

The Importance of Utilizing Pragmatics in EFL/ESL Context

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Abstract

Pragmatics research in the last few years has gained eminence under the impact of Soler and the succeeding paradigms of Communicative Competence. Amid the diverse components of communicative competence, a great number of L2 studies have attended to the concept of pragmatic competence, that deals with both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Hence, pragmatics interlanguage research is concerned with the pragmatic competence and pragmatic performance of L2 learners; though, teaching pragmatics to Non-native Speakers, particularly EFL learners, is a prickly subject. Hence, pragmatic competence has been noticeably absent from ELT curricula, notwithstanding the fact that it has been guaranteed a place in diverse models of Communicative competence. This is mainly due to the hindrances of teaching and learning pragmatics in the ESL/EFL classes. Hence, the study primarily aims at discoursing challenges and lacunas in teaching and learning pragmatics within the confines of EFL classrooms drawing on the existing published literature and proffers recommendations to overcome these problems. Thus, the paper concentrates on these central and prominent fields: the EFL/ESL setting, ELT materials, and available to teach learners, teacher competence, and evaluating pragmatic ability.

Introduction

The insight into how languages are learned and taught in the last fifty years has witnessed significant changes (Salahshour et al., 2013). The communicative language teaching approach has become a prominent method, among other approaches to language instruction. A Communicative Competence for second language acquisition research notion has become a thought-provoking topic for analysis. Thus, the concepts of Communicative competence have been described by many scholars by identifying its components. Amid the diverse elements of Communicative Competence, a large number of L2 studies have appeared to logical competence.

Though different models of Communicative competence have influenced conceptualization of pragmatic competence (Taguchi, 2011), It has been considered that pragmatic competence involves both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. Pragmalinguistic according to Taguchi, (2011, p. 289), refers to “the linguistic resources available to perform language functions” while sociopragmatic latter deals with “the language user’s assessment of the context in which such resources are implemented” However, two areas of pragmatic competence seem to be problematic for EFL/ESL novices to acquire (Abbas, 2012). Since, pragmatically competent requires L2 learners to plan their sociopragmatic knowledge onto pragmalinguistic forms under the contextual limitations of the circumstances (Clennell, 1999; Farnia & Rozina, 2009).

However, attempting the nuances of pragmatics is a challenge to non-native speakers (Rajabia et al., 2015), and the difficulty is heightened in the EFL/ESL context. Nevertheless, a difference exists between ESL and EFL learners in terms of the amount of pragmatic input available to them (Hammond, 2001). In the ESL context, L2 learners are bounded by the bath of English in their daily life (LoCastro, 2012). Meanwhile, EFL/ESL learners have less acquaintance with authentic language use; hence, fewer chances

to practice English outside the walls of the EFL/ESL classroom. Thus, depending on textbooks, instruction, and T.V/radio programs (Thomas, 1983).

Moreover, the knowledge of pragmatic does evolve as natural grammatical competence (Afzali and Rezapoorian, 2014). Therefore, according to (Saeed and Jafar, 2016), a high level of grammatical competence does not promise high pragmatic ability. Thus, literature has often described a mismatch between L2 learners' syntactic and pragmatic competencies (Farnia, 2009; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005).

The disadvantages imposed by ESL/EFL setting limitations have sparked a large number of pragmatic studies in the EFL/ESL sphere. Hence, this study aims at studying a number of these studies directing its consideration of challenges that EFL/ESL learners and teachers face in the acquisition and instruction of L2 pragmatic norms within the EFL/ESL classroom environment. Afterward, it makes suggestions on how to overcome these challenges. In communicating the problems and signifying possible clarifications, this study is limited its scope to four broad areas: the ESL/EFL context, ELT materials available in the EFL/ESL classrooms, teacher education and ability, and assessment and evaluating of pragmatic knowledge.

Methodology

The main focus of the study is on the pragmatic competence ability and knowledge concerning the knowledge of speech acts: how they are produced and interpreted in a literary work. Speech acts are one of the most critical aspects of pragmatic competence (Searle, 1969). They are also defined as the minimal units of linguistic communication (p.16).

