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IMPROVING STUDENTS' ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH PORTOFOLIO CONFERENCE

(A Classroom Action Research at Politeknik Madiun).

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Abstract

This study belongs to Classroom Action Research (CAR). This classroom action research was conducted in Politeknik Madiun in the second semester academic year 2012 – 2013, during October to December period with 6 meetings divided into 2 cycles. The subyects of this research are the students of Politeknik Madiun especially students in the second semester which consist of 37 students, they are 35 boys and 2 girls.

Portfolio conference had changed the teaching and learning condition. The teaching and learning condition has progressed positively in one meeting to others. Eventhough the condition of the class changed from not conducive into conducive, inactive into active, not alive into alive, uninteresting became interesting. The progress can also be seen from the improvement of the amount of students who participated through the students' presence, discussion, interaction, and performance in the speaking class.

Key words : portofolio conference, speaking skill and data reduction

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A. Introduction

    English is one of the international language that is used by many people in the world and in many areas of everyday life. Therefore, using English is the esiest way to communicate with people in other countries about many aspects in human life sush as technology, economy, social and politics.

    For indonesian English is a foreign language. Learning a foreign language is an intergrated process that the learner should study the four basic skills : listening, speaking, reading and writing. Listening and reading skills are regarded as receptive skills while speaking and writing skills are considered to be productive skills (Jeremy Harmer 1989 : 16). The four skills are all important. However, of all the four skills, speaking seems intuitively the most important (Penny Ur 1996 : 120). In other words, we use those skills to understand our world through listening and reading and to communicate our feeling, need and desires through speaking and writing.

    One of the manifestations of communicative skill is speaking. According to Hughes (1989: 101) as quoted by Yulia (2005:179), speaking is an interactive process in which an individual alternatively takes the role of speaker and listener. It involves comprehension and production. As the result ,in speaking, there be at least two persons involved. River (1987: 13) as quoted by Shumin (2002: 208) states that "The functions of spoken language are interactional and transactional". It means that the spoken language (speaking) is used to maintain social relationship and latter it is to convey information and ideas. Therefore the lecturer needs to provide learners opportunities for meaningful communication behavior. The topic must be relevant with learners

interaction as the key to teaching language for communication.

B. Problem Statement

Based on the background of the research, the students lack of participation in speaking class. It is caused by the lack of speaking skill. It can happen since the students rarely get the chance to use the target language. The results influence their confidence in speaking. The students have a low risk taking, a very significant personal factor to acquire the second language. To solve the problem the solution is by providing the chance to use the target language. By the solution hopefully it can improve their speaking skill. Therefore, the problem statements of the research are:

1. Can Portfolio Conference improve the students' speaking skill?
2. How is the teaching and learning condition when Portfolio Conference implemented to improve the students' speaking skill?

C. Literatur Review

1. Speaking Competence

   a. The Nature of Speaking

   The language used in communication based on the channel used. It can be spoken or written. The different choices will reflect in the different skill involved. Speaking and writing involve language production and so it is called as productive skill. On the other hand listening and reading involve receiving messages. It is stated as receptive skill (Harmer, 1991: 16). In language use it can apply a combination of skill at the same time. Listening and speaking occur at the same time. It happens simultaneously. The interactions of both skills apply powerfully in conversation and discussion. Speaking cannot be separated from listening but this research is focused on speaking skill therefore listening is described as the consideration since it is related with spoken language.

   Spoken language is as the dominant way to communicative as it is said that language is primarily oral. Therefore speaking is an important skill in learning language. Many language learners regard speaking

ability as the measure of knowing a language. They regard speaking as the important skill they can acquire, and they assess their progress in terms of accomplishment in spoken language (Burkart, 1998: 2).

