



TRANSLANGUAGING AND INDIGENOUS FILIPINO STUDENTS' SOCIAL IDENTITY IN ENGLISH WRITING CLASSROOMS

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Abstract: The idea that translanguaging in English classrooms can scaffold instruction to make sense of learning and language makes it a promising pedagogical strategy. This qualitative study explored how translanguaging could leverage indigenous Filipino students' linguistic diversity to construct narratives that authentically reflect their social identities. A corpus of two drafts of biographies written by a Higaonon and a Manobo was analyzed. The students' responses, written as journal entries and obtained through open-ended surveys and in-depth interviews, were also analyzed thematically. Results showed that translanguaging reinforces the detailing of the account of the subjects through the use of Binukid common nouns, adverbs and adverbial phrases, prepositions and prepositional phrases, conjunctions, determiners, and clauses. Their sense of responsibility and desired recognition of their identity in the non-IP mainstream community influenced translanguaging in their compositions. Lastly, this pedagogical writing strategy honors their linguistic diversity and cultural heritage, fostering a sense of pride and connection to their identity. The study concludes that translanguaging managed to enhance the depth and authenticity of the creative nonfiction texts; the Indigenous students' intrinsic motivation, rooted in their internal beliefs, values, and self-perception, heightened their translanguaging strategy; and translanguaging endeavored to boost the self-worth and self-confidence of Indigenous students, thereby cementing their identity in their works.

Keywords: *translanguaging, social identity, creative nonfiction, Higaonon, Manobo, the Philippines*

I. INTRODUCTION

Indigenous languages play a vital role in ensuring the continuation and transmission of indigenous cultures, customs, and history. However, the United Nations (2019) claimed that indigenous languages are in danger of extinction due to discrimination, marginalization, exclusion, ancestral land expropriation, misrepresentation, and colonialism. One way to protect the Indigenous Peoples' culture, knowledge, and language is their political, economic, and social empowerment; and the inclusion of indigenous languages in education is a practical step to achieving the aforementioned mission. Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples uplifts the Indigenous Peoples' revitalization, usage, development, and transmission of their language to the next generations and promotes their right to establishment and control of their educational and institutional systems to deliver education in their mother tongues.

The Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program is an initiative of the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd) that responds to international and global calls. The IPEd Program upholds the right of the Indigenous Peoples (IPs) to basic education that is responsive to their cultural methods of teaching and learning, respectful of their identities, and promotion of their Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices, goals, and other aspects of their cultural heritage (DepEd, 2011; 2015). The DepEd's (2012) Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) complements the program in supporting IP rights to an education in their mother tongue and in ways that are appropriate to their context. The MTB-MLE provides children the avenue to learn their communities' linguistic resources and sustain cultural traditions, knowledge, beliefs, practices, history, and ways of life. The policy also gives the IP children the freedom to speak and learn the language that reflects their community, shapes their self-identity, and fosters self-esteem.

However, the MTB-MLE falls short in its mission as the DepEd recognizes only the eight major languages of the country, thereby excluding local and indigenous languages like the Binukid, the mother tongue of natives in Bukidnon, Mindanao, Philippines. IP grade schoolers have no choice but to learn Bisaya as a second language, the language of instruction in schools. Doplon (2018) recounted that this educational policy considers the mother tongue as a means to an end and not an end itself, and this is where the MTB-MLE fails in its pursuit to esteem the role of indigenous languages. In this program, the acquisition of a

child's mother tongue is seen as relevant only for the first three years as this will be gradually replaced by Filipino and English as the medium of instruction in civic education subjects, Mathematics, and Sciences.

The gradual language replacement might have harmed the use of indigenous languages among the IPs. An informal survey in the Senior High School Departments of two secondary public schools in Bukidnon, Philippines shows that most of the indigenous youth, whose grandparents and parents are fluent in Binukid, cannot speak the language; only a few can understand. The perceived reasons for their incompetence in Binukid are the following: their parents rarely use their language at their homes, a revelation that confirms the investigation of Bonifacio, Zaman, Prantilla-Arambala, and Zarate (2021); schools use Bisaya, Filipino, and English as the lingua franca and fail to consider the linguistic repertoire of the IPs; and modernity in schools and community pushes them to learn the languages of instruction. The dominance of Bisaya, Filipino, and English limits them from speaking and continuing to learn their indigenous language, which reflects their heritage and self-identity. The United Nations (2019) asserted that "the death of indigenous languages means the people who spoke them lost a piece of their identity."

