A STUDY OF EVALUTION IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

English language education in India is vast and complex. Research, both in school and higher education during the current and last decades reflects the felt realities and the idealism and warrants addressing the needs of new millennium. This review of research traces language policy and the role and place of English language in education, multilingualism in school education, language curriculum design, materials in English language teaching, methods and processes of teaching of English and how English language classroom operates in the diverse Indian contexts. Research on different literacy development and language skills, English language teaching at the university level and English for specific purposes, particularly English for Engineering education, use of ICT in English language teaching, professional development of language teachers and teaching young learners are also reviewed with a view to understand how research has moved during the last decade. The tension between the demand for English language education both as a language and as a medium, and the ideal of mother tongue based multilingualism; the three models of curriculum development in the states - adoption of National Curriculum Framework (NCF) fully, adaption of NCF with modification and development a new curriculum based on the ideas of NCF and their implications on English language curriculum are well illustrated in the studies reviewed. There is a call for a shift to communication oriented processes like communicative approaches and task based language teaching particularly at the graduation level for meeting the demands of higher education and job market.

Keywords: English language, National Curriculum Framework, ICT

1. INTRODUCTION

English language education in India is an impressively large and highly complex phenomenon endowed with major strengths along with equally large failures and limitations (Tickoo, 1996; 2004). This complex situation can be traced in research themes, findings, and policy statements during the last five decades as scholars have attempted to find empirical evidences in the way English as a second language has shaped itself. The change in the status (the role and place) of English language from a colonial legacy to the prominence that it has gained today is another development, which has attracted research over the last three decades, besides language policy and medium of instruction. Researchers have also concentrated on the effectiveness of various methods and approaches to second language teaching-learning and language learning / acquisition, attempting to understand its different dimensions. Research on continuous professional development (CPD) of teachers, use of ICT in English language teaching, teaching English to young learners, teacher research, classroom research and English for professional and specific purposes are the emerging areas of research, which this review discusses.

Earlier surveys of research in education in India (Buch, 1974 & 1979; NCERT, 1977;1991;1997 & 2007) revealed the trends for further research and action. Of the six research surveys conducted so far, fourth (NCERT, 1991) and sixth (Devaki, 2006) surveys contained a separate section for language education and language learning research. Other surveys saw the language education research subsumed in curriculum, materials and methodology research. A closer look at the survey informs that not much research was available in Indian language(s) education, while English language teaching-learning research was well documented. All the surveys in their analysis brought to the notice that language education in general and English language education in particular could not meet the system related demands such as expansion, provisions and quality dimensions and learner related (individualised learning) issues. The demand for English language and English medium was well traced in the researches three decades ago. Language policy, development of materials and individual skills were also explored. Most of the observations of this review are in consonance with the inferences of the previous surveys and have implications for policy and curriculum planning and implementation.

2. LANGUAGE POLICY AND ROLE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION

The *National Commission on Education* – 1964-66 described English as 'a library language' and a language of higher education. This library language over the period of six decades has become the language of popular demand in school education and the language of higher education. The *National Policy on Education* (NPE) – 1986 emphasizes the principles of mother tongue based multilingualism whereas the four National Curriculum Frameworks for school education brought out in the years 1975, 1988, 2000 and 2005 lay emphasis on contextualisation of English language teaching suited to India's diverse

multilingual characteristics. The changing role of English in the socio-political spheres is reflected in curriculum planning and implementation. Introduction of English language in school, which was earlier planned as a third language to be introduced in grade five or six and even in eight (NCERT, 1975, 1988), is now being done from grade one in almost all the states (NCERT, 2006a; Meganathan, 2011). It has become the 'common' second language across the country. The *National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) – *2005* (NCERT, 2005) observed in its position paper on Teaching of English in the new socio-political situation that '*the introduction of English is no longer an academic question, it is a political response to people's demand*.' (NCERT, 2006a, p.1).

