact on English language in the Middle English period. Moreover, the history of Early Modern English and Modern English period when the language has undergone many changes and modification is also discussed in this course. In addition, the spread of the language as "World English" and the future of English language are included in the contents of the course.

3. Research Design

Profile of the participants

The Study was conducted in Noakhali Science and Technology University which is situated at Bangladesh. A random sample of undergraduate and graduate students (N=100), age range 20-28 years filled in a questionnaire (the questionnaire was in English language). All the students who participated in this survey have completed the course.

The students were given a brief orientation of the aims of the study before the questionnaire administration. The students' average experience in studying English in the English Language & Literature Department was 3.5 - 4 years. The students included in this study share important common features. They all belong to same University, and they follow the same curriculum.

Instrument

This study followed two main techniques. These are questionnaire and interview. For data collection the following methods are followed:

1) The students' questionnaire

The first questionnaire was administered for the students who have already completed the course. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part aims to gather information concerning students' background information such as gender, age, academic level and area of interest. The second part addresses the students' views and responses towards the course. It also contained questions on whether the course was effective in graduation level.

2) The teachers' questionnaire

The second questionnaire was administered for the teachers to know their views and responses towards the course. This questionnaire is also divided into two sections. The first section gathered information about teacher's teaching experiences, area of specialization, and whether he had read the course in his graduation/post-graduation level and he had ever taught this course or not. The second section addresses similar kinds of questions like the first questionnaire on the views and responses towards the course and the effectiveness of the course from teachers' perspectives.

3) Interviewing teachers

Five teachers were interviewed separately after giving their opinions through the questionnaire. The teachers were randomly selected among them who had taught the course at least for once.

4. Data Analysis

Analysis of the students' questionnaire

The questionnaire that was conducted for students was closed-ended. Hundred students from fourth year and MA level were asked to respond to the questionnaire. Among the participants, 49% are 24 - 25 years, 41% 22 - 23 years, 6% are 26 - 27 years and rest of the 4% is 20 - 21 years old. 58% participants are 4th year students and 42% are from MA level. Among the participants, 33% have interest toward language, 15% towards literature and rest of the 52% towards both language and literature. Before knowing students' interest towards learning history of English language, the 1st question was on their attitude towards learning English language. According to the results, most of the students have positive attitude. 85% of them selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 8% remains Neutral and 7% only selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree choices in the item "I have positive attitude towards learning English language".

Figure 1 shows that students responded positively towards learning the history of English language. 64% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 17% selected Neutral and 19% Strongly Disagree or Disagree choices in the item "I am very interested to know about the history of English language." Most of the students think that English department students should know the history of English language.

guage. Almost 72% of them selected Strongly Agree or Agree where almost 18% selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree choices in the item related to the importance of knowing the history of English language for English Department students.

It is shown in **Figure 2** that about 47% students did not find the course unnecessary or boring but 29% of them found it unnecessary and boring. In this case, 24% selected Neutral. Some students enjoyed the course but some did not. 38% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 34% selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree and 28% remained Neutral in response to the item "I enjoyed the course 'History of English Language' so much."

Figure 3 shows that when the students were asked about the content of the course, 36% responded positively that the content is interesting and adequate. 37% of them responded negatively and 27% selected neutral. Still, 68% students found the course effective for learning the history of English language. At the same time, 20% of them responded negatively and 12% remained Neutral. But when they were asked about the goals of the course, 51% students selected Strongly Agree or Agree that the course has fulfilled its goals, 31% selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree and 18% remained Neutral. The next question was on whether the course has motivated them to learn English language or not. 38% students selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 39% selected Strongly Disagree or

I am very interested to know about the history of English language. 100 responses

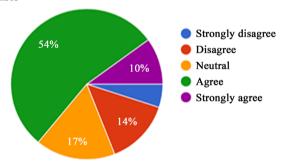


Figure 1. Percentage of students' interest to the history of English language.

I looked forward to sit at the back during this course's class because I found the course unnecessary and boring.

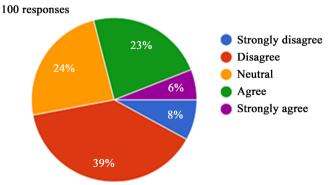


Figure 2. Percentage of students' opinion regarding the necessity of the course.

Disagree and 23% selected Neutral.