Bonifacio et al. (2021) contended that learning and relearning their language can help Indigenous people preserve their culture, thus establishing their social identity in society. "Speaking those languages," as part of measures to protect these valuable sources of knowledge, "must be normalized and promoted" (United Nations, 2019), and translanguaging, the natural, fluid use of multiple languages by multilingual speakers (Baker, 2011), is becoming a norm in bilingual and multilingual classrooms (Afriadi & Hamzah, 2021; Aoyama, 2020; Conteh, 2018; De Los Reyes, 2019; Hungwe, 2019; Kim & Chang, 2020; Robillos, 2023; Rowe, 2018; Sulaiman & Taqi, 2020). In a written context, translanguaging involves the use of multiple languages or language varieties within a single piece of writing (Canagarajah, 2011; Lee & Handsfield, 2018), such as a document, essay, or creative work.

Baker (2011), an influential scholar in the field of bilingualism, promoted the educational benefits a learner obtains in translanguaging: an in-depth understanding of the subject matter, the development of the minor language, the link of home-school learning and cooperation, and the integration of fluent speakers with early learners. Sulaiman and Taqi (2020) asserted that as a pedagogical strategy, translanguaging in English as a Second (ESL) classrooms scaffolds instruction to make sense of learning and language and forms a part of the meta-discursive regimes that students in the 21st century must perform. Rowe (2018) supported that translanguaging "can help students leverage and grow their existing linguistic and literacy skills" which in turn can "potentially contribute to constructing (over a long-term) empowering bilingual identities for... students" (García-Mateus, & Palmer, 2017).

The IP students in the abovementioned two secondary public schools in Bukidnon, Philippines, mostly Higaonon and Manobo respectively, express their interest in (re)learning their indigenous language and acknowledge the school as a critical medium that can help them (re)claim their linguistic and social identities. The promising results of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms are a prime opportunity to explore translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy in language learning, specifically in Creative Nonfiction (CNF) writing, and as a tool for expressing multifaceted identity in English classrooms.

Creative Nonfiction classes provide a platform for students to express themselves through personal narratives and factual storytelling. This specialized subject of the Humanities and the Social Sciences (HUMSS) Strand in the Philippine Senior High School Department often encourages the use of personal experiences and reflection (DepEd, 2014), which could naturally involve the incorporation of Indigenous languages and cultural elements. It is within this context that this study was conducted.

1.1 Objectives of the Study

This study explored how translanguaging could leverage indigenous Filipino students' linguistic diversity to construct narratives that authentically reflect their social identities. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. determine the lexical impact of Indigenous students' translanguaging on the overall meaning of their creative nonfiction composition;
2. analyze the influences that shape the Indigenous students' translanguaging in their creative nonfiction composition; and
3. examine how translanguaging endeavored to foster Indigenous students' social identity in their creative nonfiction compositions.

II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

This descriptive-qualitative study employed a blend of multiple-case study and autoethnographic approaches in examining how translanguaging fosters the social identity of Indigenous students in their Creative Nonfiction compositions. The approach is deemed appropriate as the study focused on the cases of two Indigenous students from two different schools. Their engagement in translanguaging in multilingual writing instruction reflects Yin's (2018) view of a case as a contemporary phenomenon "within its real-life context." Moreover, the goal of the study was to look within the multilingual writing instruction case rather than compare the two different cases of indigenous students' translanguaging engagement (Seawright & Gerring, 2014).

