

language variation from janet holmes

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Language variation from Janet Holmes

Language variation is a fundamental aspect of sociolinguistics, exploring how language differs across regions, social groups, contexts, and over time. Janet Holmes, a renowned linguist, has significantly contributed to understanding the intricacies of language variation, especially in the domains of pragmatics, conversation analysis, and sociolinguistics. Her research provides valuable insights into how language functions within different social contexts and how speakers adapt their speech to suit various social and communicative needs. This article delves into the concept of language variation as examined by Janet Holmes, exploring its types, factors influencing it, and its significance in understanding human communication.

Understanding Language Variation

Language variation refers to the differences in speech patterns, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar used by different groups or individuals. These differences can be attributed to a variety of social, geographical, cultural, and psychological factors. Holmes's work emphasizes that language is not monolithic but dynamic and always in flux, shaped by the contexts in which it is used.

Types of Language Variation

Holmes categorizes language variation into several key types:

- **Regional Variation:** Differences in language use across geographical regions, often resulting in distinct accents and dialects.
- **Social Variation:** Variations based on social factors such as class, age, gender, ethnicity, and social networks.
- **Contextual or Situational Variation:** Changes in language depending on the setting, formality, or purpose of communication.
- **Temporal Variation:** Language changes over time, reflecting historical, cultural, and technological developments.

Holmes's research highlights that these variations are not random but systematically linked to social identities and contexts.

Factors Influencing Language Variation

Holmes emphasizes multiple factors that influence how language varies. Understanding these factors is crucial for sociolinguistic analysis.

Social Factors

Holmes identifies several social factors that impact language variation:

- **Social Class:** Different social classes tend to have distinct speech patterns, vocabulary, and pronunciation styles.
- **Age:** Younger and older speakers often use different slang, pronunciations, and grammatical structures.
- **Gender:** Men and women may employ different speech styles, often influenced by social norms and expectations.
- **Ethnicity and Cultural Background:** Cultural identity influences language choice, pronunciation, and idiomatic expressions.

Linguistic Factors

Apart from social influences, linguistic factors also play a role:

- Phonetic and phonological variations
- Vocabulary differences
- Grammar and syntactic structures

Contextual Factors

Holmes notes that the context of communication influences language use:

- **Formality:** Formal settings tend to use more standardized language, while informal settings allow for colloquialisms and slang.
- **Purpose of Interaction:** The intent behind communication (e.g., persuading, informing, entertaining) shapes language choices.
- **Relationship Between Speakers:** Power dynamics, familiarity, and social roles impact language variation.

Language Variation and Social Identity

Holmes's work underscores that language variation is closely linked to social identity. Speakers consciously or unconsciously modify their language to align with or differentiate from particular social groups. This phenomenon, known as linguistic identity, helps individuals express their belonging or distinction within a community.

Accent and Dialect

Accents and dialects serve as markers of geographic and social identity. Holmes explains that:

- Accents reveal regional origins.
- Dialects reflect local vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical features.
- Speakers may switch dialects or accents depending on the context, a process called code-switching or style-shifting.

Code-Switching

Code-switching involves alternating between languages or dialects within a conversation. Holmes emphasizes its role in:

- Expressing cultural identity.
- Managing social relationships.
- Navigating different social contexts.

Language Variation in Conversation Analysis

Holmes's contributions extend to conversation analysis, examining how variation manifests in everyday interactions.

Pragmatic Variation

Pragmatics refers to how context influences meaning. Holmes illustrates that:

- Speakers adapt their speech acts based on social norms.
- The use of politeness strategies varies across cultures and situations.
- Variations in turn-taking, interruptions, and repair mechanisms are influenced by social factors.

Speech Styles and Registers

Holmes describes how individuals modulate their speech styles:

- Formal vs. informal registers.
- Consultative, casual, or intimate styles.
- These styles are chosen based on the social setting and the relationship between speakers.

The Significance of Language Variation

Understanding language variation is vital for multiple reasons:

- **Promoting Social Inclusivity:** Recognizing dialects and accents fosters respect for linguistic diversity.
- **Language Policy and Planning:** Insights into variation inform policies to support minority languages and dialects.
- **Language Education:** Awareness of variation aids in developing effective teaching methods that respect learners' linguistic backgrounds.
- **Identity and Empowerment:** Embracing linguistic variation empowers speakers to express their identities confidently.

