COMMON GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING THESIS PROPOSALS
(The Case Study of the Last Semester Students of English Department at IAIN Lhokseumawe)

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ABSTRAK

Kata Kunci: Analisis, Kesalahan Tata Bahasa, Proposal Skripsi
ABSTRACT
Based on observations conducted by researchers it was identified that most of students still got some difficulties in writing, especially in writing thesis proposal. Their difficulties related to some grammatical points of views. The research objective is to find out types of grammatical errors made by the students of English Department of IAIN Lhokseumawe. Furthermore, it attempts to identify and describe the error types and then to describe the grammatical error types made the most by those students. The participants of the research were all of students of English Department who wrote thesis proposals in academic year of 2017/2018. Totally, there were 32 students who wanted to submit their thesis proposal, however, by using purposive random sampling technique, the researchers selected 15 of them to be the subject of the research. Besides, the researcher conducted the Library research to find some books and references related to the terms Analysis, Grammatical Errors and Thesis Proposals. To get the data from the field, the researchers observed and identified the last semester students who wanted to write thesis proposals and asked them to finish their thesis proposals and had them copied for the researchers. To analyze the data, the researcher used Miles and Huberman model of qualitative analysis. The data were analyzed through analyzing the grammatical incorrect form of the sentences by marking the errors, reconstructing the correct sentences, classifying the types of errors and counting the errors in order to know the most common types of grammatical errors. As the result, the researcher found that the students made 216 errors in their thesis proposals. The errors occurred in all types of errors investigated, those are verb tense, verb form, subject-verb agreement, plural, possessive inflection, definite article, indefinite article, word order, run-on, and fragment. And, the students made the most errors with 74 time error occurrences or 34.26% of all of the errors in Run-on type of errors.

Key Words: Analysis, Grammatical Errors, Thesis Proposals

INTRODUCTION

One of the main aims having teaching writing subject for the students of English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe is to make them proficient in writing academic essays such as thesis proposals. They are trained to write different types of essays since they are at the first semester up to the last semester. In addition, they are equipped with writing skills to be able to produce different types of essays such as argumentative essay, persuasive essay, cause-effect essay, comparison and contrast essay and summary and analysis essay. In relation to that, the
subjects of writing have been specifically arranged for the students to learn such as Writing I, Writing II, Writing III and Essay Writing with the appropriate strategies and meaningful tasks. In other words, they are prepared to write with good techniques and authentic materials in an order they can write their academic essays at the end of their courses.

In fact, writing is one of the difficult language skills that should be developed and practiced by language learners, and it seems more complicated to learn and practice this skill if it is in a foreign language. Many studies indicate that writing is a continuous complex process of expressions and it is more difficult language skills comparing to other language skills; listening, speaking, and reading. In the process of writing in a foreign language, students tend to be interfered by their first language. Studies done by Ngangbam (2016), and Chen & Huang (2003), showed that the writing in foreign language is often interfered by the first language and it presents the greatest challenge to the EFL students at all stages, particularly essay writing because in this activity, writing is usually extended and therefore it becomes more demanding than in the case of writing a short paragraph. Richards also claim that there is no doubt that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these notions into legible text”.

Regarding to the complexity of writing skill, Ngangbam also states that a text determined legal by the language of syntax and the disagreements with the syntactic rules are called syntax error. According to the theory of language, the process of making structural sentences whether they are acceptable or not can be judged by our knowledge of language. Thus, in writing thesis proposal the students are not only provided with mechanisms of writing such as organization, unity, coherence, conciseness, and clarity but also having a lot of vocabularies and grammatical rules.

However, after having memorized a good amount of English vocabulary and grammar rules, they have to put that knowledge to practical use. In many cases, the majority of English students of the English Departement are still having problems in producing good thesis proposal. Based on researchers’ experience as English lecturers at the English Department, many students who are writing their thesis proposals still make many mistakes and errors in their papers. They try to translate words, phrases, and sentences from Indonesian to English with often very strange results. This problem may be caused of lack of practising writing and it is also the impact or interference with their first language during the process of writing in English. Thus, the supervisors of thesis proposal are challenged to find out the good strategies and methods in guiding their students to write good thesis.
proposal and to eliminate the common grammatical errors in their papers. To acknowledge the students’ difficulties in writing the thesis proposal, the supervisors should have a better understanding of the first language influence in the process of English writing as well as the content, structure and organization of the thesis proposals.

