

Lecture 11. Pronouns and Reflexives III: Typological Issues

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Readings: Full references and links are in References at the end. These are all on the CD except for Kiparsky 2002, which is on the web.

- (1) (Kiparsky 2002) Disjoint reference and the typology of pronouns (not on your CD, but available on the web)
- (2) (Testelefs 2005), St.Petersburg Lectures on Binding Theory, Lecture 2: Domains, orientation, and a typology of pronouns and Lecture 3: Long-distance binding and Revisions of the Binding Theory
- (3) Büring (2004), Chapter 11 (Exempt anaphora and reflexivity).

Optional readings:

- (4) (Fischer 2004) Optimal binding
- (5) (Lee 2003) Anaphoric R-expressions as bound variables
- (6) (Cole et al. 2001) – For next week: Introduction, which is online, plus possible articles relevant to your presentations that can be copied from the book (in LaTyp collection).

1. Background: typology and theory

Typology and theory are intimately linked, and this is especially clear in the study of anaphora! This point is emphasized from the very beginning in Testelefs's Lectures on Binding Theory, and it is emphasized throughout Kiparsky's article. (It can also be seen in many of the other works on anaphora, including Büring's book, Reinhart and Reuland's work, Pollard and Sag's work, ...)

What has to be explained: Different languages have different kinds of pronouns and reflexives, but systems of anaphoric expressions are in fact remarkably similar. A good theory of anaphora should include a basis for predicting what kinds of pronouns and reflexives are possible in human language and what kinds are not. See Testelefs, Lecture 1, for clear examples of "imaginable" systems which never occur, and which linguists quite confidently predict will never be found.

A theory which is too constrained will be falsified by anaphoric systems it predicted to be impossible. That happened with Chomsky's early Binding Theory: since Principle A and Principle B operated in the same domain, it predicted that pronouns and reflexives should always be in complementary distribution, which we have seen is not true, even in English.

A theory which is not constrained enough may not be "falsified" directly, but it may predict *too many* possibilities, and will fail to explain why we find just the patterns that we do and not any of the patterns that are never attested.

A theory which is based on wrong notions, or is missing some of the important "right ideas", may fail in both ways. Without a very wide array of typological data, it's hard to distinguish "right ideas" from "wrong ideas". Without a rich theoretical framework, it's hard to understand the data and draw the right kinds of typological generalizations.

2. Kiparsky's approach to anaphora typology

Note on terminology: Kiparsky uses the term "pronoun" as a general term for anaphoric expressions, including both plain pronouns and reflexives. We will mostly follow his terminology here; I'll write "plain pronoun" or "non-reflexive pronoun" when I want to refer to pronouns in the narrower sense.

2.1. On Obviation vs. Blocking

When it was discovered that pronouns and reflexives are not always in complementary distribution, linguists started looking for ways to make Principle A and Principle B distinct – different local domains, different notions of binding, or something else.

Kiparsky makes the useful distinction between "Obviation" approaches and "Blocking" approaches, and himself argues that it shouldn't be viewed as an either-or matter, but that in fact both are real and a good theory should use both. Optimality theory makes that easier to do than some other theories.

The Obviation approach: Originating with Lasnik (1976), developed by Chomsky and others in the GB tradition: "autonomous disjoint reference principles" (like Principle B), which filter out illicit coindexations in certain structural domains. The argument that the relevant domain for "Principle B effects" should be defined in terms of a predicate's arguments was argued by Hellan (1983, 1988), Sells (1986), and Farmer and Harnish (Farmer and Harnish 1987). They all proposed some version of the following principle, which is sometimes called "Obviation", a term borrowed from Algonquian grammar.

- (1) OBVIATION: Coarguments have disjoint reference.

A second key idea, which we have discussed before, is that disjoint reference is a principle of *semantic* interpretation that requires certain types of arguments of multi-place predicates to be distinct (Montague 1970, Keenan 1974, Bach and Partee 1980, Sells 1991, Pollard and Sag 1992, Reinhart and Reuland 1993). Reinhart and Reuland explicitly argue, as we saw, that Principle A is defined on *syntactic predicates* and Principle B on *semantic predicates*.