The autoethnographic approach was also considered given that the researchers were the subject teachers of the target participants, situating themselves as participants in the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). This teacher-as-researcher approach gave them an insider's perspective that provided unique insights into the dynamics of multilingual writing instruction in which the Indigenous students' translanguaging engagement transpires. Autoethnography also proved useful as this study covered classroom observation, interviews, analysis of student work, and teacher-researcher reflection.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in two public secondary schools in Bukidnon Province. School X is located in Valencia City, Bukidnon in the Division of Valencia City while School Y is situated in Quezon, Bukidnon in the Division of Bukidnon. The former houses a significant number of students who belong to the Indigenous Peoples. The barangay where School X is located is classified as a rural community. The latter is located in an Indigenous Peoples community, specifically, in the Ancestral Domain of the Anglao Clan, one of the clans of the Quezon Manobo Tribe Association (QUEMTRAS). The students of this school are composed of

different tribes; however, the majority of its number belong to the Manobo Tribe. These schools offer Junior High School and Senior High School Programs.

2.3 Participants of the Study

The participants were two indigenous Grade 12 students enrolled in Creative Nonfiction for SY 2023–2024. The first participant is a male Higaonon, labeled in this study as Higaonon Student-Participant, and the second one is a female Manobo, named in this study as Manobo Student-Participant. Despite their ethnic claims, the participants' mother tongue is Bisaya; Binukid, their second language. The fact that these learners belong to the Indigenous communities, but speak Binukid as their L2, points concern to the Department of Education's approach to multilingual education. The participants' ethnic claims as members of Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples were verified using data from the Department of Education's Learner Information System.

2.4 Corpus

Due to time constraints, only the first drafts composed during the needs analysis comprised the corpora of the study. However, the first draft, unaffected by the corrections and possible biases of the researchers, best exemplified the authentic translanguaging of the participants. The creative nonfictional text that the student-participant managed to compose was a biography, where the learners freely wrote about an individual who is influential in their community. This text is one of the topics in the specialized subject Creative Nonfiction in Quarter 2.

Higaonon Student-Participant's narrative, labeled as Creative Nonfiction 1 (CNF 1) and focused on the life of his grandfather, a respected datu in their community, is composed of 294 words, nine (9) of which are Binukid. Similarly, Manobo Student-Participant's biography, labeled Creative Nonfiction 2 (CNF 2), focuses on the life of her grandfather. CNF 2 is composed of 402 words, 29 of which are Binukid. As the biographies contain names of real people, data masking, through the use of asterisks (*) for character substitution, was employed in data anonymization to protect sensitive information while maintaining the structure of the data (names).

The students' reflective journals were useful sources for examining their reflections, intentions, and decision-making regarding the use of translanguaging in enhancing their compositions. The transcriptions of the recorded feedback between the teacher-researchers and the student-participants were also valuable sources for substantiating the latter's reflection regarding their translanguaging.

2.5 Sampling

As this qualitative research employed a case study approach, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate in the selection of two cases from different multilingual writing classrooms. The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) they identify as Indigenous peoples; (2) they can speak Binukid (even if not fluently); (3) they possess in-depth knowledge of their cultural beliefs and practices because (4) they actively participate in their cultural rituals; (5) they were willing to participate in the study; and (6) their parents consented to their participation in this classroom-based action research. The same type of sampling was considered in the analysis of students' Creative Nonfiction outputs.

2.6 Instrumentation

Notes were used to document the language practices of the students concerning translanguaging in their compositions: the languages used as reflected in their drafts, the purpose of switching, and the impact on the text's meaning. A content-validated interview protocol was used during feedback sessions to understand the students' language attitudes and motivations for translanguaging in their compositions and to substantiate the teachers' analysis of the students' translanguaging in their compositions concerning the languages used, the purpose of switching, and the impact on the text's meaning. These notes were also used to capture and document the writing process of the students. The writing process refers to the classroom interaction where the students clarified concepts, elicited ideas, asked questions from the teacher-researchers, and responded to the teachers' inquiry. The data that were collected in these notes helped substantiate the analysis of the motivation that compels students to translanguage in their compositions.

A six-item list of guide questions for student reflective journaling was handed to the learners after drafting their biographies to understand the students' language attitudes and motivations for translanguaging in their compositions and to substantiate the teachers' analysis of the students' translanguaging in their compositions concerning the languages used, the purpose of switching, and the impact on the text's meaning

2.7 Data Gathering Procedure

The conduct of the study took place on the Final Term of the First Semester of the SY 2023–2024. The data collection involved a multifaceted approach. The initial steps entailed asking permission from the office of the School Principal and parents of the concerned learners to conduct this study. Once approved at the administrative level, a letter of informed consent that outlined the purpose, procedures, and potential risks and benefits of the study was handed to the participants.