According to Mead and Rubin (2003) in Yulia (2005: 178), the definition of speaking has been expanded. One trend focuses on communication activities that reflect a variety of settings. The second one focuses accomplishments in spoken communication to achieve specific purposes. The third trend focuses on basic competencies needed for daily life. Although there are many views of definition of speaking but speaking is interactive process in which at least two person are involved. One takes role as speaker and the other one is the listener.

b. Microskill of Speaking

In order to make the speaking classes can promote the language use the teacher needs to show to the students how to convey and negotiate meaning of language. Brown (2001: 271) defines it as Micro skills of oral communication;

1) Produce chunk of language of different lengths;

2) Orally produce differences among the English phonemes and allophonic variants;

3) Produce English stress pattern, words in stressed and unstressed position, rhythmic structure, and international contours;

4) Produce reduced forms of words and phrases;

5) Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) in order to accomplish pragmatic purposes;

6) Produce fluent speech at the different rates of delivery;

7) Monitor your own oral production and use various strategic devices-pauses, filler, self correction, backtracking- to enhance the clarification of meaning.

8) Use grammatical word classes, system, word order, pattern, rules, and elliptical form;

9) Produce speech in natural constituents- in appropriate phrases, pause

groups, breathe groups, and sentences;

10) Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms;

11) Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse;

12) Accomplish appropriately communicative functions according to situations, participant, and goal;

13) Use appropriate register, implicative, pragmatic convention, and other linguistic features in face to face conversation;

14) Convey links and connection between events and communicate such relation as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification;

15) Use facial features, kinesics, body language, and other non verbal clues along with verbal language to convey meaning; and

16) Develop a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key word, rephrasing, providing context, for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor understand you.

Harmer (1991: 11) describes the sub skill related with speaking skill. Some of them are relatively same such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation of which the different term he uses is discourse. He describes further that pronunciation is as a competence of knowing how to say a word. It is made up by three areas; sound, stress, and intonation. All words are made of sounds. The learners need to understand these sounds in order to understand the language. Beside that it is very important in producing it as a form of practicing the language. The next area of pronunciation is stress. It is important for the learner to know which part of the word should be emphasized. It is a must since stress is meaningful. The last area is intonation. It is the tune used when speaking. Hammer stated it as the music of speech.

In teaching learning process the teacher needs to be sure that the students can make various sound occurs in English. The teacher needs to be sure that the students can be understood when they speak. In order that

the students speak can be understood by others they need to use rhythm and stress correctly. The students need to be able to be familiar with intonation. It is the task of the teacher to train and ensure the students to use appropriate intonation when they speak. The main point is that the teacher needs to be sure that the students can be understood when they want to say. It will be quite difficult to make them pronounce like native speaker. They may not need to have a perfect accents but it must be understood by others.

1) Grammar.

Grammar is essential in learning English as foreign language. It is a must since the students cannot find fixed expression through their everyday life. They can only acquire it through their teacher. They can not acquire it through their social context. Therefore they need to understand the rules first in order to make a meaningful expression.

Although grammar is important in learning English as foreign language but it must be understood by the teacher that grammar is as a link to come to communicative competence. The focus is not on learning grammar but on using it in language use. Therefore the teacher needs to provide various contexts in which grammar lesson can be practiced in communication.

2) Vocabulary

Harmer stated that "if the language structure is the skeleton of language, then it is vocabulary that provides the vital organs and the flesh (Harmer, 1991: 37). It means that how important vocabulary is in learning language. Vocabulary will provide the learner a stock of word to be expressed. Language learner needs to learn the lexis of the language. They have to learn what the word means and how they are used. It will be the students' storage to expresses to a meaningful communication. Their vocabulary will be meaningless when it is not used in communication.

3) Discourse

Language learners cannot acquire communicative competence when they do not understand how the language is used. Communicative competence does not need only language competence (pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc) but also how language used appropriately and how language is organized as a discourse.

c. The Problem in Speaking Skill

Mastering the art of speaking is the most important aspect in learning a second or foreign language. The success is measured by the ability to carry out a conversation in the target language. But it is not quite easy for the learner since learning English as foreign language cannot be acquired in any places. They can only acquire at certain places such as school, course or certain places which they can get every time. Therefore most of the learner can find difficulties to acquire the target language. Wikipedia (Education) describes generally the difficulties for learner in learning foreign language:

Language learners often produce errors of <u>syntax</u> and <u>pronunciation</u> thought to result from the influence of their Ll, such as mapping its grammatical patterns inappropriately onto the L2, pronouncing certain sounds incorrectly or with difficulty, and confusing items of vocabulary known as <u>false friends.</u> This is known as <u>L1 transfer</u> or "language interference ".