Kiparsky's approach adopts both of these ideas about obviation. "Obviation will be argued to be a universal violable constraint interacting with other constraints in the ranked constraint systems that define the binding patterns of languages." (p. 3) (page numbers refer to the downloaded version from his website.)

Blocking: The second approach to disjoint reference replaces Principle B by a BLOCKING constraint that makes anaphors obligatory in their binding domain under the appropriate conditions, "blocking" the coreferential interpretation of pronominals in that domain. Blocking can be seen as either a grammatical condition applying to syntactic representations (we haven't

studied any of those) or as an extra-grammatical, pragmatic, condition involving conversational implicatures, hearer strategies, or the like (Dowty 1980, Reinhart 1983a, 1983b, Farmer and Harnish 1987, Levinson 1987, 1991, 2000).

Kiparsky argues that both Obviation and Blocking constitute universal constraints that interact with each other and with other constraints in accord with rankings that are partly language-specific. He argues for their independence by showing that one applies to a syntactic representation (Blocking) and the other to semantic interpretation (Obviation), that they apply to different classes of elements, and that they apply in different domains.

Kiparsky sees Obviation and Blocking as conceptually different as well. Blocking is related to the very general “Elsewhere” principle that governs morphological expression in many domains; Kiparsky follows Burzio in treating it as an *Economy* principle. Obviation, on the other hand, is a constraint that is specific to binding theory.

2.2. The typology of anaphoric expressions

Kiparsky credits Faltz (Faltz 1977) with pioneering work showing that the binding properties of reflexives and reciprocals vary along at least two dimensions:

- the size of the domain within which they must be bound
- the nature of the antecedent in the clausal domain.

Faltz also observed that different anaphoric expressions within one language may differ in these respects, and that therefore “binding domain” and “antecedent requirement” are *lexical* properties of individual anaphors, not a syntactic parameter of the language as a whole. Later work on many languages confirmed these conclusions.

Kiparsky argues that the typology of pronouns comes from two cross-classifying properties:

- whether the expression is obviative or not, i.e. whether it can license co-referential arguments;
- what the expression’s antecedent domain is.

With respect to “antecedent domain”, Kiparsky identifies a hierarchy of five successively more inclusive antecedent domains, each characterizing a class of pronouns. When these five types are further cross-classified as +/- obviative (also known as “obviative vs. proximate”), the resulting inventory predicts 10 types of anaphoric expressions (actually 9, since one is inherently impossible); Kiparsky argues that although some of the predicted types are rare, his typology matches the range of known anaphoric expressions fairly well. (Some of the data in (Huang 2000) is acknowledged to pose difficulties.)

I will not try to summarize all of Kiparsky’s arguments, but will concentrate on some examples, with three goals: (i) to show how Optimality Theory works; (ii) to show how different rankings of constraints capture the behavior of different anaphoric expressions; and (iii) to highlight some of his typological distinctions. There are many interesting ideas in the paper that I will omit today.

3. Coargument Disjoint Reference.

3.1. Four generalizations about disjoint reference

In English, pronouns are obviative and reflexives (“anaphors” in Binding Theory) are proximate. But many languages, including Swedish, distinguish between obviative and proximate reflexives (*sig* vs. *sig själv*), and some distinguish between obviative and proximate pronouns (Algonquian). So the obviation requirement and the choice of binding domain are in principle independent, though they may not be independent in each language.

Obviation accounts for Principle B effects. It also accounts for four disjoint reference phenomena that are not addressed in standard versions of Binding Theory.

(2) **Generalization 1:** An anaphor whose antecedent is a coargument has a bound variable reading but not a coreferential reading. (**This one is very important for us.**)

(3) **Generalization 2:** A plural or conjoined DP which overlaps in reference with a coargument has a collective reading but not a distributive reading. (We won’t discuss this one.)

The other two generalizations are syntactic and are overtly instantiated in only a minority of languages; Generalization 3 concerns languages that distinguish +/- obviative reflexives, and Generalization 4 concerns languages that distinguish +/- obviative pronouns.

(4) Generalization 3: An obviative and its coarguments have disjoint reference. (See Swedish example later below)

(5) Generalization 4: At most one coargument may be proximate. (Algonquian; we won’t discuss this one.)