According to Figure 4, 51% Students think that the course is essential in graduation level but 36% responded negatively and 13% remained Neutral. At the same time 63% students think that this course is only essential when students have a specialized degree on English language in post-graduation level. But 25% responded negatively and 12% selected Neutral.

It is shown in **Figure 5** that 32% students selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 50% selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree, 18% selected Neutral in response to

The content of the course is interesting and adequate. 100 responses Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Figure 3. Percentage of students' opinion regarding the content of the course.

I feel that this course is essential for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students in graduation level.

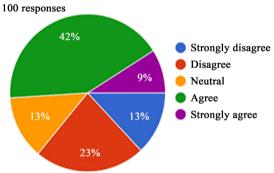
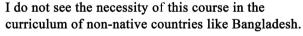


Figure 4. Percentage of students' opinion regarding the essentiality of the course.



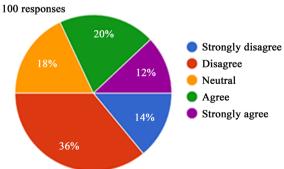


Figure 5. Students' opinion regarding the necessity of the course in non-native countries.

that this course is not necessary in the curriculum of non-native countries like Bangladesh.

Analysis of the teachers' questionnaire

15 teachers of English Department from Noakhali Science and Technology University responded to the questionnaire. Among them, 60% have less than 5 years teaching experience, 33.3% have 6-10 years and 6.7% have 11 - 15 years' experience. Around 54% selected literature, 40% selected both literature and language, and around 6% selected Language in response to the item "Your area of specification". Among the participants, only 26.7% read the course "History of English Language" in their student life and 73.3% did not have the course in their syllabus. Besides, 53.3% participants had never taught this course in their teaching career and 46.7% had taught this course.

Figure 6 shows that when teachers were asked about students having positive attitude towards learning English, 53.3% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 20% selected Disagree, and 26.7% selected Neutral.

According to Figure 7, 46.7% teachers selected Neutral, 20% selected Agree, 26.7% selected Disagree and 6.6% selected Strongly Disagree in response to the item "Students are interested to know about the history of English language".

It is found in Figure 8 that most of the teachers specifically 73.3% think that

Students have positive attitude towards

learning English language. 15 responses Strongly disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Strongly agree

Figure 6. Teachers' opinion regarding students' positive attitude towards learning English.

Students are interested to know about the

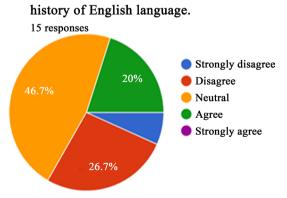


Figure 7. Teachers' opinion regarding students' interest to know the history of English.

English Department students should know the history of English language and rest of them around 26.7% remained Neutral. Nobody disagreed about this point.

Figure 9 shows that 60% of the teachers think that students do not enjoy the course and 40% selected Neutral. Besides, 46.7% of the participants selected Disagree, 33.3% selected Neutral and 20% selected Strongly Agree or Agree in response to the item "The content of the course is interesting and adequate." Moreover, 53.3% teachers selected Agree, 40% Selected Neutral and 6.7% selected Disagree choices to the item "Students find the course unnecessary and boring."

Among the participants, 33.4% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 33.3% selected Neutral and 33.3% selected Disagree in response to the item "Students find the course very effective to learn the history of English language." But according to **Figure 10**, only 20% participants agreed that the course has fulfilled its goals and met students' expectations. 40% of them selected Disagree and 40% selected Neutral regarding this item. In response to the question whether knowing the history of English language motivated students to learn English language or not, 40% selected Disagree, 33.3% selected Neutral and 26.7% selected Strongly Agree or Agree.

I think it is important for the English department students to know about the history of English language.

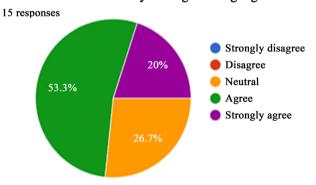


Figure 8. Teachers' opinion regarding the students' necessity of knowing the history of English.

I guess, students enjoy the course "History of English Language" so much.

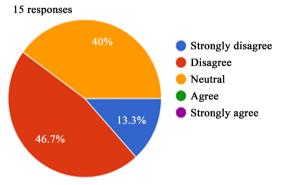


Figure 9. Teachers' opinion about how much students enjoy the course.