The researcher focuses mainly on the importance of speech acts in increasing and developing learners' ability to analyze and comprehend a literary text to better understanding text in the study. Literature and literary texts would be observed in the situation in which EFL/ESL learners can find what they absent in terms of pragmatic ability in understanding the second language. In other words, utilizing pragmatics in literature in general and in analyzing and interpreting literary texts to pin particular can help EFL/ESL learners to increase the pragmatic knowledge and ability to language target pragmatic competence. It is the communicative competence theory that impacts the importance of what is going to teach from teaching grammar rules and systems towards teaching language in use in different situations and contexts such as social context. (Nuun, 2006).

There are many approaches or methods of utilizing pragmatics in the teaching/learning EFL/ESL classes and interpreting and understanding of literary texts. Among such ways, the researcher uses Cook's schema theory (1994), which "offers daunting flowcharts to display how a reader's pragmatic knowledge and expectations cooperate with a text." Hence, pragmatics is associated with knowledge of the world. This approach, among the other methods, is recommended for this study in which real examples and speeches of language in use can be categorized according to the purposes they have. Hence, the study will offer a pragmatic approach to some selected dramatic discourse and discourse changes in the

context concerning the syntactic and grammatical changes. The analysis will focus on the use of speech act and its functions on how the interlocutors' success in performing meaning.

Difficulties in the Teaching and Learning Pragmatics in the EFL/ESL Setting

The acquisition of pragmatic competence usually has to take place in instructional settings for L2 learners (Xue Fei, 2010). Meanwhile, instructional settings are inadequate in numerous ways (LoCastro, 2012). For example, Classroom settings world-wide are normally teacher-centered, structured to complete the syllabus with little time throughout the lessons to enable training of language where learners are tangled in comprehension and production of pragmatic meaning. [And] the chances to use the target language in the real-world discussion are restricted (LoCastro, 2012, p.130).

The difficulty is more when it comes to pragmatic classroom practices in an EFL/ESL context. Since native Speakers study the social rules of talking through socializing at home, at school, and in society (LoCastro, 2012). Yet, for EFL/ESL learners, knowledge rules of correctness are enormously problematic as there are almost no chances for communication with native speakers (Hymes, 1992)). Meanwhile, EFL/ESL learners have slight, if any, experience to English outside the classroom; therefore, they could be at a drawback to ESL/ESL learners.

The EFL/ESL classroom location may impose restrictions on the acquisition and instruction of pragmatics in numerous ways. Firstly, within the ESL/EFL setting, micro-level grammatical correctness takes precedence over macro-level pragmatic accuracy due to the dominance of structural syllabus (Bardovi-Harlig; Mahan-Taylor, 1991). Secondly, within the EFL classroom location, language is treated as an object somewhat than a means of communication, and chances for socialization are limited (Boxer and Pickering, 1995). Thirdly, the classroom setting habitually obliges to a few speech acts and cannot duplicate the real-world language use; in a nutshell, it cannot adequately prepare language learners for speaking quickly in the target language community (Kramsch, 1996). Lastly, within the EFL context, teachers serve as the main foundation of input for EFL/ESL learners. Nonetheless, non-native teacher talk can be considered by several features. Firstly, it is full with direct tactics as teachers are regularly in a state of power (Mwihaki, 2004), and this "asymmetrical power relationship" among the teacher and the students might impact the pragmatic aspects of teachers' talk (Nikula, 2002, p. 456); secondly, the English used in the classroom is frequently in the form of "materials-dependent talk" as EFL/ESL learners and teachers depend seriously on their textbooks (Nikula, 2002, p. 454), the fact that makes non-native teacher conversation seem precise, unnatural, and at odds with face-to-face discussions; finally, within the EFL context, teacher-learner connection is ranked (Kasper and Rose, 2001); hence, classroom language appears to be more well-mannered than real-world language use.