3.2. Bound variable vs. coreferential (covaluation) readings

Generalization 1 is famously manifested in VP anaphora, as we have illustrated before. English reflexives whose antecedent is a coargument get only the bound variable reading (“sloppy identity”), as in (6). What we have not emphasized before, though we mentioned it last week, is that English reflexives whose antecedent is *not* a coargument can be ambiguous between bound variable and coreferential readings, as in (7).

- (6) John hates himself, and so does Fred. (unambiguous)
a. \neq Fred hates John too. (no “strict identity”, “coreferential” reading)
b. means: Fred hates himself too. (“sloppy identity” only: bound variable reading)

- (7) John considers [himself competent], and so does Fred. (ambiguous)
a. Fred considers [John incompetent] too. (“strict”)
b. Fred considers [himself incompetent] too. (“sloppy”)

Other ambiguous examples cited by Kiparsky (some of the data may not be agreed on by everyone), all with reflexives whose antecedent is not a coargument, include the following.

- (8) a. John thought that Mary’s parents would approve of someone like himself, and so did Fred. (ambiguous)
b. John loves his wife, and so does Fred. (ambiguous; *his* is not marked for reflexivity)
c. John has a picture of himself, and so does Fred.

3.2.1. What is the local domain?

Kiparsky considers the binding in both (6) and (7) to be “local”; he distinguishes local syntactic domains for binding (i.e. “binding domains”) from the semantic co-argument domain, which he does not consider to be a binding domain at all, but rather the domain of the universal Obviation principle. He argues that the real minimal binding domain is the “accessible subject domain”, the minimal domain in which there is a subject.

3.2.2. Disambiguation in Russian

In English, the distinction between the bound variable reading and the coreferential reading of pronouns normally has no direct formal reflex. But in Russian, the reflexives *svoj* (poss.) and *sebjja* (acc.) can have not only third-person antecedents but also first and second person antecedents, and in that case they “compete” with regular first and second person possessives.

Kiparsky asserts, based on (Dahl 1973), that it is precisely in the coargument case (9) that the reflexive is obligatory, and there it has only the bound variable reading. (Class: does everyone agree?)

- (9) a. *Ja ljublju odnogo menja.
‘I like only me.’
b. Ja ljublju odnogo sebjja. (bound variable reading only – right?)
‘I like only myself.’

When the pronoun is not a coargument of its antecedent, the contrast between pronoun and reflexive (both for plain pronouns and for possessives) marks the semantic contrast between coreferential vs. bound variable reading:

- (10) a. Ja ljublju moju ženu, i Ivan tože. (‘strict’, coreferential)
‘I love my wife, and Ivan also (loves my wife).’
b. Ja ljublju svoju ženu, i Ivan tože. (‘sloppy’, bound variable)
‘I love my (self’s) wife, and Ivan also (loves his wife).’

Next step: to formulate constraints that will account for the Russian data, for generalizations 1-4 in Section 3.1 about English, and for Swedish and Algonquian data to follow.

3.2.3. Towards an analysis of the Russian data

First of all, how to conceptualize the three possible relations between a pronoun and a (potential) antecedent, namely *bound anaphora*, *coreference*, and *disjoint reference*?

- *Bound anaphora*: coindexed; associated with the same variable. (cf. the discussion in Büring and in our previous lectures – the antecedent will become sister to a binding operator, and just the anaphoric expression will be interpreted as a variable. But we won’t try to make that explicit here.)
- *Coreference* or *covaluation*: distinct variables, but given the same assignment (same individual, or perhaps same ‘discourse referent’)
- *Disjoint reference*: distinct variables assigned to distinct individuals.

Kiparsky uses the following mnemonic notation:

- (11) a. *Bound anaphora*: $A_x \dots B_x (x \rightarrow a)$
b. *Coreference*: $A_x \dots B_y (x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow a)$
c. *Disjoint reference*: $A_x \dots B_y (x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow b, a \neq b)$

He notes that since we need to distinguish these three cases, Binding Theory can’t be based simply on coindexing; there are also constraints on the interpretation of non-coindexed arguments.

For his Optimality Theoretic approach, there will be “inputs” and “outputs”, and a given set of candidate input-output pairs will be evaluated to find the most “harmonic” output for a given input. The input candidates will be “logical forms” (semantically annotated syntax), with any coindexation and any assignment of values to variables. The outputs will be morphological forms.