Holmes's research advocates for an appreciation of linguistic diversity as a reflection of rich social and cultural fabric.

Conclusion

Language variation from Janet Holmes offers a comprehensive framework for understanding how and why language differs across social, regional, and situational contexts. Her work highlights that language is a dynamic, socially embedded phenomenon that serves not only communicative purposes but also plays a crucial role in identity construction and social interaction. Recognizing and studying these variations deepen our appreciation for linguistic diversity and enhance our ability to foster inclusive and effective communication in an increasingly interconnected world.

References

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- Holmes, J. (2014). An Introduction to Language and Society. Routledge.
- Trudgill, P. (2000). Sociolinguistics: An Introduction to Language and Society. Penguin.

Note: For a more detailed exploration, readers are encouraged to consult Holmes's published works

which provide extensive case studies, theoretical insights, and practical examples of language variation in diverse contexts.

Language Variation from Janet Holmes: An In-Depth Exploration of Sociolinguistic Dynamics

Language variation is a fundamental aspect of human communication, reflecting the diversity and complexity of social identities, cultural backgrounds, and contextual influences. Among scholars who have significantly contributed to our understanding of this multifaceted phenomenon is Janet Holmes, whose work on language variation offers critical insights into how language functions across different social settings. This article provides a comprehensive review of Holmes' contributions to the study of language variation, examining her theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and implications for sociolinguistics.

Introduction to Language Variation and Janet Holmes' Contributions

Language is inherently variable. No two speakers use language in exactly the same way, and this variability is shaped by numerous factors, including geographical location, social class, gender, age, and context of communication. Janet Holmes has been at the forefront of investigating these dimensions, particularly focusing on how language reflects and constructs social identities.

Holmes' work is rooted in the sociolinguistic tradition that explores the interface between language and society. Her research emphasizes that language variation is not random but systematically linked to social variables. Through her extensive studies, she has elucidated the ways in which language variation can serve as a marker of social relationships, power dynamics, and cultural norms.

Foundational Concepts in Holmes' Approach to Language Variation

Variationist Sociolinguistics

Holmes' approach is heavily influenced by variationist sociolinguistics, a paradigm that examines how linguistic features vary according to social factors. This approach involves:

- Quantitative analysis of linguistic data
- Identifying correlations between language features and social variables
- Recognizing patterns of variation across different groups

Holmes adopted and refined this methodology, applying it to a wide range of linguistic phenomena to uncover the social meanings embedded within language variation.

Style-Shifting and Contextual Variation

One of Holmes' key contributions is her emphasis on style-shifting – the way individuals alter their language use depending on context. She argues that:

- Speakers adjust their speech to align with or distance themselves from certain social identities
- These adjustments are deliberate and serve social functions
- Style-shifting reflects underlying social motivations, such as politeness, solidarity, or authority

Holmes' analysis of style-shifting underscores the fluidity of language and the importance of context in shaping linguistic choices.

Major Themes in Holmes' Research on Language Variation

Gender and Language Variation

Holmes has extensively explored how gender influences language use. Her research reveals that:

- Women tend to use more standard, polite, and affiliative language forms
- Men often employ more assertive, direct, and informal language
- These differences are context-dependent and can vary across cultures

She emphasizes that such variations are not merely biological but are socially constructed, reflecting gender roles and expectations. Holmes advocates for a nuanced understanding that recognizes both socialization processes and individual agency.

Social Class and Language

Holmes' studies also highlight the relationship between social class and linguistic variation. Key points include:

- Working-class speakers may favor vernacular or non-standard forms
- Middle and upper-class speakers often employ more formal or prestige variants
- Language choices serve as markers of social identity and group membership

Her work demonstrates that language variation can reinforce social boundaries or serve as a form of social mobility.

Age and Language Change

Age-related variation is another focus area, with Holmes noting that:

- Younger speakers often innovate linguistically, leading to language change over time
- Older speakers tend to preserve traditional forms
- Generational differences contribute to ongoing language evolution

This perspective situates language variation within broader social change processes.