ELT Materials/Resources

Instructional materials, in precise textbooks, can serve as a vital foundation for teaching L2 pragmatic norms within the EFL since learners frequently relate with their textbooks, and their teachers use textbooks as a guide (Hassan, 2014; McDonough, Jo et al., 2013). Nonetheless, textbooks cannot always count on as dependable sources of pragmatic input for L2 learners (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001), since, it is primarily grounded on the author's perception rather than experimental research and thus are often insufficient, naïve, and at times improper for presenting L2 pragmatic norms (Mousavi, 2012; Hassan, 2014). For example, textbooks that deal with regret speech act have engrossed merely on the languages of apology with no reference to its semantic formulas or comprehension strategies (SAMARANAYAKE, 2015); in other words, there is no reference of when to say what or how to say it efficiently.

In addition, the books must be complemented with sensibly sequenced communicative activities stirring from controlled to less controlled activities (Mousavi, 2012) as existing activities intended for training purposes do not offer learners with suitable training to automatize realization of speech acts (Morgan and Reynolds, 1991).

Furthermore, as materials must for pragmatics teaching demand at least three crucial elements (social context, language use, and interaction), according to Taguchi (2011), the author has anticipated three types of tasks, namely; conscious-raising tasks, receptive-skills tasks, and productive-skills tasks to be encompassed in pragmatics materials.

Today technology has brought new opportunities for pragmatics teaching and practice aside from the traditional pragmatics teaching materials. For example, videotapes of naturalistic interactions can serve as an active medium for the clear teaching of pragmatics (Belz, 2003). Furthermore, the recent latest advances in the use of computers, computer-assisted language learning has provided us with more chances for instruction and learning pragmatics. Taguchi (2011) affirmed social networking and virtual social platforms to have produced other technological facilities for practicing pragmatics). Equally, the Internet and the World Wide Web have come to our aid to simplify pragmatics teaching and learning. As such, a few websites have been dedicated to L2 pragmatics.

Teacher Competence

Pointless to say, teacher-training in pragmatics is critical (Abbas, 2012), and teacher educators must prove to EFL teachers that pragmatics must develop an integral part of L2 teaching (Abed, 2001); also, teacher educators must offer practical understandings into how to teach pragmatics in the language classroom (Rajabia, 2015) since "the effort on empirically authenticated pragmatics in teacher development programs would preferably result in better prominence on it in the L2 classroom" (Cohen, 2012,34). As a result of these, Bardovi- Harlig and Mahan-Taylor recommend three pedagogical practices for teaching pragmatics to L2 learners, which are as follows: "1) the usage of true language samples; 2) input first followed by interpretation and production; 3) and the introduction of the teaching of pragmatics at initial levels".

Assessment and Evaluation of Pragmatic ability (competence and performance)

Providing educative feedback in pragmatics could certainly help L2 learners change towards native-like pragmatic norms. Though, EFL/ESL teachers must be careful about how to make improvements at the pragmatic level since correcting sociopragmatic failure is a more dangerous issue than modifying pragmalinguistic failure (Thomas, 1983). According to Thomas (1983), sociopragmatic choices are social before they are linguistics. While foreign learners are relatively willing to modifications which they regard as linguistic, they are admissibly sensitive about having their social (or even political, religious, or moral) judgment called into question. (p. 104).

Besides, it must be noted that teachers teach pragmatics in EFL/ESL classrooms as it was mentioned in Section 1.4., they do not sufficiently assess it (Rajabia, 2015). Thus, one cannot refute the worth of pragmatics in developing communicative capacity; Rajabia (2015) recommends teachers to comprise the valuation of pragmatic knowledge in short and long tests and proposes the following strategies for evaluating pragmatics:

1. Retain the speech act situations realistic (for the learner group) and engaging.
2. Search for key features of performance.
3. Open a discussion and debate with the students after they have performed speech acts.
4. Compare the student's performance with that of a native.
5. Have the students offer a basis for why they replied as they did in the given social condition.