Most of the error is on the pronunciation, vocabulary, and syntax. It is caused by the different of the first language compared with the target language. It is the so called contrastive analyses.

Brown (2001:270) describes specifically some cases that make speaking difficult. The cases of difficulties are as follows:

1) Clustering.
2) Redundancy
3) Reduced forms
4) Performance variable
5) Colloquial language
6) Rate of delivery

7) Stress rhythm, and intonation

8) Interaction

d. Technique to develop speaking skill.

In order to minimize the problem encounter in speaking, Brown (2001: 275) offers some principles for designing speaking techniques. The principles are as follows:

1) Use techniques that cover the spectrum of learner needs, from language focus on accuracy to message-based focus on interaction, meaning and fluency. Fluency and accuracy are both important in communicative language teaching. Fluency is as the initial goal of communicative language teaching while accuracy is achieved by mastering some elements such as phonology, grammar, and discourse. Both of them should be achieved in order to come to acquire language use not on mastering the language aspect.

2) Provide intrinsically motivating techniques

The teacher is not responsible on the students motivation but they can provide technique in teaching learning process in which the students intrinsically motivation will arise. It will help them to aware the benefit of the activity for them.

3) Encourage the use of authentic language in meaningful contexts.

In order to provide the students with meaningful learning the teacher needs to use authentic language in the meaningful contexts. It can be a hard task for the teacher .By the teacher creativity it can help both the students and the teacher in doing teaching learning better.

4) Provide appropriate feedback and correction.

Since English in Indonesia is stated as foreign language therefore the students cannot get feedback outside the class. The teacher task is to do it in the learning process.

5) Capitalized on the natural link between speaking and listening

Speaking and listening is simultaneous skill because it can occur in the same time. These two skills cannot be separated although the learning process is focused on speaking skill. Therefore the listening skill can be the initial activity to come to the speaking one.

6) Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication

In order to improve the students speaking skill of course the teachers have to provide the students with the opportunities to speak. The technique designed must encourage the students to speak.

7) Encourage the development of speaking strategies.

It is very important for the students since the teacher does not always accompany the students to acquire the target language. They need to have a strategy to maintain communication. They really need what in the previous chapter is called strategy competence.

Language learners are stated as fluent in speaking when they speak in phrasal. They do not speak word by word. It needs both cognitive aspect and phonological aspect at the same time. It will make speaking to be fluent.

It can be concluded that speaking is a communication activity in which at least two person are involved with aspects of fluency and accuracy. Fluency is as the initial goal of communicative language teaching while accuracy is achieved by mastering some elements such as phonology, grammar, and discourse. It can be developed by having motivation, giving the learners task, and giving them opportunities to speak in phrasal.

2. Speaking Assessment

They are two types of assessment to monitor learning, namely authentic and performance assessment.

a. Authentic Assessment

Authentic assessment is one of the principles need to be applied by the language teacher. According to Malley & Pierce (1996) in Suyanto (2002: 3), authentic assessment is used to describe form of assessment. It is to describe the students' assessment, their motivation, and also their attitude toward classroom activities which is relevant with the learning process. One of the authentic assessments is performance assessment. It is an assessment where the students have to apply of knowledge to a particular of context. Furthermore, Wiggin (1993) in Yulia (2005) stated that performance assessment is to test the students ability in demonstrating their knowledge and skill (what they know and can do) in variety situation and context.

b. Performance Assessment

Performance assessment is in speaking assessment needs not only the knowledge but also the ability to demonstrate it as a skill. Furthermore, Yulia

stated that speaking is an interactive process in which an individual takes the role of speaker and listener. Therefore, it involves comprehension and production. She defines some estimation in speaking assessment. They are method, purposes, appropriate activity, and criteria. There are two methods for speaking assessment skill; Observational approach and Structural approach. The first one is an assessment in which the students' behavior is assessed and observed unobtrusively. The second one is a speaking assessment in which the students have to perform specific oral task. Their performances are evaluated. The students' activity can be in the form of interview, group, or class setting. Since it is about speaking assessment so the purpose is to find out whether the students can interact successfully by using the target language.

