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INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE: PLURIVERSALIZING THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF SPANISH

We choose to begin this Editorial piece by acknowledging and paying our respect to the traditional custodians of the lands from which this work originates: Turrbal and Jagera Country, in Meanjin, otherwise known as Brisbane, as well as the Anaiwan people on the Ancestral Land of the Ngawanya, otherwise referred to as Armidale. We recognize First Nations peoples' enduring connection to these lands, waters, and the fact that their sovereignty has never been ceded. It is with gratitude that we reflect upon the history and significance of these lands and acknowledge the contribution and resilience of the Indigenous peoples who have cared for them through generations, despite ongoing acts of violence and dispossession perpetrated against them. This acknowledgement is a deliberate effort aimed at reminding ourselves that “our most pressing human struggles over indigeneity, race, migration and diasporas, gender and sexuality, disability, and the very survival of the Earth—can be traced back to the harmful history of European colonization and its persistent aftermaths” (De Fina et al., 2023, p. 819). The present reality of coloniality, the material and symbolic extension of the enduring modern/colonial project (Quijano, 2000), is also evident in language, a key vehicle for cultural hegemony and ideological transmission. The very act of writing this paper in English, to examine the nuances of Spanish, two languages deeply intertwined with colonial expansion, is inherently reflective of the hierarchical complexities that undergird our everyday practices.

As three non-Indigenous educators, (up)rooted (im)migrants (two of us from Abya Yala—a subaltern way of referring to Latin America¹), multilingual speakers, living and working in what we know today as Australia, what brought us together in this editorial endeavor was our shared interest in interrogating the current state of teaching and learning Spanish as a world language. The three of us have been/continue to be engaged, in one way or another, in the teaching and learning of Spanish across primary, secondary, tertiary as well as teacher education sectors in Australia. In this context, we are confronted by growing (internal-ized) tensions. On the one hand, a discipline on shifting grounds, shaken by reverberating calls for social justice and critical, decolonizing pedagogies that resist and actively challenge established norms and “coloniallingual” legacies (see, for example, Bouamer & Bourdeau, 2022; Criser & Malakaj, 2020; Davidson et al., 2023; Hines-Gaither & Accilien, 2022; Hird, 2023; Hudley & Flores, 2022; Macedo, 2019; Meighan, 2022; Ortaçtepe Hart, 2023; Randolph & Johnson, 2017; Reagan & Osborn, 2020; Rosa & Flores, 2021). On the other hand, coming to terms with our distinct embodied experiences, privileges and struggles, inside and outside the classroom, learning, teaching, and speaking what we know today as “Spanish”.

As we discovered, some of the moments that captured these growing tensions in our memories were fleeting ones, while others had become indelible. Among these moments, the following stood out as they sparked further, generative conversations that eventually led to our conceptualization of this Special Issue:

I (Leonardo) have to admit that while my recollection of memories and past events involving teaching Spanish in various contexts is most enjoyable, some moments or episodes require a delicate choice of words to describe my thoughts, feelings and emotions. As a Chilean speaker of Spanish teaching Spanish for beginners and advanced students at an Australian university, my pedagogical journey has been marked by a peculiar challenge—navigating comments and remarks regarding the linguistic characteristics of my spoken Spanish. Students and colleagues have occasionally expressed the desire for a more "standard" variety, urging a departure from my laid-back style, enriched with culturally used colloquial expressions. This situation has posed a unique tension between the authenticity of my linguistic identity and the perceived expectations of a standardized language, often influenced by formal or academic norms entrenched in colonial views of Spanish. Embracing and celebrating Latin American linguistic diversity, I find myself at a crossroads where the inherent

¹ See Stavenhagen, 2010.

dynamism and fluidity of language intersect with institutional expectations which tend to be driven by linguistic conformity and a colonial view that favours certain varieties over others.

For me (Adriana), most of these memories have to do with confronting the internalized colonial mindset that undergirds linguistic hierarchies in the Spanish-speaking world. From the time I was explicitly asked by a program director to soften my distinctive Argentinian (porteño) accent in order to sound more “neutral” for the students, to having to suppress the use of “vos” in favor of “tú” in order to present students with the ‘most commonly used’ second person singular verb conjugation. At the time, I did not question these requests as they were carefully couched in the guise of pedagogical clarity, but as time went by, and my accent became increasingly more ‘neutral’, I couldn’t help but wonder whether a Spanish teacher from Spain would be asked to change their accent or drop the use of “vosotros” in favor of “ustedes” simply because it is more widespread.