Barron (2003) attempted to offer a general outline for the assessment of interlanguage pragmatics and proposed a theoretic and an operative definition for pragmatic capability. The framework according to Barron, (2003) can guide EFL/ESL teachers in the evaluation of pragmatic knowledge

Result And Discussion

The aim of this study is to develop and increase the capability to the understanding of the literary discourse and to grasp a better attitude of literature and the literary work by enriching and motivating the learners' pragmatic knowledge and capability and making it part of the teaching/learning strategy how to increase and develop the quality EFL/ESL teaching. Here the researcher will examine an extract from a dramatic discourse of Julius Caesar. The analysis will show part of Mark Antony's dramatic conversation in Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. The study will depend on the basic pragmatic categories and consider Antony's speech enable to show how the interlocutor succeeds in performing the successful message to the readers that is the illocutionary act and force (the communicative intention). This must be understood by the hearers, but this is not uttered directly or explicitly. The dramatic discourse or conversation is different from the natural or artificial conversation and discourse that introduced in textbooks. The dialogue is composed of a limited range of illocutionary types, such as questions and answers.

To exemplify this point, the next section will analyze an extract pragmatically from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar.

Here the researcher will examine an extract from Act III, scene ii from Shakespeare's Julius Caesar when Marc Antony delivers a speech at Caesar's funeral is an example of oratory and tactful manipulation and persuasion, which has been analyzed mostly from a pragmatic point of view.

Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears;

I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him.

The evil that men do lives after them;

The good is oft interred with their bones;

So let it be with Caesar

The noble Brutus hath told you Caesar was ambitious:

If it were so, it was a grievous fault,

And grievously hath Caesar answer'd it.

Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—

For Brutus is an honorable man;

So are they all, all honorable men—

Come I to speak in Caesar's funeral

He was my friend, faithful and just to me:

But Brutus says he was ambitious;

And Brutus is an honorable man.

He hath brought many captives home to Rome

Whose ransoms did the general coffers fill:

Did this in Caesar seem ambitious?

When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept:

Ambition should be made of sterner stuff:

Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And Brutus is an honourable man.
You all did see that on the Lupercal
I thrice presented him a kingly crown,
Which he did thrice refuse: was this ambition?
Yet Brutus says he was ambitious;
And, sure, he is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove what Brutus spoke,
But here I am to speak what I do know.
You all did love him once, not without cause:
What cause withholds you then, to mourn for him?
O judgment! thou art fled to brutish beasts,
And men have lost their reason. Bear with me;
My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar,
And I must pause till it come back to me (He weeps)

Mark Antony's funeral speech is a brilliant example of the use of symbols in exercising the rational application. He uses short sentences and plays with different types of a sentence such as a statement (positive) and negative sentences in a very proper and wise way, introducing irony with a pinch of mockery. His technique is successful in sending a message to the people who are gathered in the situation to protest Caesar's murder.

Throughout his speech, Antony uses various strategies and techniques such as winning and appealing plan to accomplish his hidden and unrevealed goal: that of promoting the gathered people to punish Caesar's death. He is successful in his task in sending the purpose of his speech; that is why the hearers must understand the illocutionary force (intention) of his speech acts. To achieve his goal that is the persuasion of the mob (roman) people, he pretends that he belongs to them and supports them in doing any action toward the revenge on the assassins. Still, in reality, he tries all his effort to make the people become of his part and support him to punish Caesar's murder.

Mark Antony uses the same syntactical structure as another character in the play uses (Brutus) when beginning his speech; he will use different words, though. He shows himself very cleverly that he is close

and friendly with the people by using some words as “Friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears” this is the same strategy and technique used by Brutus who is one of the main characters in the play and one of the assassinator members. Antony uses the word “friend” to pretend that he is very close to them, and there is no distance between him and the audience.

The purpose of Antony’s eulogy is to specify the mob people to take revenge on those who assassinated Caesar, so. In order to obtain the people’s acceptance, he displays that he is with them and supports them to do that. Antony first make an appealing request to the people “Friends, Romans, countrymen” and then he uses contradictories to stress on his intention and goal “I came to bury Caesar, not to praise him./ The evil that men do lives after them”.the meaning of this utterance is obscure, although it appears to be unambiguous in a sense. ‘I am here to pronounce the burial speech that is all; I have no purpose of praising Caesar or showing that he was any better than he was. This is a hint given to the people, and they didn’t believe that Antony directly shows his disagreement with Brutus. This is the outcome of Antony’s oratory speech, in which he speaks in conformity in front of people.