3.   MOTHER TONGUE BASED MULTILINGUALISM AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Mother tongue based multilingualism projects were initiated by the state governments in India as a result of global advocacy by UNESCO (2003, 2015) and the demand for protecting indigenous languages, in an effort to bring in mother tongues of learners belonging to tribal and minor communities to school education and to ensure mother tongue based medium of learning. Two such projects in India – one in the state of Andhra Pradesh and another in Odisha – yielded fruits showing the effect of mother tongue based learning in situations where children begin their learning in their mother tongue before they move to the state language or they learn both the state and mother tongue concurrently. Panda, Mohanty, Shivani Nag, and Biswabandan (2011), in a longitudinal study of the multi lingual education (MLE) programme in the states of Andhra Pradesh and Odisha, report that mother tongue based teaching serves as a facilitator for transition to other languages – the state language and learning of English and helps to develop literacy and numeracy very well. Miller's (2005) study is an illustration of how language-in-education policy as implemented in schools serves as a hindrance for minorities as the languages of the learners belonging to minority community do not find a place at the school system level. Even if the minority language is available as a provision to study, the schools are less resourced to teach the languages in terms of availability of teachers and materials which includes the textbook. The incomprehensibility is compounded when children whose mother tongue is not the language of schooling either drop out of the school or are declared as the ones who can't learn (Jhingaran, 2005). Introduction of English language without adequate resources, particularly English language teachers, throws much greater challenges when it comes to the quality of education (Jhingaran, 2009). Scholey (2015) argues that 'students in India face real possibility of psychological and socio-cultural damage by being forced into English medium education at a young age'. The researcher poses a pertinent question: how can learners in the lower-primary school develop useful and meaningful English language knowledge and skill and without impairing their mother tongue development at the same time? (p.10).

4.   ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

Research on second language curriculum throws light on the processes and outcomes of curriculum development and implementation. Studies have been conducted on curriculum making as a professional educational exercise to find evidences on how curriculum statements and processes of curriculum making assume and result in learning outcomes in the classroom and in high stake examinations. Explorations into different approaches to English language curriculum and teaching have been attempted to find out the way a particular approach or method works. A theoretical exploration by Narayanan, Rajasekharan and Iyyappan (2009) advocates to meet the rising needs of the variants of general English Language Teaching (ELT) viz. English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). ESP marks the advancement in the conventional framework of ELT, which defines teaching requirements depending upon the specific needs of different groups of students instead of one multi-purpose course.

An unsound curriculum planning and the gap between the 'intended' and 'implemented' curriculum influence the teaching-learning of English in schools, particularly in rural areas. Meganathan (2009) analysed curricular statements and syllabi of the states of Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland. He reported a lack of holistic planning for introduction of English as a second language in schools in terms of basic assumptions about language learning / acquisition (how language learning takes place), learner profiles and the diverse contexts in which learning takes place, as well as the recent developments in language learning-teaching. Most states refuse to move beyond the good old structural approaches, while they stress for communication skills to help the learners for an upward movement.

5.   MATERIALS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (ELT)

Materials play an influential role in the teaching-learning of a language, though there have been debates in the ELT profession on the actual role of materials in teaching-learning of English as a second and foreign language. The two aspects of materials – the potential for guiding students through learning processes and the limitations resulting from the preferences of teachers who use textbooks - have been debated by the ELT professionals (Litz, 2005). Researchers have recognised the importance of materials "as the basis of much of the language input that learners receive and the language practices that occurs in the classroom' (Richards, 2001, p.251). Text books are also evaluated in terms of pedagogical understanding of language learning

and theories underlying them (Bhat, 1986). Reviews of researches concerning currently used ELT materials (Tomlinson 2001; 2005 & Tomlinson & Avila, 2007) conclude that most course books insist on providing explicit teaching and practices without understanding the language pedagogy.