When teaching in a high school Spanish immersion program, I (Danielle) caught myself perpetuating colonial language standards when insisting students speak in Spanish only, denying them access to their full linguistic repertoires. I also recall that during one such lesson a colleague had told me in the lunch break just 30-minutes prior that I should “stop speaking like that, you sound like a Latina!” which she found disconcerting given my blonde hair and blue eyes. Moments like this highlight the multiple and complex ways in which colonial (micro)aggressions influenced by standardization, geographical boundaries, and accentism continue in Spanish as a world language education.

What these memories clearly point to are some of the manifestations and embodied experiences of the “coloniality of language” (Veronelli, 2015). At its core, decolonizing (Spanish) language requires us to engage with its violent colonial past, confront ensuing raciolinguistic hierarchies (Flores & Rosa, 2023), and challenge internalized Western/Eurocentric ways of knowing and being, which we may ourselves (sub-)consciously and complicitly support/benefit from. These processes also entail recognizing the diverse linguistic and cultural histories of Spanish-speaking regions, acknowledging the contributions of Indigenous and Afro-Latinx communities, and rectifying historical injustices. (Re)connecting ourselves to these painful, historical lineages and their impact on present realities becomes a necessary step in paving the way for exploring pluriversal possibilities for our field.

This Special Issue therefore serves as a platform for guest editors and contributors to engage in a critical dialogue surrounding the social, cultural, political, and historical complexities that shape, and constantly interfere with what we understand and conceptualize as Spanish language education today (Hernández-Martín, 2022; Masuda, 2019; Ocampo González, 2023). This introduction explores the evolving landscape of decolonial efforts within Spanish language education, highlighting key principles, challenges, and implications for reshaping the way Spanish is taught and learned across sectors and geographical/geopolitical contexts. Then, through a collection of six insightful papers, we collectively embark on the pursuit of practices, experiences and knowledges through which scholars, teachers and learners of Spanish may approach this task.

What is pluriversality in (Spanish as a World) language education?

From a traditional scholarly perspective, the emergence of decolonial thought in Latin American Studies can be traced back to works published in the early nineties (by Aníbal Quijano, Walter D. Mignolo, Catherine Walsh, among others). However, the impact of decolonial thinking on the teaching and learning of “Spanish” itself—particularly at university level—is much more recent (see, for example, Castro-Klarén, 2016; and more recently, Herlihy-Mera, 2022). Within the decolonial project, the notion of pluriversalizing (language) pedagogy, has to do with re-centering and amplifying marginalized, Indigenous ways of knowing and being as well as world-making practices that may support life in all its forms, while attempting to divest from and disrupt dominant (destructive) world-making practices entrenched in modernity/coloniality (Steiner, 2022).

In this context, *pluriversal* is a combination of “plural” and “universal” which challenges the traditional, singular notion of the hegemonic universe or “one-world ontology” powered by modernity/coloniality (Escobar, 2018). In order to move beyond this hegemonic, one-world ontological disposition, Escobar et al. (2022) advocate for transitions into “new modes of existence ... different categories and modes of understanding, which takes us into the territory of relationality and pluriversality” (p. 109). These territories of relationality and pluriversality make space for “*un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos*”—a saying popularized by the Zapatista movement in Mexico during the 1970s as part of a leftist movement against the North American Free Trade Agreement. Yet the multiple, co-existing worlds of the pluriverse are not considered independent and separate but rather joined through radical interdependence and relationality (Escobar, 2018). Radical interdependence and relationality are premised on the notion that the dualisms of modernity (e.g., mind/body, nature/culture, reason/emotion) are connected through an “inexhaustible *tejido* (weave)...that sustains life and allows it to flourish,

which is to say, the pluriverse” (Escobar, 2020, p. 7). Therefore, pluriversal thought challenges ideas espoused by Western modernity that we all live in a single world where universalisms drawn from North America and Europe naturally prevail (Escobar, 2018; Mignolo, 2018). This move toward pluriversality has been fueled by wider decolonial efforts in Applied Linguistics and broader educational research (see, for example, De Fina et al., 2023).