Kiparsky proposes six constraints, in two groups. The first three are specific to binding theory, the second is a very general “Parse” constraint, and the last two are markedness (economy) constraints.

- (12) BINDING CONSTRAINTS:
a. BINDING DOMAIN: A pronoun has a compatible antecedent in a designated domain D.
b. OBVIATION: An obviative an its coarguments have disjoint reference.
c. PROX: A proximate is a bound anaphor (i.e. it is indexed to the same variable as its antecedent)
(13) The PARSE constraint: This bars the null candidate; it basically says that for every possible input, there must be an output. But it is outranked by some other constraints, so in fact some inputs have no outputs.
(14) ECONOMY CONSTRAINTS:
a. FEATURAL (SEMANTIC) ECONOMY: Avoid pronominals.
b. MORPHOLOGICAL ECONOMY: Avoid morphologically complex pronouns.

The idea behind the FEATURAL ECONOMY constraint is that pronominals have richer intrinsic semantic feature content than anaphors; anaphors are more fully “dependent”. MORPHOLOGICAL ECONOMY favors morphologically simple pronouns (like *sig*) over complex ones (*sig själv*).

Assumptions about Russian vs. English: Pronouns of Russian have the same properties as the corresponding pronouns of English, except that the reflexives *svoj*, *sebjja* have no person features. As in English, the reflexives are proximate, and the pronominals (*menja*, *moju*) are obviative.

The tableau in (15) indicates the relevant properties of the input logical forms using the notation in (11). Candidate sets 1 and 2 illustrate coargument reflexives, with bound anaphora and (the impossible) coreferential readings, respectively. Candidate sets 3 and 4 illustrate non-coargument possessive reflexives, with the same two readings (this time both possible, one reading with *svoju* and the other with *moju*). The single set of ranked constraints succeeds in picking out the right input-output pairs. (The BINDING DOMAIN constraint plays no role in these particular examples; it will later. The two ECONOMY constraints are ranked together in the lowest position; when both are violated (see later Swedish example), there will be two *’s.

How to read the OT tableau: First, think of it as four separate tableaux, each three lines long, that have been put together for efficiency. Each one concerns one input and a choice among two outputs plus a third choice “no output”: we actually have an example of “no output” in situation 2, meaning there is no way (at least not among those standard choices) to express that meaning in Russian.

The columns show the ranked constraints: the highest-ranked constraint is BD (BINDING DOMAIN) and the lowest ranked (pair of) constraint(s) is ECONOMY.

The rows 1a, 1b, 1c show the three candidate input-output pairs for the input where antecedent and anaphoric expression are to express the bound variable reading, both assigned to a single variable x . (Imagine that input to be repeated on the left side of each line.) The three candidate outputs are “Ja_x ljublj_x menja_x”, Ja_x ljublj_x sebja_x”, and \emptyset (“no output”). In the cells on the right, each * marks a violation of the constraint that heads the given column.

The candidate that wins is the one that violates no constraint or violates a less-highly ranked constraint than any other candidate. (It doesn’t matter how *many* constraints a candidate violates; only the highest-ranked constraint violated by each candidate matters.) For each of the losers, the highest-ranked violation is indicated by “!”. The winner is marked on the left by the pointing hand \Rightarrow .

Gaps in the output (\emptyset) violate the PARSE constraint. Gaps occur when all of the available candidates violate some constraint that’s higher ranked than PARSE. The gap in the Russian data (which is paralleled by English) occurs when one tries to figure out how to express a coargument reflexive with a coreferential rather than a bound variable reading: at least with these choices, it can’t be done.

(15)

	BD	OBVIATION	PROX	PARSE	ECONOMY
1a. $x \rightarrow a$ Ja _x ljublj _x menja _x		*!			*
1b. \Rightarrow Ja _x ljublj _x sebja _x					
1c. \emptyset				*!	
2a. $x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow a$ Ja _x ljublj _x menja _y		*!			*
2b. Ja _x ljublj _x sebja _y			*!		
2c. \Rightarrow \emptyset				*	
3a. $x \rightarrow a$ Ja _x ljublj _x moju _x ženu					*!
3b. \Rightarrow Ja _x ljublj _x svoju _x ženu					
3c. \emptyset				*!	
4a. \Rightarrow $x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow a$ Ja _x ljublj _x moju _y ženu					*
4b. Ja _x ljublj _x svoju _y ženu			*!		
4c. \emptyset				*!	