Indeed, writing thesis proposals in English demands conscious efforts and practices in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. The students have to acquire proficiency in the use of the language as well as writing strategies, techniques and skills, through the writing subjects from the first semester up to the sixth semester, it is hoped that they will be more proficient writers in English. However, most of the last semester students of English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhoseumawe find it difficult to write thesis proposals free of errors of various types. In accomplishing the thesis proposals, the students are demanded to find out the appropriate ideas. Not only the students have to consider unity but also the coherence of their own essays. Therefore, they need to be more creative to get some sets of vocabulary, punctuation, sentence structure, and also transitions. The students also have to use the appropriate tenses that support their own writing. As a result, there have been some writing errors because they have a lack of knowledge on how to write the correct sentences in their thesis proposals. To find out the writing errors made by the students, there will be an error analysis regarding the problem that measures how frequent the students made the writing errors.

This research is expected to provide the real condition of the English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty that will be proved by the researchers. It refers to the error analysis in students’ papers that will be analyzed by considering the mechanism of writing as well as the grammatical error. This research focuses on a discussion about finding out the writing errors made by the English students of the last semester using an error analysis.

In relation to the problems mentioned above, the researchers will analyze the students’ writing errors by using an error analysis which shows the causes of errors as well as the solution to encounter it. Hence, the students will not make the similar errors later.

Based on the background discussed above, the research will aim:

a. To find out kinds of grammatical errors made by the last semester students of English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe in writing thesis proposals.

b. To know types of grammatical errors mostly made by the students in writing thesis proposals.
To find out the causes of grammatical errors the students make in writing thesis proposals.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the descriptive qualitative method and also procedures of error analysis itself. The researchers tried to show the students’ errors in writing their thesis proposals. The researchers also tried to investigate why and what problems tended the students to have grammatical errors. This research would also help in finding the problematic areas of the interlanguage grammatical errors.

The English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe had been chosen as the research site. This study would be easy to conduct because the researchers worked for the English department of IAIN Lhokseumawe. Burns and Grove (1993) state that a population is defined as all elements (individual, objects, and events) that meet the sample criteria for inclusion in a study. The participants of this research will be the last semester students of English Department of Education and Teacher Training Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe in the academic year of 2017 - 2018. They were purposively chosen as the researcher believed that they would be representatives in this research. There were 15 students selected as participants who took part in this research.

Regarding to data collection instruments, the researchers collected the thesis proposals made by the last semester students. These thesis proposals should be given to the researchers before they took the seminar examination. Then, the researchers analyzed and corrected the students working papers to know their grammatical errors in writing their proposals.

Since, this research focused on investigating the problematic areas of grammatical errors made by the students in thesis proposals, the researchers postulated a set of grammatical error categories to be analysed: a) adjectives and adjectives phrases errors b) adverbs and adverb phrases errors c) noun phrases errors d) sentence structure errors and e) word order errors.

The findings and the results of this study might contribute a wider spectrum of structures and become a remedy for this critical period of university study. This also would give contributions to get a positive change in teaching literacy instructions. The process of analyzing the collected data is to examine the students performance. Thus, the techniques of analyzing the errors is taken in accordance with the following four steps (Huang:2002).

a. Data collection
b. Identification of errors
c. Classification of errors into error types
d. A statement of error frequency

To collect data of this research, the researchers will use two techniques, namely documentation and interview. Documentation is related to students thesis proposals. The researchers will collect students’ thesis proposals within a time limit of two months. They might choose one of the most interesting titles. The thesis proposal should include with three chapters consist of (1) Introduction; background of the study, statement of the problem, aims of the study, hypotheses, definition of terms and the plan of the study, (2) Literature Review; a theoretical background of the study and a review of literature which is relevant for the study, and (3) Methodology of the study; research design which involves organizing, justification, selection of subjects and data collection. The subjects are guided to write thesis proposal as directly, concisely natural and simple as possible. To add and develop more examples of thesis proposals, they are asked to collect and read some thesis proposals which are available in the library. Then the researchers collects the completed samples, in order to ensure that all the samples collected from the students are valid and non-revised first drafts. They will be asked to write manually, and to eliminate writing anxiety and to provide a clear perspective to the subjects a hard-copy drafts are provided and to provide confidentiality of the participants, all the samples are encoded with numbers instead of the students names. In addition, interview is used to find out information from the students about the causes of errors they make. In this case, the students will be asked questions related to such as: mother tongue interference, intra language interference and inter language interference.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This chapter presented the results of the students’ worksheets on which the students’ errors were analyzed and the discussion concerning with the findings obtained from the data. It presented the findings of the research concerning on the grammatical errors made by the students in their thesis proposals: the data were analyzed to answer the research questions as they were stated in Chapter I before.

Frequency of Grammatical errors in each category

It has been mentioned in Chapter I that this study was only focused on the grammatical errors of the students in their thesis proposals. The grammatical errors were classified based on the description by Ferris (2002). Therefore, it was found from the students’ thesis proposals that they made many grammatical errors when they wrote their thesis.