In this Special Issue, we attempt to engage with pluriversal thought in relation to the persistent dualisms and universals commonly associated with Spanish as a world language education and have invited contributors to share works which challenge these. We do this bearing in mind the kind of worlds we invite and drawing inspirations from Aymara scholar, Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui’s work on *un mundo ch’ixi* which she describes as a world in which: “parallel coexistence of multiple cultural differences that do not extinguish but instead antagonize and complement each other. Each one reproduces itself from the depths of the past and relates to others in a contentious way” (2019, p. 117).

As such, we argue that understanding prevailing binaries which position one-world notions of Spanish as world language as superior in particular ways are important to unpack. Yecid Ortega’s (2024) forthcoming work on the notion of pluriversal Applied Linguistics—inspired by insights from Arturo Escobar and Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui—calls for an “understanding of how we *lenguajeamos* while relating to human, non-humans and beyond humans...for better planetary survival” (Ortega, personal communication; forthcoming in 2024). We see a call to rupture the human and non-human divide in who/how Spanish as a world language is cultivated. In this Special Issue, we are also inspired by the recent work of Jeffrey Herlihy-Mera (2022) on the decolonizing American Spanish, in which he describes the decolonial pluriverse as localized, multimodal/semiotic, situated, post-gendered, nonstandard, cultivated rather than learned and ephemeral (situational, circumstantial, conditional, migrational). While this work centers largely on the realities of the United States university programs, several aspects can be extrapolated to the global contexts in which Spanish is learnt/taught/spoken. While in no way exhaustive, we attempt to contrast some of these competing, one-world and emerging pluriversal orientations relevant to Spanish as a world language in Table 1.

Table 1. Orientations in Spanish as a world language education

<i>One-world</i>	<i>Pluriversalizing</i>
<i>Subsuming/hybridizing in harmony into the dominant, hegemonic phenomena (Veronelli, 2015)</i>	Parallel co-existence in antagonistic and complementary ways (Cusicanqui, 2018); sustaining one another as self-different from what it has been while continuing to be itself and also with the other (de la Cadena & Escobar, 2023, p.31).
<i>Mastery of fixed, ahistorical grammar based on Castilian Spanish (Veronelli, 2015; Ocampo González, 2023)</i>	Recognizing the full linguistic repertoire of speakers used in dynamic and sometimes unexpected ways (Otheguy & García, 2016) and cultivated by speakers (Heinrichs, 2021; Herhily-Mera, 2022). Ontological grammar: always in and through relations; multiplicity (Gurney & Demuro, 2023), intersectionality.
<i>Silences and erasure of those suffering from colonial logics (Herlihy-Mera, (2022) e.g., coloniality of languaging (Veronelli, 2015)</i>	Visibilising those suffering from coloniality of languaging, why/how this is the case and why and for whom this matters, for example, through engagement with Indigenous knowledges (Fountain, 2023) as well as raciolinguistic (e.g., Licata, Austin & Clemons, 2023; Padilla & Vana, 2022) and antiracism perspectives (Magro, 2023).
<i>(Written literacy) language-based practices used to “word the world” (cf. Mika et al., 2020)</i>	Languaging as living (Heinrichs, 2022); flexible; evolving; dynamic; historicizing (Heinrichs, 2021).
<i>Universalisms based on Western/North American/European “truths”</i>	Radical relationality and interdependence (Escobar, 2020)
<i>Spain/Latin-American-centric perspectives (Herlihy-Mera, 2022) in terms of location, accent, native-speakerism</i>	Ephemeral (situational, circumstantial, conditional, migrational) (Herhily-Mera, 2022) Valuing local and lived experiences of Spanish(es) with(in) shared, global experiences/languaging/Spanish(es).
<i>Intertwining cisheteronormative colonial legacy and grammatical gender binaries</i>	Non-binary possibilities (Díaz, Mejía, & Villamizar, 2022; Parra & Serafini, 2021).
<i>Human/anthropocentric perspectives (cf. Prádanos, 2015)</i>	Non-human, digital, relationality (Heinrichs, 2021; Herhily-Mera, 2022; Ortega, forthcoming).