Performance assessment is really suitable to measure students' speaking skill. It can measure the real students' ability in learning language both of the competence and performance. It is not only an assessment of students' performance or students' product but also on the process. Therefore the process can be measured in proportional way. It is not only to measure the linguistic competence but also to measure how English is used as means of communication (communicative competence). The teachers do not need to wait until mid semester or final semester to measure the students' capability. This assessment can be done continually during process of learning (on going process).During the process the teacher can monitor and observe the students on how they do the task up to the final result. By observing continually the teacher can determine ability of the students. It is very important in which the teacher can observe the students performance. This regular observation can be informed to the students in order that the students can understand their strengths and weaknesses. By their understanding it will help them to achieve the competencies stated in curriculum.

To do the performance assessment to measure the students' speaking skill there are some items need to be followed by the teacher such as; a) involving the students real life, b) Making used of the students ability and the exited tool, c) involving self assessment and reflection, d) Identifying the students strengths and weaknesses, e) Integrating some skill of language, f) the meaningful task for the student, etc. Therefore language teacher has to understand the authentic assessment in order that they can measure the students

appropriately. Below are some examples of performance assessment in language learning classroom:

1) Oral interview to measure the oral language and asking and answering question;

2) Retelling the main idea or the story;

3) Portfolio;

4) Discussion or debate;

5) Role play or simulation;

6) Reporting teacher task orally or written, etc.

3. Portfolio Conference

This part discusses the notion of portfolio, the useful of Portfolio, the Notion of Conference, Portfolio conference as a technique to promote students speaking skill, the way to carry on portfolio conference.

a. The Notion of Portfolio and the Guidelines

Paulson, Paulson and Mayer (1991: 60) define that portfolio is a purposeful collections of student's work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress and achievement in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self-reflection.

Grace (1992: 1) who stresses the learning process, defines as "portfolio is a record of the child's process of learning: what the child has learned and how she has gone about learning; how she thinks, questions, analyzes, synthesizes, produces, creates; and how she interacts--intellectually, emotionally and socially-with others".

Collins (1992 : 452) identify portfolio as "a container of collected evidence with a purpose. Evidence is documentations that can be used one person or group of persons to infer another person's knowledge, skill, and/or disposition". While Winsor and Ellefson (1995 : 68), who stress the learning process and learning product, define that "portfolio is a fusion of process and product. It is the process of reflection, selection,

rationalization, and evaluation, together with the product of those processes".

Furthermore, Simon and Forgette-Giroux (2000 : 36) define as "portfolio is a cumulative and ongoing collection of entries that are selected and commented on by the student, the teacher and/or peers, to assess the student's progress in the development of a competency".

Portfolio is a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates the students and their effort, progress, and achievement in given areas (Genesee and Upshur, 1996: 99). The portfolios here can be a file folder, box, or any durable and expandable container. What work can be kept in portfolio are sample of writing, favorite short story, recording of speaking sample, etc.

In order that the teacher can make use of portfolio they need to understand the characteristic of Portfolio. The characteristics are as follow:

1) Represent an emphasis on language use and cultural understanding;
2) Represent a collaborative approach to assessment;
3) Represent a student's range of performance in reading, writing, speaking, and listening as well as cultural understanding;
4) Emphasize what students can do rather than what they cannot do;
5) Represent a student's progress over time;
6) Engage students in establishing ongoing learning goals and assessing their progress towards those goals;
7) Measure each student's achievement while allowing for individual differences between students in a class;
8) Address improvement, effort, and achievement;
9) Allow for assessment of process and product;
10) Link teaching and assessment to learning.

b. **The Use of Portfolio**

Genesee and Upshur (1996: 107), furthermore, define some benefits of implementing portfolio in class. The portfolio promotes:

1) Students' involvement in assessment

2) Students' self reflection

3) Students' ownership and responsibility of their own learning

4) Students' collaborative and sharing classroom

5) Students' ability to think critically about the school work

6) Students' excitement about learning.

c. **The Notion of Portfolio Conference and the Guidelines**

The portfolio offers students a way to put organize the work from all part of their school life, as well as important experience outside of school. It allows them to connect both pieces of work and experience into larger context of their learning, and to see how each piece and experience impact into the other.