Theoretical Frameworks and Methodologies

Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches

Holmes employs a mixed-methods approach, combining:

- Quantitative analysis: statistical examination of linguistic features across social groups
- Qualitative analysis: interviews and ethnographic observations to contextualize data

This comprehensive methodology allows for robust interpretations of how and why language varies.

Corpus Linguistics

A significant aspect of Holmes' research involves corpus linguistics, which entails analyzing large collections of authentic language data. This approach facilitates:

- Identifying patterns of variation
- Tracking language change over time
- Comparing different social groups systematically

Interdisciplinary Perspectives

Holmes integrates insights from anthropology, psychology, and cultural studies, enriching her analysis of language variation as a social phenomenon.

Implications of Holmes' Work for Sociolinguistics and Beyond

Understanding Identity and Power

Holmes' research underscores that language variation is a key tool for constructing and expressing social identities. It also reveals how language can serve as a means of exercising or resisting power within social hierarchies.

Language Policy and Education

Her findings have practical implications for language education and policy, advocating for:

- Recognition of linguistic diversity
- Respect for dialectal variation
- Awareness of the social meanings of language choices

Future Directions in Language Variation Research

Holmes encourages ongoing exploration into emerging forms of communication, such as digital and social media language, which continue to shape language variation patterns.

Critical Evaluation and Contribution to the Field

Holmes' work has significantly advanced sociolinguistics by providing detailed, empirically grounded analyses of language variation. Her emphasis on social context, identity, and power dynamics makes her contributions relevant across disciplines. Moreover, her methodological rigor and interdisciplinary approach have set standards for future research.

However, some critics argue that Holmes' focus on traditional social variables may overlook the increasing importance of technology and globalization in shaping language variation. Nonetheless, her work remains foundational, offering vital frameworks for understanding linguistic diversity.

Conclusion

Janet Holmes' exploration of language variation offers a comprehensive lens through which to understand the intricate relationship between language and society. Her emphasis on social factors—gender, class, age, and context—illuminates the ways in which language functions as a dynamic, socially embedded resource. As communication continues to evolve in digital spaces, Holmes' insights remain crucial for decoding the ongoing patterns of language variation and their implications for social identity and power.

Her scholarly legacy provides a rich foundation for both academic inquiry and practical applications, reaffirming the importance of sociolinguistic awareness in fostering inclusive, understanding, and socially aware communication practices.

Question What is Janet Holmes' main contribution to the study of language variation? Janet Holmes is renowned for her extensive research on language variation and change, particularly in social contexts, emphasizing how language reflects identity, group membership, and social dynamics. How does Janet Holmes describe the relationship between language variation and social identity? Holmes argues that language variation is a key marker of social identity, with individuals and groups using specific linguistic features to signal their social affiliations, status, and group membership. What are some of the key factors influencing language variation according to Janet Holmes? Holmes highlights factors such as social class, age, gender, ethnicity, and context as influential in shaping language variation across different communities and situations. How has Janet Holmes contributed to understanding gender differences in language use? Holmes has extensively studied gender-based language variation, demonstrating how men and women often use language differently to construct social identities and navigate social interactions. In what ways does Janet Holmes suggest language variation can inform us about societal change? Holmes suggests that tracking language variation over time can reveal shifting social norms, power dynamics, and cultural values within a society, making it a valuable tool for understanding societal change. What methodological approaches does Janet Holmes advocate for studying language variation? Holmes advocates for a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, including corpus analysis, sociolinguistic interviews, and ethnographic observation, to comprehensively study language variation in social contexts.

Related keywords: language variation, Janet Holmes, linguistic diversity, dialects, sociolinguistics, language change, speech communities, grammatical variation, regional accents, language contact

Romaine Introduction To Sociolinguistics

Romaine introduction to sociolinguistics provides a foundational overview of how language functions within society, exploring the dynamic relationship between language, culture, identity, and social structures. As a prominent figure in the field, Jean Berko Gleason Romaine has contributed significantly to our understanding of how language varies and evolves in social contexts. This article aims to delve into the core concepts of sociolinguistics, its importance, key theories, and Romaine's contributions, offering a comprehensive introduction for students, researchers, and language enthusiasts alike.