Exercises for the reader: Ignoring constraint BD for the moment, are there any other rankings of the four relevant constraints that would give the same results? What would change if you interchange (just) the rankings of OBVIATION and PARSE? What would change if you interchange (just) the rankings of PROX and PARSE?

3.3. Illustration: Swedish sig, an obviative reflexive. Cancellation of obviativity by själv.

(41) (first half), p. 18

	BD	OBVIATION	PROX	PARSE	ECONOMY
<i>Coarguments</i>					
1a $x \rightarrow a$ John _x älskar $_x$ *sig		*!			
1b \Rightarrow sig själv					*
1c *honom		*!			*
1d *honom själv					**!
1e \emptyset (gap)? No				*!	
2a $x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow a$ *sig		*!			
2b *sig själv			*!		*
2c *honom		*!			*
2d *honom själv			*!		**
2e \Rightarrow \emptyset (gap)? Yes				*	
3a $x \rightarrow a, y \rightarrow b$ *sig	*!				
3b *sig själv	*!		*		*
3c \Rightarrow homom					*
3d *honom själv			*!		**
3e \emptyset (gap)? No				*!	

Consider 1a-1e first. Here we consider what forms can and cannot be used to express bound anaphora in a simple coargument sentence like Kiparsky’s (23a) *John föredrar sig ‘John prefers self’, (29a) John_i älskar honom_i ‘John_i loves him_i’, (31a) John älskar sig själv ‘John loves refl+self’, and (not cited in the article, but described) (29a’) *John_i älskar honom_i själv ‘John_i loves him_i+self’.

The “input” is the ‘logical form’ abbreviated by “ $x \rightarrow a$ ”, i.e. bound variable anaphora. The candidate outputs are the four alternative forms for such a sentence with the four pronominal forms, plus the gap possibility \emptyset .

The ranking of the constraints is just the same as in the Russian example. What is different is the lexical specification of the candidate output forms: sig, like homom and unlike Russian sebja, is obviative. And sig själv and homom själv are both proximate. What makes sig and sig själv reflexives is “Condition A”, here represented as the BINDING DOMAIN constraint: that plays a role in Case 3, the Disjoint Reference situation: Both sig and sig själv violate that top-ranked constraint in 3, because with that indexing they have no compatible antecedent within the local domain.

See the article for the other half of this tableau, with examples involving non-coarguments.

3.4. Gaps

When we discussed earlier the fact that pronouns and reflexives are not in complementary distribution in many languages, we followed the literature in citing contexts where both are permitted. Kiparsky draws attention to another aspect of non-complementarity that emerges on his input-output perspective, namely situations where neither can occur. This shows that “Blocking” isn’t enough, as Reinhart (and Bach and Partee) had hoped. The gap in the “coreference” alternative in both the Russian tableau, case 2, and the Swedish tableau, case 2, shows that Obviation can block a pronoun from occurring even in a case where a reflexive cannot occur either. Of course these gaps are not syntactic positions where neither can occur, but rather “logical forms” – syntax plus interpretive choice – that can’t be expressed.

His paper gives further examples of such gaps in English and German.

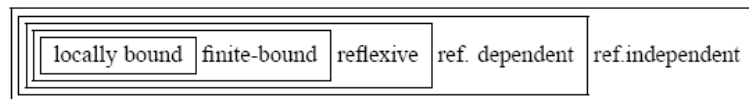
As he notes, violation of either Obviation or Blocking (Economy) produces deviancy, but the sharpest judgments of ungrammaticality come from joint violation of both.

3.5. Morphologically marked Obviation

(Discussion of Algonquian languages such as Cree and Ojibwa, with further evidence that obviation and blocking are independent constraints in Ojibwa.)

4. The Typology of Pronouns

Table (59), p. 25



The table results from four binary divisions.