Before the conduct of the first lesson on Biography writing, all the students in these Creative Nonfiction classes, regardless of their ethnicity, were directed to interview an influential person in their community to possess personal information about these people. In the conduct of the lesson and as part of the analysis, all the students were encouraged to incorporate local terms in their drafts. After inquiry of the IP student-participants' subjects of their biographies, their grandfathers, they were specifically directed to use Binukid terms to capture "the ethnic beauty of a Lumad's life."

The writing process of the students – the classroom interaction where the student-participants clarified concepts, elicited ideas, asked questions from the teacher-researchers, and responded to the teachers' inquiry – was monitored using notes to document any data related to the motivation that compels students to translanguage in their compositions. These notes were also used in the

assessment (checking of drafts) to document the language practices of the students concerning translanguaging in their compositions: the languages used, the purpose of switching, the impact on the text's meaning, and translanguaging patterns and expressions of social identity.

To delve into the participants' motivation in translanguaging and validate the researchers' analyses of the external influences that shape the reasons for their translanguaging, the participants were instructed to compose a reflective journal following a list of guide questions. One-on-one interviews were also conducted after the writing session. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. Throughout this process, ethical considerations were paramount, respecting cultural protocols and ensuring the well-being of participants.

The collected data underwent qualitative analysis, employing methods like thematic analysis, and triangulation to interpret the data collected from creative nonfiction samples, student reflective journals, observation, and interviews. The findings were presented comprehensively in a research report, offering insights and recommendations for culturally responsive writing instruction practices.

2.8 Data Analysis

The compositions of the students were subjected to lexical analysis to identify instances where the students translanguaged in their written compositions, categorize them based on the languages used, determine the purpose of switching, and analyze the impact on the text's meaning. The analysis of the students' language choices, the context in which they occur, and the impact on communication and learning informed the examination of the extent how translanguaging fosters their social identity in their creative nonfictional outputs. A Higaonon native who is fluent in Binukid, a former Filipino language instructor at a nearby university, and presently, a Senior Research Associate of the Media and Public Relations Office UP System, helped in the translation and analysis of the literal meanings and nuances of the Binukid items found in the corpora.

Details unique to the two cases informed the thematic analysis of the student's reflections, intentions, and decision-making regarding the use of translanguaging in enhancing their compositions. The reflective accounts of the students in their journals and their responses during the feedback sessions were thematically analyzed to obtain an objective understanding of their translanguaging practices.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Lexical Impact of Translanguaging

Table 1 shows the overall result of the lexical items that impact the overall meaning of the creative nonfiction texts.

Table 1. Overall lexical items

Lexical Items	CNF 1		CNF 2		Total	
	freq	%	freq	%	freq	%
Noun	9	64	5	36	14	37
Adverb(ial phrase)	0	0	10	100	10	26
Preposition(al phrase)	0	0	7	100	7	19
Conjunction	0	0	3	100	3	8
Determiner	0	0	2	100	2	5
Clauses	0	0	2	100	2	5
			Total		38	100

Binukid common nouns predominated the corpora. The use of these general names that center on titles ("datu" for *chieftain* in the English language, "bae" for *woman chieftain*, "kunkunulan" for *messenger*, "baylan" for *ritualist*), a political unit of community organization ("barangay," "sitio," "tribu" for *tribe*), ceremonial practices ("manawal" for *healing*, "buyag" for *a ritual to drive off malevolent spirits*, "bala" and "balah" variation for *a ceremony for seeking solutions*), and supernatural-related items ("Magbabayew" for *God*, "swerte" for *luck*) establishes the foci and intention of the biographies. These items encompass the personal history, upbringing, and contributions to the community of the subject of each biography. The use of these nouns allows the Indigenous student writers to express ideas, describe situations, and convey information that is culturally relevant to the biographical contexts. The common noun usage provides shared understanding by interlocutors (the student-writer and readers) of languages spoken in the community (Binukid, Bisaya, and English) making them accessible and universal in communication.