Understanding Sociolinguistics

Definition and Scope

Sociolinguistics is the study of how language is used within society and how social factors influence language variation and change. It examines the relationship between linguistic features and social variables such as age, gender, ethnicity, social class, and geographical location. The field seeks to understand not just how language functions in communication but also how it reflects and shapes social identities and power dynamics.

Historical Development

The origins of sociolinguistics trace back to the early 20th century, with pioneering work by scholars like William Labov, who is often regarded as the founder of modern sociolinguistics. His studies on language variation in New York City laid the groundwork for understanding linguistic diversity within urban communities. Over time, the discipline expanded to include studies on dialects, language attitudes, multilingualism, and language policy.

Core Concepts in Sociolinguistics

Language Variation

Language variation refers to differences in speech patterns across different social groups or regions. These variations can be systematic and are often linked to social factors. For example, dialects, accents, and vocabulary choices often distinguish one community from another.

Language Change

Language change is a natural process where languages evolve over time due to social influence, contact with other languages, and internal linguistic developments. Sociolinguists study how social context accelerates or constrains these changes.

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing

Code-switching involves alternating between two or more languages or dialects within a conversation or even a sentence. It often reflects cultural identity and social relationships. Code-mixing refers to blending elements of different languages within a single utterance.

Language Attitudes and Ideologies

Attitudes towards different languages or dialects influence social interactions and language policies. Ideologies about language can reinforce social hierarchies or promote social cohesion.

Key Theories and Approaches in Sociolinguistics

Variationist Sociolinguistics

This approach, pioneered by William Labov, emphasizes studying observable linguistic variation and correlating it with social variables. It involves meticulous data collection and statistical analysis to understand patterns.

Ethnography of Communication

Developed by Dell Hymes, this approach emphasizes understanding language in its cultural context. It considers speech communities and the social norms governing communication.

Social Construction of Language

This perspective views language as a social product that is constructed and reconstructed through social interactions, emphasizing the fluidity of language and identity.

Identity and Language

Research in this area explores how individuals use language to construct and express their social identities, such as ethnicity, gender, or social status.

Romaine's Contributions to Sociolinguistics

Educational and Pedagogical Perspectives

Romaine has extensively studied language development, bilingualism, and language education. Her work emphasizes the importance of understanding sociolinguistic factors in language teaching and learning, advocating for inclusive approaches that respect linguistic diversity.

Language and Identity

Romaine's research highlights how language choice and variation are integral to identity formation. She explores how social groups use language to signal membership, resistance, or social stratification.

Multilingualism and Language Policy

A significant part of Romaine's work addresses the challenges and opportunities of multilingual societies. She advocates for language policies that promote linguistic rights and respect for minority languages.

Research on Language Attitudes

Romaine has investigated how attitudes towards different dialects and languages influence social integration and educational outcomes. Her findings underscore the importance of positive language attitudes in fostering social cohesion.

Applications of Sociolinguistics

Language Planning and Policy

Sociolinguistics informs government and institutional policies on language use, education, and preservation of minority languages.

Language Education

Understanding sociolinguistic principles helps educators develop curricula that accommodate linguistic diversity and support bilingual or multilingual learners.

Social Justice and Equality

Studies in sociolinguistics shed light on linguistic discrimination and advocate for equal recognition of all language varieties.

Technology and Communication

The digital age has expanded the scope of sociolinguistics to include online communication, social media language, and digital dialects.

Challenges and Future Directions in Sociolinguistics

Globalization and Language Contact

Increased contact among languages raises questions about language shift, endangerment, and the future of linguistic diversity.

Technological Advances

Advances in data collection and analysis, including computational linguistics and corpus studies, are opening new avenues for research.

Interdisciplinary Approaches

Integrating insights from anthropology, psychology, and sociology enriches understanding of language in social contexts.

Addressing Language Inequality

Future research aims to promote multilingualism and challenge linguistic hierarchies, fostering inclusive societies.