Emerging pluriversal orientations to Spanish as a world language education act here as reference points, which can be further informed by complementary theoretical frameworks such

as critical pedagogy and queer theory. We invite readers to consider the kinds of binaries that affect them as teachers/learners/speakers of Spanish and how these may be disrupted in their own contexts.

How did we assemble this Special Issue?

From the inception of this project, we envisioned the potential representation of multiple languages as decolonizing praxis, particularly within the predominantly monolingualized/ising, Anglophone eduscape in which we have been socialized, and from which we have benefited. This was imperative to illuminate, amplify and realize the kinds of critical, pluriversal perspectives we want to advance in the field of (Spanish) language education.

As editors, we held regular critical discussions to shape the issue by carefully selecting contributions that aligned with this vision. We also engaged with the selected contributors, primarily through email but also, a number of online meetings, conducted in English/Spanish through which we introduced ourselves and each other, to humanize the editorial process, share our collective vision of the SI, and ensure we could support contributors at various stages of the submission/revision processes. In our commitment to transcend the English-centric paradigm, we consciously refrained from dictating linguistic choices, entrusting our contributors with the autonomy to decide which languages/languageing practices best expressed their narratives and scholarly work. It is important to note that while this and several contributions in this Special Issue are written in English, (largely) following expected English academic writing conventions, all contributors actively engaged with works in other languages by scholars from a wide range of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Each article stands as a testament to the authors' deep-rooted understanding and dedication to the field of Spanish/world languages education, viewed through a lens that challenges traditional paradigms. Their work embodies a commitment to dismantling colonial structures within the teaching and learning of Spanish as a world language, and to amplifying marginalized voices both within and outside the classroom walls.

The Special Issue opens with Glenda Mejía's contribution, a deeply personal, autoethnographic conversation that Glenda has with her(self/ves), and the readers. Through a unique writing style that resists traditional academic conventions, she shares her relationship with Spanish language, as she navigates the dual roles of being an educator and a perpetual (un)learner. Her narrative is deeply rooted in her identity as a Salvadoran/Australian, a Central American woman of color, grappling with linguistic dualities. Her (spoken and written) "accents" in both English and Spanish are not mere "variations" but emblematic of the broader decolonial discourse on

language as a site of power and oppression. This work represents an ongoing dialogue aimed at fostering alternative modes of thinking, teaching, and feeling. Through these reflections, Glenda also shares pedagogical vignettes that illustrate how these (un)learnings have found their way into her teaching practice. This introspection is not solely a personal journey; it represents an ongoing effort to transform pedagogical spaces, challenge hegemonic discourses and advocate for a more inclusive and reflective approach to education.

Macarena Ortiz-Jiménez examines the entrenched monocentric underpinnings of Spanish language education, which continue to privilege Castilian Spanish. This paper argues that the romanticization of “pluricentric Spanish” overlooks deeply ingrained, unequal power dynamics among its varieties, intertwined with the complex identities of its speakers. Rooted in colonial-era oppressive language ideologies, this approach perpetuates linguistic hierarchies, assigning status and prestige to standard forms while discriminating against non-standard varieties and accents. The study investigates how university-level Spanish teachers (n=38) in Australia perpetuate these hierarchies by ranking normative Spanish varieties, revealing a pattern of accentism. This preference for Castilian Spanish over other varieties like Andalusian and Caribbean Spanish not only reflects biases among educators but also influences classroom instruction.

Next, Aris Moreno Clemons and Tasha Austin turn our attention towards how Black (racialized) Spanish language teachers in the United States counter linguistic marginalization and challenge racializing narratives that contribute to the exclusion of Afro-diasporic and Indigenous (hi)stories from Spanish language curricula. They employ a collaborative narrative inquiry to delve into the experiences of eight Black Spanish educators to uncover the complex interplay of support, challenges, and insights these educators offer. Central to their narratives is the collective journey of affirming and defending Blackness within academic spaces that perpetuate erasure, marginalization, and pervasive anti-Blackness. These educators’ stories illuminate more than just personal struggles; they reveal a profound engagement with Black historicity, the fostering of cross-ethnic solidarities, and the embodiment of Ubuntu—the essence of our shared humanity and compassion. This is not merely a defense of Black identity; it is an active reclamation and celebration of Blackness in the face of systemic negation. Their resistance is also evident in their determined opposition to the negative stereotyping of Black experiences, cultures, and the potential of Black students. This resistance manifests through deliberate pedagogical, curricular, and policy decisions that challenge and disrupt the status quo in various educational settings. Crucially, these educators’ pedagogical choices resonate with what Uju Anya (2021) describes as Critical Race Pedagogy. This approach is not just about teaching; it’s a radical act of defiance against and engagement with the power imbalances inherent in

language education. It represents a collective commitment to develop and implement pedagogies that confront and dismantle the entrenched inequities in our educational systems.