Studies on development of materials in English suggest that a holistic approach with concern for the learner, teacher, learning processes and learning outcomes would be effective (Meganathan, 2008). Available materials concentrate more on providing reading and writing skills and the other two listening and speaking skills are neglected. Providing meaningful linguistic inputs in the materials is a necessity for effective language learning to take place (Mahalingam, 2000). Materials developed as a follow up to the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 stress the importance of linguistic as well as socio-cultural contexts of learners as inputs recognizing the learner as a constructor of knowledge. This understanding provides scope for authenticity to the tasks. However, curriculum and material development processes in the diverse Indian situations demand a much deeper understanding in developing expertise in materials development for 'diversity within diversity' (i.e. variations within each state / regions) (Meganathan, 2008). Materials for day-to-day use and the need of alternative materials, besides the textbooks, is another dimension which demands expertise on the part of the teacher to become materials developers. Effect of the materials have shown result on the two major skills viz. Listening and speaking which the textbooks tend to ignore for reasons not known (Kohli, 2009).

A comprehensive analysis of textbooks produced (prior to NCF 2005) at the national level by NCERT and the textbooks of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat from the perspective of feminist critique of nation and identity reveals how language pedagogy itself is perceived on 'what constitutes pedagogy of teaching language frame content. The purpose of language is primarily seen as comprehension and value generation' (p. 35). Recent developments in language pedagogy - including language as a tool, skill, a lens through which meaning-making occurs - are not reflected when texts are used for learning tasks and activities (Bhog, Mullick, Bharadwaj & Sharma, 2009).

Textbook reviews and analysis reveal that a textbook can be a restrictive mechanism with its contrived and unauthentic materials and tasks which would not provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with language for learning (Meganathan, 2013, 2014). There are, however, studies which show that textbooks developed with a sound understanding of pedagogy and the contexts of the learning can become an effective tool for language learning (Brundage, 2004). Transition in the methods of language teaching from audio-lingual method to communicative approach to constructivism as advocated by NCF – 2005 and their reflections on materials has been examined (Vajpayye, 2012). One major development is that the textbooks attempt to inform the teacher through 'teacher's pages and explicit advocacy' of the desired language pedagogy. There is a need for situating English language teaching in local cultures as well (Singhal, 2014). For example, studies reveal that how English language dominated the national imagination (Advani, 2009). English language learning programmes should consider social setting and prepare learners to deal with varied situations with successful communication. Materials such as newspaper clippings, magazine articles, and audio visuals should be used in the classroom; home culture can be used as a yardstick to which learners develop an informal understanding of the target culture (Singhal, 2014).

Bhattacharya, Madan, Sarkar and Basu (2012) explored the English language textbooks of classes III, IV and V published by NCERT with the perspectives of multiculturalism, pluralism and literature as an input for language learning at the primary stage. Textbook were analyzed 'as they are' (i.e. as intended) and 'in action', that is as perceived and used by teachers and learners in the classroom. The views and understanding of textbook developers were also obtained. The study revealed that the textbooks reflected current pedagogical understanding. However, the selection of texts and tasks in many lessons did not reveal the intention of an ideal textbook. Teachers are left with no other materials to complement and supplement the textbook thereby leaving them to explore ways and means to find materials for use in the classroom. The study also came out with characteristics of 'ideal' English textbook for students of primary and middle school. These characteristics included: (i) textbook should stimulate children's interest, curiosity, be enjoyable as well as facilitate multifaceted learning; (ii) it should experiment with genres, and play with the notion of a text; (iii) it should encourage student-initiated learning; (iv) text-based exercises should move away from the idea of any one correct answer, and give space to creative interpretation and subject engagement; (v) grammar-based activities should instil interest and should not be given precedence over other activities; (vi) preaching values, morals and social awareness should not be the explicit intention of each chapter; (vii) textbooks should try to relate to students' everyday contexts as far as possible and (viii) language used in the book should be simple, but with multiple registers and varieties of English.

6. METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH AND THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

This section is devoted to an analysis of research studies on methods and approaches, particularly prevailing communicative as well as and Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) approaches and how the methods are realised in the classroom, classroom research, English for engineering courses and ELT at the undergraduate level. Employing experimental designs to establish effectiveness of one particular method or approach to English as a second language teaching in terms of syllabus, materials and