The use of adverbs and adverbial phrases, prepositions and prepositional phrases, conjunctions, determiners, and clauses is also evident in the Manobo creative nonfiction. The adverbs and adverbial phrases "gentaw" for *now*, "nawena" for *before*, "diye" for *there*, "ware damha" for *unexpectedly*, "kene teg agpataas" for *not to boast*, "te ware paglangan" for *to make the story short*, and "te katapesan" for *at the end*, indicate time, giving temporal contexts to actions and events of the subjects, indicate location and direction, providing spatial context, and modify the sentence, indicating the speaker's manner of expression.

For example, the use of "di-ye" in the narrative:

Six years later, he transferred *te* White Kulaman, Kitaotao, Bukidnon. *Di-ye*, he met B*velyn V*****n T*****n.

refers to the previously mentioned or implied location where Manuel moved (White Kulaman, Kitaotao, Bukidnon). It helps to specify the tribal setting where M*nuel met B*velyn V*****n T*****n. The depth and specificity brought by the adverb usage contribute to the richness of expression.

The prepositions and prepositional phrases “*te*” for the English equivalent *at*, *to*, and *of the*, “*te gahem Magbabayew*” for *through God’s power*, and “*te pangasak din*” for *in his words* convey movement and direction, helping specify the path of action. These prepositions not only provide smooth transitions at the structural level but also add descriptive information about the ethnic voice as a modifier as in the prepositional phrase “*te gahem Magbabayew*” for *through God’s power* in the narrative:

***Te gahem Magbabayew*, he gained respect from the IPs because of his father. He became famous among the IPs because *te* legacy of his father.**

The conjunction “*wey*” for *and* occurs thrice in CNF 2. These conjunctions are used to connect items in a list as in:

In the 12th day of January, year 1959, the son of Mr. M*гно C*s T*****n, *wey* M*rtina B****n T*****n was born... His journey here was good, he invest money *wey* some property.**

Given the items that sandwich “*wey*,” the reader can infer that the “*wey*” functions as a conjunction.

The translanguaging in the corpora reinforces the detailing of the account of the subjects through the predominant use of Binukid common nouns. The events that influenced the subjects’ lives are narrated smoothly with the use of Binukid adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions. The student writers’ natural use of Binukid in their English narratives exemplifies Rowe’s (2018) claim that translanguaging, indeed, leverages one’s existing linguistic and literacy skills. Translanguaging helped the student writers enhance the ethnic identity of the subjects and the local color of the Higaonon and Manobo contexts in English composition. This manifests Hélot’s (2014) stand on translanguaging as an artistic and evocative manifestation of bilinguals’ use of their linguistic repertoires. The tone and voice of the indigenous writers are evident through the smooth transitions and Binukid and English vocabulary. Through the use of context clues, readers can infer the meaning of Binukid items and the richness of the narratives, thereby contributing to the overall comprehension of the texts. In these ways, translanguaging enriches the depth and authenticity of creative nonfiction texts.

3.2 Influences Shaping Indigenous Students’ Translanguaging

The analysis of the student writers’ motives for the usage of Binukid items in their creative nonfiction compositions reveals the influences on their linguistic diversity or the natural use of their language repertoire in the texts. One factor that is common among the two indigenous participants is the sense of responsibility. They feel accountable for the promotion and preservation of their local languages. Manobo Student-Participant believes that the IP youth can be depended on to make their language known (*maila*), celebrated (*mapasundayag*), promoted (*mapalambo*), and preserved (*mapreserba*).

Higaonon Student-Participant remarked that his local language serves as his “guide in expressing...” his viewpoints, thereby preserving their “history and... traditions.” This sense of responsibility is inspired by the “*sakripisyo sa... mga katigulangan*” (sacrifices of their ancestors), as stated by Manobo Student-Participant, and the leadership of the datu and bae in their community, as shared by Higaonon Student-Participant. Their strong connection to their indigenous culture, as shown in their active participation in rituals and celebrations, might have formed their sense of responsibility and this internalized commitment, in turn, exerts a profound influence on translanguaging within their written compositions.