The next contribution, by James Coda, Kelly Moser and Liv Halaas Detwiler, shifts our attention to decolonial efforts to trouble Western, modernist notions imbued in “racial, sexual, political, epistemic, economic, spiritual, and linguistic forms of dominance” (Gurney & Demuro, 2022, p. 505). This paper starts off by exploring the intersection of queer theory in English language education, and then turns to its emerging scholarship in Spanish language teaching and learning. Guided by Nelson’s (2020) conceptualization of ‘queer thinking’ this contribution centers on a critical review of extant literature is witnessing a transformative wave of academic and pedagogical initiatives aimed at disrupting the entrenched heteronormative narratives. This inquiry challenges the conventional wisdom and praxis in Spanish language education as illuminated by Coda (2018), urging us to consider how it might actively engage with and incorporate queer perspectives. The central question driving this exploration is how Spanish language education can be re-envisioned—particularly in the US context—to not only acknowledge but critically engage with LGBTQ+ identities, especially in contexts where these identities are marginalized or contested. The paper sheds light on the current engagement of queer thinking in Spanish language education and ponders the potential trajectories for its future application. It calls for a radical rethinking of Spanish language pedagogy, one that subverts the normative and embraces the queer, thereby contributing to the construction of more inclusive and socially just educational spaces.

Following from Coda, Moser and Detwiler, Julia Donnelly Spiegelman’s paper compellingly urges us to consider the individuals impacted by such policies and the oversimplified and polarizing debates that surround inclusive and non-binary language in Spanish-speaking contexts. These emerging linguistic practices are frequently dichotomized, positioning the linguistic innovations advocated by trans and queer communities as antithetical to the perceived linguistic conservatism within Spanish-speaking communities in the United States, but also around the world. These discussions ultimately overlook the complex realities of non-binary heritage learners of Spanish, who navigate their linguistic identities across various spheres, including family and educational environments. Central to Spiegelman’s exploration is the lived experience of a non-binary, adolescent heritage learner of Spanish, who is actively seeking to affirm their existence within the confining binary constructs of boy/girl and native/non-native Spanish speaker. Drawing on Anzaldúa’s (1987) concept of the borderlands, the paper presents a qualitative case study that illuminates the multifaceted challenges and negotiations faced by this learner.

Through thematic analysis of interviews, and complementary focus groups, and survey data, the study uncovers the myriad contextual forces shaping the perceptions of legitimacy and existence in the Spanish language. These forces encompass entrenched ideologies like native speakerism and linguistic prescriptivism, as well as localized dynamics such as the learner's positioning as a non-expert and their access to an affirming peer community. This research not only highlights the significant implications of language and representation for trans, non-binary, and heritage language learners but also calls for a reevaluation of language education practices. It underscores the urgent need for language researchers and educators to recognize and address the unique challenges faced by these learners, paving the way for more inclusive and representative language teaching practices.

The Special Issue concludes with a study that invites us to go beyond the confines of the traditional classroom, advocating for pleasure and for disconnecting normative assessment from the educational process. Ruth-Sara Sánchez Asún, Francielle Spinelli and Alicia Ximena Gazmuri Sanhueza focus on fostering critical thinking and building a learning community without hierarchies, where learners, educators, and the social context intertwine in order to defy traditional power dynamics. Set in the Australian university context, and written in Spanish, their research engages with performing arts, collaborative work, and critical reflection as a way of challenging hegemonic pedagogies in Spanish language teaching, aiming to generate meaningful transformative learning experiences. Through alternative drama and theatre-informed pedagogical strategies, they propose to empower students and teachers and promote a learning that transcends mere knowledge acquisition, transforming their experiences into pathways for social change and the assertion of marginalized voices and experiences.