The errors were listed in three columns of the table. The first column
is the category of error, which consists of four categories. The second column is the type of errors and the third column is the number of errors that occur in each type of error. To get a clear understanding, the researcher presented the table as follows:

Table I. Frequency of errors in each category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of error</th>
<th>Type of error</th>
<th>No. of error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verb errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Verb tense</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Verb form</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Subject-verb agreement</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Noun errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plural</td>
<td></td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Possessive inflection</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>35</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Article/determiner errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Definite</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Indefinite</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category 4</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence errors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Word order</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Run-on</td>
<td></td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Fragments</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>115</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>216</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table above illustrated that the grand total occurrences of errors in all categories were 216. The first category, verb errors category, occurred 57 times which is divided into three types of errors, verb tense, verb form and subject-verb agreement. From the data, the first category of the verb errors is the verb tense which comprised 22 errors and the verb form comprised 23 errors. Meanwhile, in subject-verb agreement error type, the students made the least errors with 12 occurrences in the category. The second category is noun ending errors. The errors occurred in this category were 35 times, with the classification of 32 times errors that happened in the plural type of error and only 3 times remained for possessive inflection type of error. The third category was article errors which have two types of errors, definite and indefinite article errors. In this category the errors occurred only 9 times, with the errors distribution that 8 times happened in definite and only 1 time happened in indefinite type of error. The last category was sentence errors category. The first type of error in the category is word order. It consisted of 5 errors. The second one was run-on type of error, it became the highest frequency of errors with 74 times. And the last type of error was fragments.
it had 36 times errors.

The data illustrated that the most frequent errors happened in the run-on type of error. Errors in fragment and plural types were the second most common types of error and the third most common type of error that the students made in their thesis proposals.

**Verb errors category**

It is indicated that there were 57 errors occurred in this category. The highest type of errors made in the Verb errors category was verb form with 23 times of error occurrences. The errors in this category were related to the use of verb forms. Besides, the errors also occurred in combining main verb and auxiliary. In this case, it can be assumed that the students were still confused about the use of auxiliary and verb.

1. **Verb tense**
   The type of errors that the students made in verb tense was related to the use of simple present tense and past tense. In this case, the errors happened because the students used past tense to refer to present condition. e.g. “…, the researcher collaborated with the teacher who help him”. The correct sentence should be “…, the researcher collaborated with the teacher who helped him”. Beside that, the students also made errors in using present verbs to refer to events in the past. All students’ errors in verb tense type of errors together with suggested correction can be seen in the appendixes.

2. **Verb form**
   The researcher found 22 errors related to verb form errors made by the students in their thesis proposals. In general, the errors were related to the use of auxiliary verbs in active and passive voices. In using auxiliary verbs, the students made errors in three different ways. Firstly, they students put wrong auxiliary verbs in their sentences. For example, “…research is base on…”, however, it should be “…research based on”. Secondly, the students put wrong verbs in their passive sentences. E.g. “…cannot be acquire …” it should be: “cannot be acquired”. Moreover, the students made the errors in sentences because of missing verbs. E.g. “…the students difficult to …”. It should be: “the students are difficult to…”.

   Furthermore, some of the students’ errors related to verb form type of errors can be seen in the appendixes.

3. **Subject-verb agreement**
   As many as 12 errors were found by the researcher in analyzing the students’ thesis proposals. The researcher indentified that the students...
Noun Errors Category

Noun Errors Category is divided into two types. The students made errors in both of those types. There were 35 errors occurred in this category. The highest type of errors made in this category was plural with 32 times error occurrences. The errors in this category were related to the use of articles that must be followed by nouns in plural forms, the use of ordinal number, and the use of expressions., specifically, the errors can be drawn below.

The frequency of errors found in students’ writing for each types of noun error category is characterized by the incorrect use of singular or plural form. However, in the plural type of errors, the researchers classified the errors based on their characteristics, those are: 1) Error in using articles that must be followed by plural forms of nouns. E.g. “…some technique”. It should be: “…some technique”. 2) Error in using an ordinal number that must be followed by plural forms of nouns. E.g. “…two type…” . It should be: “…two types..”. 3) Error in using expressions that must be followed by plural forms of nouns. E.g. “… one of method…” . It should be: “… one of the methods…”.

The students made fewer errors in this type. The errors only occurred 3 times. However, the researcher analyzed that the errors found in possessive inflection is characterized by the incorrect use of possessive form. The “’s” signs that the students used in their sentences might refer to plural form when the sentences were corrected. E.g. “…to improve student’s knowledge…. It should be: “…to improve students’ knowledge…”. In addition, the researcher found one phrase related to the possessive inflection error. The phrase is: “…The student achievement…”. However, it should be “The students’ achievement”. For more examples, see appendixes.
Article/determiner Errors Category

The errors in the use of articles, both definite and indefinite articles were also found in the students’ thesis proposals. There were 9 error occurrences in both types of errors, 8 indefinite article type of error and only 1 error in indefinite.