Conclusion

Romaine's introduction to sociolinguistics provides a comprehensive overview of how language functions as a social phenomenon. Her work emphasizes the importance of understanding linguistic variation, language attitudes, and identity within diverse social contexts. As the field continues to evolve, sociolinguistics remains vital for addressing contemporary issues related to language policy, education, and social justice. By exploring the intricate relationship between language and society, Romaine's contributions help us appreciate the rich complexity of human communication and its role in shaping social identities and structures.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, Romaine, language variation, language change, code-switching, language attitudes, multilingualism, language policy, identity, language education

Romaine Introduction to Sociolinguistics: Exploring Language in Society

Introduction

Romaine introduction to sociolinguistics offers an insightful glimpse into how language functions within social contexts. As a field, sociolinguistics examines the dynamic relationship between language and society, exploring how social factors influence language use, variation, and change. This discipline bridges the gap between linguistics and sociology, revealing the intricate ways in which identity, culture, power, and social structures shape communication. Whether through regional accents, social dialects, gendered language, or language policies, sociolinguistics unpacks the profound impact of societal factors on language phenomena.

This article provides a comprehensive overview of the core principles introduced by Jeanette Romane, a pioneering figure in sociolinguistic research. We will explore foundational concepts such as language variation, dialects, and sociolects, delve into how social identities influence language, and examine contemporary issues like language contact and language policy. By the end, readers will gain a solid understanding of how sociolinguistics illuminates the complex relationship between language and society, emphasizing its relevance in today's diverse and interconnected world.

The Foundations of Sociolinguistics: Jeanette Romane's Perspective

Jeanette Romane's contributions to sociolinguistics have been instrumental in establishing the field as a rigorous academic discipline. Her approach emphasizes that language cannot be studied in isolation from its social context. Romane argued that language is both a reflection of society and a tool for social interaction, shaping and being shaped by social identities and power relations.

Key Principles of Romane's Approach:

- **Language Variation Is Systematic:** Romane highlighted that linguistic differences are not random but follow social patterns. Variations in pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar often correlate with factors like geography, social class, ethnicity, gender, and age.
- **Language and Identity:** She emphasized that language choices serve as markers of personal and group identity, allowing speakers to signal belonging or differentiation within social groups.
- **Language Change Is Socially Driven:** Romane pointed out that language evolves through social processes, influenced by contact, migration, and social mobility.

Her work laid the groundwork for understanding language as a social practice, emphasizing that linguistic phenomena are deeply embedded in social realities.

Core Concepts in Sociolinguistics

Language Variation and Dialects

One of the fundamental concepts in sociolinguistics is language variation—the idea that no language is monolithic but exists in multiple forms across different communities.

- **Dialect:** A regional or social variety of a language distinguished by pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. For example, British English and American English are dialectal variations.
- **Accent:** A way of pronouncing words associated with a particular region or social group. For instance, a Southern American accent versus a New York accent.
- **Sociolect:** Language variation associated with a particular social class or group. For example, the language used by teenagers today versus older adults.

Why is variation important? It reveals social identities, geographical boundaries, and social stratification. Romane argued that understanding these variations helps linguists decode social structures and cultural identities.

Registers and Styles

Language adaptation is another key concept. Speakers modify their language according to context?formal or informal settings, professional environments, or casual conversations.

- Register: A variety of language used in a specific context, characterized by vocabulary, tone, and formality. For example, legal language versus casual chat.

- Style-shifting: The phenomenon where speakers switch between registers depending on social situation or audience.

Romane emphasized that code-switching and style-shifting are natural strategies for negotiating social identities and maintaining social cohesion.

Language and Social Identity

Romane's work underscores that language is a powerful marker of social identity. People use language consciously or unconsciously to express their belonging or differentiate themselves from others.

Gender and Language: Romane explored how gender influences language use, with women and men often exhibiting different speech patterns. For instance, women might use more standard language forms, whereas men might show more linguistic innovation.

Ethnicity and Language: Ethnic identity can be expressed through language choices, dialects, or code-switching. For example, bilingual speakers may alternate between languages to signal cultural identity.

Social Class: Language reflects social stratification. Working-class speech may differ markedly from upper-class speech, with implications for social mobility and perceptions of competence.

Romane argued that understanding these social markers is essential for analyzing power dynamics and social inequalities.

Language Contact and Change

Language contact occurs when speakers of different languages or dialects interact regularly, leading to borrowings, pidgin and creole formation, and language shift.

- Borrowing: Inclusion of words or phrases from one language into another. For example, English has borrowed extensively from French and Latin.