The Special Issue also includes a review of the 2022 volume *Decoloniality, Language and Literacy: Conversations with Teacher Educators*, edited by Carolyn McKinney and Pam Christie. In this review essay, written in Spanish, Carla Tapia Parada offers a critical appraisal of the key themes and arguments presented in the chapters, examining how each of them addresses the complex relationship between decolonial theory and (languages) education. Tapia Parada skillfully navigates the intricate ideas proposed by the authors, providing a comprehensive evaluation of their contribution and relevance in/to Spanish-speaking educational contexts, such as Chile.

These contributions attempt to foster a polyvocal dialogue that may transcend geographical borders and provide insights on the range of challenges and opportunities that emerge in various contexts. Even though most, if not all, of these contexts have historically been sites of prevailing colonial, Eurocentric perspectives within the pedagogical landscape of Spanish language

education, they hold opportunities for the critical interrogation of hegemonic views that are reshaping the contours of Spanish pedagogy. Nevertheless, we also acknowledge that the geographical origin of this Special Issue and its contributions is also reflective of largely privileged sites of knowledge production.

Towards a pluriversal future for our praxis

We encourage you to engage with the contents of this Special Issue not merely as passive readers but as active listeners/participants with situated agentic power to effect change. As you delve into each of these thought-provoking contributions, we invite you to reflect on their relevance and applicability within your own educational contexts. Consider how the insights, theories, and practices presented resonate with your unique realities, the specific challenges you face, and the opportunities you encounter in your educational environments. Furthermore, we urge you to contemplate the lived and embodied experiences of your learners. How do these contributions speak to their diverse needs, backgrounds, and aspirations? In what ways can the ideas and strategies discussed be adapted or implemented to enrich their learning journey and foster a more inclusive and responsive educational setting?

This endeavor, therefore, seeks to embrace the diverse voices, experiences, and practices of individuals who consistently contend with a system characterized by hegemonic language ideologies. In addition, we aspire to contribute to a more inclusive and equitable academic landscape that recognizes and honors the rich cultural heritage of First Nations peoples while fostering a collective commitment to decolonization and the dismantling of linguistic hegemony. We invite readers to do the same as they engage with us and the contributors to this Special Issue, from a situated position, specific time, and place, all of which are deeply interrelated with the current state of the world.

Finally, we remind ourselves that these insights are relevant beyond classroom practice. Pluriversalizing the discipline also requires us to rethink our research method(ologies), how we do research on our practice, in relation to/with our context. It requires us to delve into not just how we practice teaching within the classroom but also how we approach research on our teaching practices, aligning it more closely with the contextual realities we navigate. This entails embracing a more inclusive and participatory research paradigm that involves collaboration with diverse stakeholders.

This Special Issue aims to serve not just as a collection of academic articles, but as a catalyst for meaningful, critical exchanges, that may spark change and innovation. Therefore, we ask you to approach these contributions with a critical eye and an open mind, considering both their

theoretical implications and practical applications. By doing so, we hope that you will find inspiration and guidance that will assist you in enhancing and transforming your daily educational practices.

Gratitude and acknowledgements

As editors, we stand at the threshold of this Special Issue with profound gratitude, acknowledging the collective efforts that have shaped this scholarly endeavor. We extend our deepest gratitude to all the contributors of this Special Issue for placing their trust in us throughout this collaborative journey. Their dedication, expertise, and innovative perspectives have been instrumental in shaping the richness and depth of this publication. Due to the nature of this collection, we had to mobilize a vast, international network of multilingual scholars/reviewers. These colleagues openly embraced the pluriversal epistemological and linguistic lens we advanced in terms of academic publishing. We would like to thank each of these peer reviewers for lending their time and expertise to supporting authors in enhancing their contributions; in alphabetical order: Uju Anya, Blanca Caldas, Miguel Farias, María Eugenia Flores, Claire Maree, Bri McKenzie, Finex Ndhlovu, Vijay Ramjattan, Michel Riquelme Sanderson, Sol Rojas-Lizana, Carmen Soto, and Mauricio Veliz. We are also indebted to the Editors of *Critical Multilingualism Studies*, Janice McGregor and Emma Trentman, who believed in us and the potential of this Special Issue.

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