In order that the students' portfolio can be used for larger context of learning it is very important to prepare for a conference. It needs to be carried out in teaching learning process to re-examine students' past work and to think about the power and the challenge of that work. It is as the reflection and evaluation of the students' work. It also offers the students a chance to report their progress that it promotes a conversation between the students and the lecturer, among the students, and between the students and their friends. Conference promotes communication among the people who are involved.

According to Genesee (1996: 107) conference are often used to review the contents of portfolio. Conference is the form of conversation and discussion between teacher and the students about the content of portfolio. Conference can include the individual students, several students, or even the whole class. Smith (2004: 24) describes how useful the conference is. She stated:"Students hold important information about what they know and what they are able to do, as well as what they don't know and unable to do. Given opportunity, students can discuss their learning and their growth competency each others. A portfolio of work contains concrete evidence of that learning and growth, and offers the

perfect vehicle for discussing progress ".

d. Portfolio Conference as a Technique to improve Speaking skill

Portfolio conference in this research is developed from the view above but there are some differences in the application. The main differences are on the goal of the conference. The conference is held to promote students speaking skill. By the active participation during the conference the students have to communicate orally. It will result in their improvement in speaking skill.

The conference is in the form of conversation and discussion which is guided by the student and the teacher scenario. It can be stated as mini conference (Tipka, 2005: 34) in which the participants are the students and the lecturer. He stated that conference offer excellent chance to exchange information and share ideas in the world of English foreign language. The focus of the conference is on the oral language use using target language (English). The conference is held regularly during speaking class as technique to practice speaking skill. During conference the students have to communicate orally with their friends or their lecturer using the target language. The students' active participation during the conference promotes their speaking skill. Therefore the conference in this research is not only focuses on the process but also on the product. The process is on promoting the students' participation. The product is on improving their speaking skill.

The mini conference was chosen as the form of the portfolio conference since it offers many benefits. Tipka (2005: 35) describes the benefit of mini conference. The first one is that mini conference is cost effective for the participant, speaker, and institution. Therefore Portfolio conference in this research required virtually no funding. It only needs a meeting place and a time schedule. The meeting place can be in class or out of class such as school park. The second benefit of mini conference is that presenters are speaking from localized context, and the speakers and participants have a high level of familiarity with each other and the issues

they are presenting. By the localized context it makes the presentation is useful and informative.

The students' portfolio is as the media to guide a conference. Every task in teaching learning process can be kept in the portfolio. It is not always their best work in order that they can review it. It may also not the completed work in order that they can add it next. When they complete their work or get their best they not need to throw the worst one. All the work in process may keep in the container. The students are responsible to keep their container in the class. It is carried out in order that the lecturer need to check contain of their portfolio.

e. The Way to Carry on Portfolio Conference

Conference stated above usually is focused on process. The lecturer will only be the facilitator of the conference. It is as the reflection of the previous plan and students work during certain time. But the conference in this research is used for grading purposes for assessing language achievement. It focuses on learning outcome or achievement. Therefore there will be some differences on the way the conference carried out. The lecturer has to encourage the students and control the conference.

The conference is carried out as follow: (1) The lecturer should direct the conference and retain control of it at all times in order to ensure uniformity of the procedures, (2) All students should participate to ensure the collection of the same kind of information to be applied to grading all the students, (3) The conference protocol should be the same for all students so the individual differences in students' performance are not due to variation in protocol (4) Use assessment information from the conference along with information from other assessment procedures such as observation, (5) It is essential to keep detailed notes of conference. It is as information on students' grade. It is collected during the conference.

Before coming to the conference the lecturer needs to introduce English that is hoped encounter in the conference. It is linguistic

competence the students are hoped to master. It is sentence pattern and types, constituent structure, morphological inflection, lexical resources, and phonological systems needed to realize communication. It is very important since English in Indonesia is as a foreign language.