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tasks used in the classroom, studies show that methods could be localized and contextualized suiting to the needs of learners to provide exposure to and engagement with language. Language use and learner-learner interaction in the classroom are found to be the precursor of, and essential for language development in the learner. As Agnihotri and Singh (2012, p. 97) observed, "In most of the studies, it was found that schooling and exposure were the two most important factors determining the quality of performance clearly showing that if children receive adequate exposure to the target language, their competence and performance does not differ from that of the so-called 'native speaker' in any significant way." Devaki (2006,p 59) in her analysis of language learning strategy research observed that "there is a gap between teacher's use of strategy for ELT and students' preferences for the communicative approach as the strategy for language learning". Opportunities for language use in the classroom are limited so that whatever input learners receive does not enable them to 'intake' so that they use the language for purposes. Jangid (2004) in her study of Whole Language Approach to second language instruction reported that learners who undertook whole language approach were able to gain literacy and language proficiency much ahead of children who were taught in regular conventional syllabus. A study of relationship between adjustment and achievement (Saraswati, 2005) reported the effect of the class room processes on learning outcomes. Learner-learner and learner-teacher interactions serve as an instrument for increased learning outcomes (Sarkar, 2006).

The curricular revision which resulted in the development of NCF -2005 in India could be seen as an illustration of the emerging development in methods of language teaching. NCF – 2005 advocates the whole language perspective and language across the curriculum approach with an eclectic perspective for promoting language learning based on the philosophy of social construction of knowledge (Vygotsky, 1978). Contextualisation of the themes and authenticity of tasks as well as providing and enabling environment clearly do not endorse any particular method or approach to be adopted by teachers. It is imperative on the part of teachers to have an understanding of the basic tenets of language pedagogy in order to develop their own flexible strategies for promoting language learning. The study of classroom transaction processes in government and private schools in Manipur (Neumie, 2013) reveals that the schools lack resources both in terms of materials and teacher input in facilitating interaction and this makes the classrooms disinterested.

Perception of students and parents on bilingualism as a methodology for teaching and communicative approach to language teaching in the Jammu region (at the secondary level and those who pursue professional and non professional courses) shows that combinations of two or more methods work effectively leading to informed eclecticism (Nancy, 2011). The study found that disinterested lecturing and dictation as methods of teaching led to students resorting to only the prescribed textbooks. Non-involvement of teachers in syllabus and materials development; teaching for tests and passing the examinations, and lack of English language environment in the classroom are the major reasons for not realizing the communicative approach to language teaching. However, research reveals that the use of the local languages to teach and interact, promotes English language learning. Similarly, Upadhyay (2012) highlights the wrong practices of teaching English as a second language which refuse to move beyond the good old translation method. Teachers' lack of understanding regarding the objectives of teaching English, lesser or no attention to oral skills, vocabulary learning and product based writing activities, are the reasons for students not being able to acquire the English language. This calls for a sound professional training of teachers in second language acquisition theories and language pedagogy.

An investigation into communication and its purpose in second language teaching and learning by James (2010) shows that 'the link between language and the communicative functions has proved beyond doubt the influence of the pragmatic communicative functions on the formation and evolution of linguistic structures'. Communicative competence in a second language emerges from implicit knowledge that develops consequent to the learners' interactive and reflexive experience, assisted by the socio-cultural environment. Instruction generally aims at developing explicit knowledge that may be assessed under standard test conditions through controlled measuring processes. The study also makes a case for proactive bilingual communication in the classroom which may lead to language modification and linguistic restructuring. In the process of communication, learners also learn things through language in the sense that learning is both a meaning system to be built up by the learners and the means by which they develop knowledge systems. Therefore, one of the primary intentions to learn a second language could be the need to widen the scope of experience and knowledge acquisition. This is further supported by Sircar's (2000) study which advocates dialogic teaching for literary interpretation as an instrument for reading, and interpretation of literary text by questioning the objectivity which is imposed on the reader in any narrative. Dialogic teaching paves for moving beyond the text and questioning it.

A study of discourse oriented pedagogy (introduced in Kerala after the curriculum revision in the year 2009) on upper primary students (class VI) reveals that learners showed marked improvement in all the four skills viz. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Effective planning and implementation of curriculum revision was a contributing factor for the improvement in English learning (Balakrishnan, 2014). Effectiveness of reciprocal teaching over traditional teaching method in the milieu of language aptitude proves that the reciprocal strategies like collaborative learning, interactions between and among learners and teachers promotes language learning. All the variables viz. gender, rural and urban showed positive effect

of reciprocal teaching (Vani, 2004). The curriclum evaluation study by Yadav (2014) in the context of Haryana called for total revamping from curriculum design to assessment in order to promote effective interactive pedagogy in English language teaching at tertiary level.