- Pidgins and Creoles: Simplified languages that develop in contact situations, often as a means of communication among groups without a common language, evolving into fully developed creole languages over time.

- Language Shift: When a community gradually adopts a different language, often due to social or economic pressures. For example, indigenous communities shifting to dominant national languages.

Romane emphasized that language contact phenomena reflect historical and social processes like colonization, migration, and globalization.

Language Policy and Ideology

Language is not only a social phenomenon but also a political instrument. Romane examined how governments and institutions influence language use through policies and ideological frameworks.

Language Planning: Efforts to regulate or influence language use through standardization, promotion, or suppression.

Language Ideology: Beliefs and attitudes about language that reflect social power and cultural values. For example, the prestige associated with Standard English or the marginalization of minority languages.

Language Rights: Debates around linguistic diversity and the rights of communities to maintain their languages in education, media, and public life.

Romane highlighted that language policies can reinforce social inequalities or promote social cohesion, making the study of language ideology crucial for understanding societal power structures.

Contemporary Relevance of Sociolinguistics

Today, sociolinguistics continues to evolve, addressing issues such as digital communication,

globalization, and multilingualism.

Digital Age and Language: The internet has created new varieties of language, including slang, emojis, and memes, influencing how identity and community are expressed online.

Globalization: Increased contact among languages leads to language death, borrowing, and the emergence of global lingua francas like English.

Multilingual Societies: Countries like India and Canada exemplify linguistic diversity, where policies aim to balance the promotion of multiple languages with national unity.

Language and Social Justice: Sociolinguistics now plays a role in advocating for linguistic rights, combating discrimination based on language use, and promoting inclusive communication.

Conclusion

Romaine introduction to sociolinguistics provides an essential framework for understanding how language functions within social contexts. By examining variation, identity, contact, and policy, the field reveals the complex interplay between language and society. Jeanette Romane's pioneering work underscores that language is not merely a system of rules but a living social practice that shapes and is shaped by social forces.

In an increasingly interconnected world marked by migration, digital communication, and cultural exchange, sociolinguistics remains vital for analyzing how language reflects societal structures and influences individual identities. Whether studying accents, dialects, or language policies, the insights from Romane's approach help us appreciate the richness of human communication and the social fabric it weaves.

Understanding sociolinguistics equips us to navigate and appreciate linguistic diversity, promote social justice, and foster more inclusive societies. As language continues to evolve in response to social change, the principles introduced by Romane offer timeless guidance for scholars, policymakers, educators, and anyone interested in the intricate dance between language and society.

Question What is the main focus of 'Introduction to Sociolinguistics' by Romaine?
Answer Romaine's 'Introduction to Sociolinguistics' explores how language varies and changes in social contexts, examining the relationship between language and society, including topics like dialects, accents, language attitudes, and social identity. Why is sociolinguistics important in understanding language use today? Sociolinguistics helps us understand how language reflects social identities, power dynamics, and cultural diversity, which is crucial in multicultural and multilingual societies to promote effective communication and social cohesion. What are some key concepts introduced in

Romaine's book? Key concepts include language variation (dialects and accents), language change, language attitudes, code-switching, language and identity, and the social functions of language. How does Romaine describe the relationship between language and social identity? Romaine emphasizes that language is a vital marker of social identity, influencing and reflecting aspects such as class, ethnicity, gender, and social group membership. Can you explain the concept of language variation discussed in Romaine's book? Language variation refers to differences in language use across regions (dialects), social groups (sociolects), and contexts, highlighting that no language is monolithic but shaped by social factors. What role does Romaine assign to language attitudes in sociolinguistics? Romaine highlights that language attitudes?opinions and feelings about different languages or dialects?affect language change, social acceptance, and identity formation. How does 'Introduction to Sociolinguistics' address language change over time? The book discusses how social factors such as contact, migration, and technological advances influence language evolution, emphasizing that language change is a natural and ongoing social process. What are some real-world applications of sociolinguistics principles explained by Romaine? Applications include language planning, education, addressing linguistic discrimination, designing inclusive communication strategies, and understanding language policies in multilingual societies.

Related keywords: sociolinguistics, language variation, speech community, language and society, dialects, linguistic identity, language change, code-switching, social factors in language, linguistic diversity

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