It is shown in **Figure 11** that among the participants, 46.7% agreed about the essentiality of the course in graduation level but 40% selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree and 13.3% selected Neutral. But 60% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 33.3 selected Strongly Disagree or Disagree and 6.7% selected Neutral in response to the item "The course is only essential when students want to have a specialized degree on English Language."

According to Figure 12, 46.6% selected Strongly Agree or Agree, 40% selected



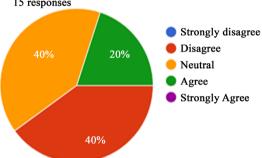


Figure 10. Percentage of teachers' opinion regarding the fulfillment of the goals.

This course is essential for EFL (English as Foreign Language) students in graduation level.

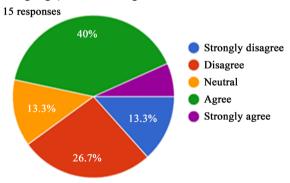


Figure 11. Teachers' opinion regarding the essentiality of the course in graduation level.

I do not see the necessity of this course in the curriculum of non-native countries like Bangladesh.

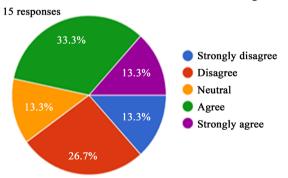


Figure 12. Teachers' opinion regarding the necessity of the course in non-native countries.

Strongly Disagree or Disagree and 13.3% selected Neutral choices to the item "I don't see the necessity of this course in the curriculum of non-native countries like Bangladesh.

5. Findings and Recommendations

After analyzing the results, it was found that teachers and students have both similarities and differences in their opinions. Both agreed that students have positive attitudes toward learning English language. Both teachers and students responded positively that English department students should know the history of English language. Besides, both provided similar opinions regarding the content of the course. Only 20% teachers and 36% students agreed that the content of the course was interesting and adequate. Moreover, almost 40% teachers and 39% students disagreed that students feel more motivated to learn English language after knowing its history. Moreover, whether the course is essential for EFL students in graduation level or not, both teachers and students responded positively. At the same time, 63% students and 60% teachers also agreed that this course could be included only when the students had a specialized degree on English language. And finally, 40% teachers and 50% students agreed about the necessity of the course in the curriculum of non-native countries like Bangladesh.

On the other hand, teachers and students have also different opinions regarding the course "History of English Language". For example, only 20% teachers agreed that students are interested to know about the history of English language but 64% responded positively regarding their interests towards knowing the history of English language. Besides, according to students' responses, only 29% students find the course unnecessary and boring but almost 54% students found it so according to teachers' opinions. Moreover, 38% students agreed that they enjoyed the course but 60% teachers said that students did not enjoy the course. In addition, students and teachers have also different opinions regarding the effectiveness of the course. For example, 68% students found the course effective for learning history of English language but only 33.4% teachers agreed about the effectiveness. Finally, 51% students agreed that the course had fulfilled its goals but only 20% teachers accepted this.

In order to fulfill the gap between teachers' and students' opinions and to make the course more effective, we need to focus on the following points based on the results of the questionnaire and teachers' interview:

- 1) Creative methods and techniques of imparting knowledge should be employed by the teachers to make the course interesting and enjoyable to the students.
- 2) Instructors should add some contents according to students' needs and expectations besides including the basic contents of the course. They can contextualize some items. For example, during describing the origin of English Language, they can mention about the origin of Bengali language too.
- 3) As the teachers found that the course failed to fulfill its goals, teachers should adopt proper strategies and follow different activities to fulfill the goals

and to make the course effective.

4) As only half of teachers and students agreed about the necessity of this course in the graduation level of Bangladesh, it can be included as an alternative course in the syllabus where students will have the options to choose it. Besides, it can be included in the syllabus when students want a specialized degree on English language.

6. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study focuses on a variety of purposes. Firstly, it investigates the students' and teachers' responses towards the course entitled "History of English Language" in the English Department at NSTU. Another purpose is investigating the effectiveness of the course in graduation level in non-native countries like Bangladesh. Data were collected by means of questionnaire and interview and it is clear from the results there are differences and similarities in teachers' and students' views towards the course. Findings reveal that the students have more positive views towards the course than the teachers. To fulfill the gap between teachers' and students' opinions, some activities have been recommended by the researchers. The teaching process needs to engage students actively with some motivating learning styles and enjoyable techniques in order to fulfill the goals of the course. The course can also be added in the syllabus of graduation level as an optional course.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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