This finding conforms to the study of Rabie-Ahmed and Mohamed (2022) who found that a bilingual’s heritage background is influential to their positive outlook on translanguaging. Their appreciation for their families’ origins and their intent to master a target language contribute to their perception of translanguaging.

The second factor that influenced Manobo Student-Participant’s translanguaging is the desired recognition of their identity in the non-IP mainstream community. Through these “Binukid terms, *mas mailhan mi nila... kung kinsa mi... sa niingon ini nga pamaagi... mas mahatagan ug halawum nga pagsabot, respeto, ug patas nga pagtagad... diha sa katilingban*” (we hope to be recognized... of who we are... in this way... we will be fully understood, respected, and fairly treated in the society). As a result, this acknowledgment gives them pride and this pride empowers them to use the richness of their “*pulong*” (dialect) as reflected in Higaonon Student-Participant’s words: “*Taina hu mga pulong*.” The pride in their way of life permeates their language and expression. In his study involving Manobo IPs, Bonifacio (2021) stressed that translanguaging forms a significant factor in projecting their identities in the Cebuano mainstream community. The automatic and unconscious use of Binukid lexis in their utterances is a way of establishing their individuality.

3.3 Translanguaging and Indigenous Students’ Social Identity

The analysis of the lexical impact of translanguaging on the overall meaning of the creative nonfiction texts and the motives that drive student writers to translanguage in their compositions reveals how translanguaging endeavors to foster these Indigenous students’ social identity in their works.

Translanguaging allows the student writers to express themselves through the use of Binukid and cultural nuances in their compositions. This pedagogical strategy in writing honors their linguistic diversity and cultural heritage, which in turn, fosters a sense of pride and connection to their identity. Manobo Student-Participant takes pride in retaining the Binukid terms in her

composition as it tributes “the sacrifices of their ancestors.” She also acknowledges that their “dialect is a part of our culture” and speaking this language makes her stand out as a Pulangiyan Manobo in a Non-IPs-dominated community: “gapakita... siya kung kinsa ko ug asa ko gikan” (This native language shows who I am and where I am from).

Higaonon Student-Participant shares the same sentiment: “Ku hura barangay hura daan sitio, aman taina hu lugar mig ila adagi hu kasaysayan” (In every barangay and sitio, our ancestors left behind stories about the beauty of these places), “linking to our culture.” As reflected in his composition, he takes pride in their datu and bae, the pillars in their barangay, as these leaders guide them in understanding their traditions and preserving their culture. This is the reason he made Datu M*nb*t*n*n, his grandfather, a subject in his biographical work. Further, he attributes the recognition of their “history and traditions” in the community to their local dialect. The use of Binukid items alongside the dominant English empowers the students to communicate more authentically. The participants claim that the use of Binukid helps them “express” their “viewpoint in a unique way.” Translanguaging provides them the platform to express thoughts, emotions, and experiences and share sentiments accurately and deeply, which in turn, strengthens their sense of agency and self-worth as Pulangiyan Manobo and Higaonon. Hari si ran agkagayha (Binukid for *they are not ashamed*).

The student writers’ flexible translanguaging in their creative nonfiction compositions confirms the claim of Bonifacio et al. (2021) that the dynamicity and responsiveness of IP youth to change are instrumental in preserving their language. Their willingness to (re) learn their indigenous language fueled them to (re)claim their linguistic and social identities.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: Translanguaging helped enhance the depth and authenticity of the creative nonfiction texts; the Indigenous students’ intrinsic motivation, rooted in their internal beliefs, values, and self-perception, heightened their translanguaging strategy; and translanguaging endeavored to boost the self-worth and self-confidence of Indigenous students, thereby cementing their identity in their creative nonfiction works. Hence, the following recommendations were formulated: Translanguaging may be taught to students as a pedagogical strategy in language learning; writing activities that exploit Indigenous students’ intrinsic motivation may be designed and implemented in English classrooms; and translanguaging may be encouraged in schools as a norm of effective communication and social construction of identity. Bonifacio (2021) believed that openness to the IP youth’s individuality and needs and giving value to their linguistic and cultural heritage help the advocacy on preserving Indigenous language and identity.

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