Mark Antony’s discourse in Julius Caesar is one of the most persuasive discourses of all time. However, his method here is unclear the connection between the short, simple declarations, and so progress alternative meanings for them.” What is the evil that survives a man’s death:” is it merely the evil deeds he has done or the memory of them, as Brutus appears to have [suggested.it](#) seems to only to an animate object. This is an example of a violation of the maxim of the manner in its ambiguity. The good deeds of Caesar have forgotten and buried with him and none remember them. This may show that Antony wants to tell the people that no need to think about Caesar whatever goodness has done is gone, but only the evil actions are left for you. He uses different and obscure utterances, which is contradictory in form but may give sense. He may not come to admire Caesar overtly, but he will speak by indirection of what he knows.

Antony uses contrastive opinion and utterance when he addresses his speech to the people. He says, “He was my friend, faithful and just to me,” but at the same time, he says, “But Brutus says he was ambitious” he tactfully contradicts the fact and speech he produces. He violates the maxim of quality (don’t say what you believe false) when seemingly blames Caesar and glorifies the assassins because he should do that. He uses verbal irony as a powerful rhetorical device for a convincing argument. In his speech, he combines a large number of rhetorical techniques and questions such as verbal irony, repetition, imagery, and implications, among others. Antony plants suspicion on Brutus’ utterances and purposes again when using the concessive conjunct yet after a rhetorical question. Yet signals and symbols here the unanticipated, shocking nature of what is being said as if Caesar “was ambitious” in the attitude of what was uttered before as: “Was this ambition?/Yet Brutus says he was ambitious”. While he uses conjunction and instead of explaining what Antony said in his speech makes the suspicion more as: “And, sure, he is an honorable man.” In another utterance, Antony uses and combines the word Caesar and Brutus in one statement and phrase. At the same time, it needs to separate or at least make a contrastive emphasis on creating a distinction between those two persons. This shows a clear violation of indirect speech. it is also the violation of the maxim of the manner in which it is what Brutus said, and

it's his opinion not what I (Antony) said and believes. Antony's speech acts are mostly of a specific or illustrative type (Searle, 1969). But they are presented generally as reported, or statement speech as "The noble Brutus / Hath told you, Caesar was ambitious." In his speech, Antony doesn't take fully responsible for what he says to the people, but in fact, he just mentions and quotes Brutus's speech and people's words. He combines quotations and general ideas and opinions. Antony's perlocutionary force was successful to the people who gathered there. The use of the adjective 'honourable' is a clear example of the way Antony violates the Politeness Principle maxims. He tries to request the Politeness Principle, which intentionally fails. The manner of the utterances he uses needs the listener and reader to work at a series of inferences. They should comprehend that Antony requests to make several compound declarations in one brief phrase. He infers the betrayal of Brutus (playing on a punning sense of his name), the innocence of Caesar, and constant defend himself.

All in all, Antony's speech acts as a hidden directive, the result of which is an action - the assassinator's punishment. He uses a successful strategy by using a metaphor "brutish beasts" and the direct use of irony of "honourable men" as a synonym of traitors and murders. The good point about Mark Antony's speech (from a pragmatic point of view) is that all the characters spoken about are present (either dead or alive) in the context they are: the people, Brutus, Caesar. That is why there is a high degree of indexicality in the segment. Whenever he wants to persuade and make the citizens to his part and world to punish Caesar's assassinators, he is careful about his position and situation as a speaker ("I" is employed 20 times). The vocatives he uses "You gentle Romans," "Friends, Romans, countrymen" (Ibid) have a phatic purpose. He creates his world-of-discourse and gives it with semantic and pragmatic coherence: "My heart is in the coffin there with Caesar, / And I must pause till it comes back to me". The utterances they use and the meanings introduce are amazing in view of what is presented before. To persuade the audience (Roman people) to be a part of his world, he made some radical changes in his discourse and utterance. This is to make the people believe and trust him.