7. STUDIES ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TASK BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING (TBLT)

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has shown an impact on curriculum, syllabus and materials development over last two decades. Research has been conducted to establish the effect of TBLT as a method or strategy in the varied Indian contexts. Employing tasks to analyse the oral communication skills of tertiary level students, Ramamoorthy (2006) found that tasks can be used for developing implicit knowledge which develops incidentally as a result of the effort to communicate. Fluency in a second language can be gained when learners attempt to use the second language in real operating conditions leading to automization. Group and collaborative work promote high amount of language practice which, in turn, increases motivation as negotiation for meaning. Parthiban (2011) reported the effectiveness of task based language teaching in improving listening skills of learners at secondary stage (classes IX and X). The study also found gender differences. The male students first learnt grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, syllabification, stress and meaning, while the order for female students was pronunciation, stress, syllabification, vocabulary and meaning. The study, notably, could not find any difference between rural and urban learners.

TBLT has immense potential to enhance communicative competence of English language learners. Implementing TBLT in a large class is an uphill task as organizing individuals in pair and/or for group work poses problems for 'pre task-while task-post task structure' as rubrics by the teacher could not be received by all learners. This leads to lack of understanding regarding the goals of the tasks. Recommendations such as judicious use of L1 and flexibility of time for 'while-task',(learner's working time with language in the task) paves way for the adaptation of TBLT in Indian contexts (Dutta, 2015). Tasks used in the teaching of reading comprehension needs to include meta-cognitive strategies which are essential for reading as meaning making rather than cognitive strategies which are universal human strategies (Zeba, 2009). Sivakami (2014) examined learner autonomy in task based language teaching as an innovative strategy and found improvement in learners' speaking skill with the provision of liberty for using vocabulary and sentence structures, and the learning process of their own. Speaking skill was found to be influenced by the medium of instruction of the learners and education of parents and other variables such as gender and locale. Motivation of learners and its relationship with autonomy emerged to be a crucial factor.

Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is, in a way, a dominant and current method of language teaching in the ELT scene today. Most studies employ experimental design to find the effectiveness of TBLT over the 'traditional methods or strategies' of teaching of English. TBLT, as the findings go, promotes learner autonomy, learner-learner interaction leading to language processing effectively when the tasks are designed with sound pedagogical understanding and the teacher facilitates learners for language use. It can be inferred from the findings of research reported that TBLT can serve as an instrument for meeting the current demand of English language skills required for academic and employability purposes. This needs to be considered with all seriousness in curriculum design at the secondary and higher secondary level of school education and at the undergraduate level. Researchers believe that TBLT can be an effective instrument in meeting the demand of English language skills for graduates who look forward to enter their professional world.

8. CLASSROOM RESEARCH

The classroom research has had a long tradition in English as a second language. Allwright and Baily (1991, p.2) perceive it as classroom-centred research. 'Classroom-centered research is just what it says it is, research centred on the classroom. It is different from research that concentrates on the input given to the classroom (the syllabus, the teaching materials, etc.) or on the output from the classroom (learner test score, for example).' Ellis (2008a, b) describes three main categories of empirical research in language classrooms: (i) classroom process research, (ii) the study of classroom interaction and L2 acquisition, and (iii) the study of formal instruction and L2 acquisition. The studies reported here on classroom research explored all the three categories. Teaching English in less resourced contexts has shown that inputs and exposure to the language and interactions enhances the language learning in school (Amritavalli, 2007). Prasad (2013) made an attempt to examine what happens in the classroom when the teacher and learners come together to learn English. The qualitative analysis of classroom language showed that the teacher's language dominates over the learners' peer response and interaction. Teacher questioning and teacher response was studied more than learners' response and interaction in the schools.