The next step is communication activity. It divides into two parts; functional communication activity and social interaction activity (Little wood as quoted by Richard, 2001: 166). The functional activity is the activity which is used the pattern in the previous step. Social interaction activity is the main activity in Portfolio Conference. It can be in the form of conversation, discussion, dialogue or debates.

In order to provide the students a guideline to come to the conference the students have to fill in appraisal agenda. By filling the appraisal agenda the students can choose their own topic or partner to come to the conference.

D. Research Method

This classroom action research was conducted in Politeknik Madiun in the second semester students academic year 2012 - 2013 during October to December period with 6 meetings divided into 2 cycles. The first cycle was done in 3 meetings and cycle II was done in 3 meetings. The time allotment for English is 2 lecture hours (2 SKS) a week, each session of which takes 45 minutes.This research was hold from January 2013 to December 2013.

The subyects of the research are the students of Politeknik Madiun especially students of the second semester. They are 37 students, consist of 35 boys and 2 girls. The procedure undertaken in this CAR used the model developed by Kurt Lewin consists of four components: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. In this research, the writer used two techniques of collecting data, namely test and non-test. The test was given to the students by giving the topic materials sheet to be implemanted in their speaking competence.   The non test was from observation, interview, and recording to collect qualitative data.

E. Conclusion

Based on the result of the research, the researcher concludes that the implementation of Portfolio Conference in teaching speaking contributes some progresses on the students' speaking competence. During the implementation of Portfolio Conference, there are two conclusions taken related to the question of the research problems whether Portfolio Conference can improve the students' skill and the condition during the implication of Portfolio Conference.

1. Portfolio Conference can improve the students' speaking skill

   Based on the research finding from Cycle I and Cycle II it can be concluded that Portfolio Conference can improve the students speaking skill. The proof can be seen from the improvement in the speaking aspect namely fluency and accuracy, the improvement from the average score of pre-test, post-test of cycle I and post-test of cycle II.

2. The teaching-learning condition when Portfolio Conference was implemented

   Portfolio conference had changed the teaching and learning condition. The teaching and leaning condition has progressed positively in one meeting to others. Eventhough the condition of the class changed from not conducive into conducive, inactive into active, not alive into alive, uninteresting became interesting. The progress can also be seen from the improvement of the amount of students who participated through the students' presence, discussion, interaction, and performance in the speaking class.

   By using the technique of portfolio conference in class the students' participation in the teaching learning improves positively. The speaking class using portfolio conference has become an interesting teaching\- learning activity. The condition before the action was bad. First, before the implementation of action, many students were late or not active joining the speaking class, but after the implementation of action, the speaking class has become an interesting thing for the students. All of the students actively

joined the speaking class by coming the class in time. Second, the students' attitude in the discussion improved better. Before the implementation of action, many students were not active in joining the discussion session, but after the implementation of action, the no one did not involved actively in the discussion. Third, the students' attitude in the interaction also improved better. Before the implementation of action, many students were not active interacting in the teaching-learning, but after the implementation of action, no one did not involved actively in the interaction. Fourth, the students' attitude in the performance also improved better. Before the implementation of action, many students did not have active performance in the teaching-learning, but after the implementation of action, no one did not have active performance.

F. Implication

One of the manifestations of communicative skill is speaking. Therefore the teacher needs to provide learners opportunities for meaningful communication behavior. The topic must be relevant with learner-learner interaction as the key to teaching language for communication. The students' participation in speaking class is very crucial since the teaching-learning process will not run well when the students do not actively involve, especially in oral communication.

In order to improve the students' speaking competence, the teacher should be able to facilitate the needs. If the right activities are taught in the right way, speaking in class can be a lot of fun, raising general learner motivation and making the English language classroom a fun and a dynamic place to be. Portfolio Conference accommodates those needs.

Portfolio conference offers new technique for the students since they never get the technique before. Portfolio conference also offers a new strategy for the students. It is a new technique for the students therefore the students need a strategy to involve in the interaction. Some difficulty may arise during the interaction. This is the exact time they must use their strategy in order to

break down the problem. When the students can learn how to use the strategies more effectively they become more self reliant. It improves their self confident, an important factor in learning language. Portfolio conference, offer interesting topic to discuss when the students are learning. The contents of the portfolio are used as media to discuss.

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