Antony's speech is meant to make the citizens take to avenge on Caesar's assassinator; with this purpose in mind, he makes a serious change in the people's opinion and attitude, i.e., he exploits the people's beliefs and actions). Antony uses quotations and reported speech to avoid explicit inference. This is a successful strategy he uses when he addresses his speech to the Citizen of Rome. Repetition at an assessable linguistic distance occurs with the same purpose in another cue uttered by Antony: his utterance uses in a different context. He points to the certainty and conformity that whatever I said and is not my attitude, it is a reference to what they believe and their point of view "But Brutus says he was ambitious, And Brutus is an honorable man" this shows the oratory and eulogy of Marc Antony. The personal appeal is intensified by means of rhetorical questions: "What cause withholds you then to mourn for him?" What I want to highlight at this point is that although "unhappy", the directive addressed to Roman people by Antony is, actually, very successful and Antony gets his message across, because the exchange ends with citizen's confirmation of Anton's words "And I must pause till it come back to me". Antony's language is so very persuasive because it thrives on metaphors and irony. Every word or utterance generates some frame in the hearer's mind.

Antony risks his characteristic to push the Roman citizen “fill” the gaps and get a different ending. As we illustrated, the people are unwilling to accepting Antony’s purpose—they suspect him of being against the murders. That is why the Antony has to create an outlook of belief and friendliness by apparently glorifying the murders. In order to accomplish his goal, Antony helps to the emotional function of language, rhetorically displaying and requesting a relationship in opinions and feelings; vocatives “O judgment!” and demands “Bear with me”. The rhetorical strategy and style of Mark Antony in breaking down expected types of thinking demonstrates the unusual naturalism of Shakespeare’s writing. Thus, Pragmatics helps create the causes of the characters’ tragedy.

The above analysis showed the importance of pragmatics and using it in teaching/learning process In return; the literary text can help improve and develop the students’ and EFL/ESL pragmatic competence when it is considered as part of the teaching plan to develop the quality of EFL/ESL teaching. The focus was on several important elements, meant to reveal the speaker’s skill in making common ground and using people whose opinions, beliefs, and feelings were at first totally different from his.

Thus, second language learners need to acquaint themselves with various features of pragmatic ability since the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and expertise helps to assist learners in many diverse and multiple ways. Similarly, teamwork among teachers, teacher educators, materials developers, and test designers will lead to strong guidelines of pragmatic ability. Specifically, teachers are frontlines of pragmatic development agenda. In particular, it is teachers who are confronting the study of pragmatic modification schema. Hence, they must integrate pragmatics into their teaching/learning practices along with terminology and syntax.

Conclusion

The study attempts to investigate issues that get in the way of teaching and learning pragmatics within the EFL/ESL classroom situation and to make submissions to overcome those challenges. To this end, the article revised the current literature in four areas: EFL/ESL classroom context, teaching materials, teacher ability and education, and the assessment of pragmatic knowledge and competence.

In conclusion, it is essential to note that equipping oneself to be knowledgeable about pragmatic competence is as important as developing one’s IT and technology skills. Both are indispensable tools for the world of today, irrespective of one’s regional or geographical location. Thus, second language learners need to acquaint themselves with various features of pragmatic ability, since the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and ability helps to assist learners in many diverse and multiple ways. Similarly, teamwork among teachers, teacher educators, materials developers, and test designers will lead to strong guidelines of pragmatic ability. Specifically, teachers are frontlines of pragmatic development agenda. In particular, it is teachers who are confronting the study of pragmatic modification schema. Hence, they must integrate pragmatics into their teaching/learning practices along with terminology and syntax.

Literature and literary texts can help improve the learners’ pragmatic competence when it is used as part of the teaching process to the EFL/ESL classes to develop and enhance the quality of teaching in

EFL/ESL context, and this leads learners to a better understanding of literature/literary texts and better perception of its importance of using pragmatics in teaching.

The move of methodology in literature and linguistics has motivated the utilize of literary discourse in the EFL/ESL classes. Accordingly, if learners learn a language to deal with reality, and literature is an imitation of fact, it becomes of great worth to use literature and literary discourse in teaching/learning a language. Studying literary discourse (Literature in general), developing the students' pragmatic competence leads to a better using of the literary work.

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Availability of data and materials

Data sharing not applicable to this article as no datasets were generated or analyzed during the current study

Authors' contributions

YSF collected and analyzed the data. NMI discussed the results. Both are equally accountable for all aspects of the work and read the final manuscript.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have competing interests by the Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

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