The researchers have paid less attention to study the listening and speaking skills and the problems in the classroom. Ramanathan and Bruning (2003) concluded that barriers such as large classroom and low parental education lead to less home support. Also, the predominance of the first language at home and assessment procedures are detrimental to development of oral English language skills. A clear move to interactive methods / strategies through engaging tasks has been advocated, which leads to eclectic ways of approaching the language classroom. The functional view of language and language learning to

communicate, comprehensive pronunciation, and multilingualism are the strategies which teachers adopt in the classrooms for promoting second language (Latha & Fathima, 2016). An investigation on the effectiveness of English language teaching strategies employed by primary teachers with Collier's Conceptual Model of acquiring a second language found that the effective teaching strategies like teacher behaviour, lesson delivery and sequencing of content and learning expectation of learners added to their repertoire (Piller & Skilling, 2005).

Burmon's (2004) analysis of errors committed by students at +2 (classes XI and XII) and university levels in the Garo Hills of Meghalaya revealed that learners had problems in different areas of language operation. The sources of these errors, other than the mother tongue interference, were related mostly to teaching inadequacies on the part of the teachers and unsuitable teaching materials. Inadequate syllabus, teacher's lack of knowledge of how a second language is learnt, other systemic issues such as teacher deployment and large classrooms are some of the reasons for learners not paying attention to correct use of language. In a mixed method research, Vidhyanathan (2015) did not observe difference between English language teachers from schools with and without hearing impairment on aspects such as their knowledge, attitude and practices towards teaching hearing impaired.

It is evident from the above discussion that the classroom research has concentrated on studying classroom interaction – teacher-learner interaction, learner-learner interaction and whole class interaction – and its effect on language learning such as use of language by learners and prevalence of English language in the classroom ambience. Findings clearly inform that language use is a precursor as well as core to language development in learners. Large classrooms, teacher's language proficiency and lack of pedagogical knowledge, and unsuitable materials are reported to be major constraints in English language learning. Advocating a kind of mixed methodologies, an eclectic way of planning and conducting the classroom processes, the studies expect the English language classroom to connect with the lives of learners and their lived experiences. However, there is a lack of studies in the area of language disability and disability for learning.

9. TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS (TEYL)

Teaching young learners appears to be an area of interest to researchers these days. Studies on teaching English to young learners (TEYL) inform pedagogues and curriculum planners of the need for further diversification and flexibility in curriculum design. The studies in the Indian context attempt to understand the existing policies and their implications (Kapur, 2000). It also tries to understand the problems related to materials for teaching young learners, whether it is the lack of availability or the difficulty in accessing the available materials (Mathew & Pani, 2009). Graddol's (2010) study (discussed earlier) of the current status and future possibilities of English language and ELT in India throws light on the magnitude of the problem, keeping in mind the huge learner population and materials for quality English language education. NCERT's (2011a) study on the status of English language education at the primary level also explored the problems related to introduction of English from class one without much resources.

10. CONCLUSION

Research needs to be an instrument for societal and national development, contribution to furthering knowledge and creation of new knowledge. Findings of researches reported here inform us on education - both school and higher education - on the current trends in educational policy implementation, curriculum planning, processes of delivery of English language education, teacher development, teaching young learners and other areas which needs to be researched. The following theses emerge out of the researches analysed in this review. The demand for English language as a skill for upward mobility has resulted in a kind of tension and crisis in language-in-education policy planning and implementation. This crisis is the result of disparity in the education system - within school systems, and in the processes of schooling. The demand for English could be stated as one core finding of the many studies reviewed. The language has made shift from third or foreign language to 'common second language' within the accepted national language-in-education policy which aims at promoting mother tongue based multilingualism. It would be an onerous task to undo the demand, for the demand for languages does bring in opportunities. The place for English language amidst Indian languages as observed by the Position Paper on Teaching of English (NCERT, 2006a) for its supplementary and complementary roles in fostering all languages through the strategy of multilingualism in the classroom needs to be addressed. It is high time that policy planners and curriculum developers mindfully thought of national language-in-education from the educational perspective for promoting all languages for harmonious language and cognitive development.

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