- (60) a. A pronoun may be REFERENTIALLY INDEPENDENT or REFERENTIALLY DEPENDENT. Referentially independent pronouns can (but need not) introduce something new into the discourse – for instance via deictic or demonstrative uses (in the narrow sense). Referentially dependent pronouns cannot introduce anything new – they must have at least a “discourse antecedent”.
- b. Referentially dependent pronouns may be REFLEXIVE or NON-REFLEXIVE. (Referentially independent pronouns are necessarily non-reflexive.) Reflexive pronouns need a *syntactic* antecedent. Non-reflexives can (but need not) get their reference from context/discourse.
- c. Reflexive pronouns may be FINITE-BOUND or NON-FINITE-BOUND. (Non-reflexive are necessarily non-bound.) Finite-bound pronouns require an antecedent within the same finite clause. Non-finite-bound pronouns can (but need not) have an antecedent within the same finite clause.
- d. Finite-bound pronouns may be subject to the requirement that they be LOCALLY BOUND, or not. Locally bound pronouns require an antecedent in the first accessible subject domain. Non-locally bound pronouns can (but need not) have a “long-distance” antecedent.

The category of a pronoun is defined by **the maximum domain in which its antecedent may be found**. Here are some illustrative diagnostic contexts, which define a hierarchy of five domains.

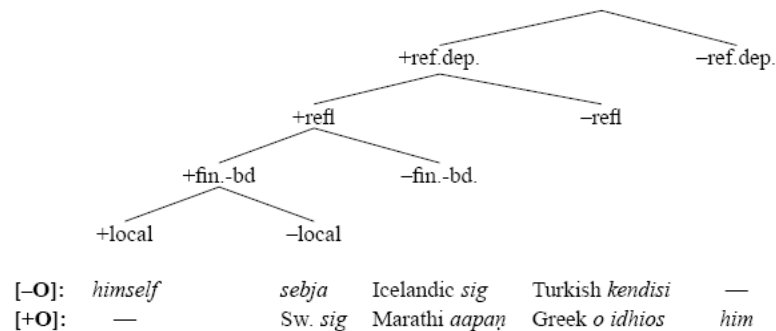
- (61) (p.26) a. *Referentially independent*:
It’s ____ !
We need to talk about ____, ____, and ____.
- b. *Referentially dependent*:
1. *Non-reflexive*:
John_i is here. I saw _____i. (discourse antecedent)
2. *Reflexive*:
i. *Non-finite-bound*:
John_i thought that I would criticize _____i.
John_i was sad. Why didn’t Mary love _____i? (*logophoric* in strict sense)
- ii. *Finite-bound*:
A. *Non-locally bound*:
John_i asked me to criticize _____i.
B. *Locally bound*:
John_i criticized _____i. (reflexive)
John_i showed Bill_j _____{i,j} in the mirror.

The five pronoun types cross-classify with the obviation property [+/- Obviative], yielding ten logically possible types of pronominal elements. The full typology, with a representative of each type, is given in (62) (p. 27).

The gap on the top right edge represents the absence of a non-obviative referentially independent pronoun: if such a pronoun existed, it would be a “universal pronoun”, able to be used both as a demonstrative and a reflexive. It is said to violate an “Expressiveness” universal, namely that in every language, all pronominal systems are expressive in the sense that they provide a means to mark both coreference and non-coreference in any domain. (Formally, it is equivalent to the assumption that PARSE universally outranks ECONOMY.)

What about the potential gap on the bottom left edge? Are there obviative locally bound reflexives? Obviation should prohibit it from having a coargument antecedent while its local binding requirement can only be satisfied by an antecedent in the same clause. Kiparsky suggests that one can distinguish between German and English by calling the German locally bound subject-oriented reflexive Obviative to prohibit it taking a direct object antecedent, as English reflexives can. So in that narrowest domain, +/- Obviative can be used to indicate +/- Subject-oriented, which otherwise would need a separate feature. “Subject-oriented” is taken to be a relativized version of the coargument disjoint reference requirement (obviation).

(62), p. 27: The full pronoun typology: 5 local domains × 2 values for [± Obviative]



There is much more in the paper, including examples of all the kinds of pronouns in the typology, but this much may give a hint of how Kiparsky's ideas and their implementation in Optimality Theory can provide an interesting and potentially very fruitful approach to the typology of anaphora.

Note: in your presentations about "your languages", I don't expect you to figure out exactly which of Kiparsky's 10 classes your various pronouns and reflexives correspond to. But you may be able to narrow down the possibilities enough to make some interesting distinctions.

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