1. Definite

The researcher found that there were 5 errors related to definite article type of errors. Based on the data, the errors happened in two ways. Firstly, the students did not put articles needed in their sentences. E.g. “…The researcher used book because…” . It should be: “…The researcher used the book because…”. Secondly, the students put an article in which it is not necessary. E.g. “… mastering the English completely.”. however, it should be “mastering English completely”. More errors can be seen in the appendixes.

2. Indefinite

The researcher indicated that there was only 1 error related to indefinite article type of errors. Based on the data, the researchers got that the only error was “…is the suitable technique…” . And, it should be “…”is a suitable technique…”

Sentence Errors Category

In sentence errors category, the students made errors the most among the four categories analyzed by the researchers. In this case, the researchers found that there were 115 error occurrences with the highest frequency found in Run On type of error. The second highest error frequency was found in Fragment type of error and followed by Word Order type of error in the third position.

To get a clear understanding about the errors in sentence error category,, the discussion below is presented.

1. Word order

In analyzing the data, the researcher identified 5 error occurrences in the students’ thesis proposal. It is indicated that all of the errors in Word order were related to the terms “modified and modifier” in ordering words to construct phrases in sentences in which English language is different to Indonesian. E.g. “study document”. It should be: “documentation study”.

2. Run-on

The students made the highest frequency of errors in Run-on type of errors with 74 time occurrences. In analyzing the data, the researcher
found that the students constructed sentences without having clear subjects as the reference to refer to. Generally, it happened when the students tried to construct subordinate clauses meanwhile there were no subjects as the references there. As a matter of fact, the sentences revealed ambiguity to understand. E.g. “So, how the importance also prepare a test to the students…” The sentence should be constructed as follows: “In fact, it is also important to prepare a test for the students…”.

More errors of Run-on type can be seen in appendixes.

3. Fragments

It is found that the errors in Fragment type of errors were the second-highest frequency of errors related to all types of errors investigated in this research. As many as 36 error occurrences were identified on the students’ thesis proposals. The students made the errors related to word function in which the students could not differentiate between nouns and verbs, e.g “…feel that speak English is difficult.”. It should be: “…feel that speaking English is difficult”. More examples of errors can be seen in the appendix.

DISCUSSIONS

After identifying and classifying all of the errors found in Thesis Proposal made by the students of English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe in academic year 2017/2018, now the researcher needs to discuss all of the data to find out the answers of the research questions stated before. At first, the researcher needs to display all of the errors in percentage to ease the researchers to find out the highest frequency in each type of errors.

Tables 2. The percentage of all types of errors

The table above presents the percentage of all types of errors made by
the students. There are ten types of errors being investigated in this research. As a result, it can be concluded that the students made the errors in all types of errors. The students made 22 errors or 10.19% in verb tense, 23 errors or 10.65% in verb form, 12 errors or 5.56% in subject-verb agreement, 32 errors or 14.8% in plural, 3 errors or 1.39% in possessive inflection, 8 errors or 3.70% in definite article, 1 error or 0.46% in indefinite article, 5 errors or 2.31% in word order, 74 errors or 34.26% in run-on, 36 errors or 16.67% in fragment type of error. Based on the data, the researcher confirmed that the students made the most errors with 74 time error occurrences in Run-on type of errors.

The researcher found that the errors that the students made were related to

to the use of simple present tense and past tense. In this case, the errors happened because the students used past tense to refer to present condition. Beside that, the students also made errors in using present verbs to refer to events in the past. E.g., the researcher collaborated with the teacher who help him. In this case, the researchers may conclude that the students did not have enough knowledge about tenses in English. In this case, the students did have enough knowledge to construct good sentences. Whereas mistakes or lapses that are due to performance deficiencies and arise from lack of attention, slips of memory, anxiety possibly caused by pressure of time etc. They are not systematic and readily identifiable and self correctable (Corder: 1973).

Furthermore, the students’ errors were related to addition. These errors are identified easily when the students put unimportant words in their sentences. Gustian (2012) stated that these errors can be seen when they put auxiliary 'was' and 'were' in verbal sentences. From the students' writing, the researcher found that the students made these errors. For example, "...research is base on...." . we simply know that there should not be put an auxiliary in the sentence. In this study, moreover, errors of addition are also commonly found in the use of articles. The students failed to put a suitable article in the sentences. They even put the article where there is no need. E.g., “...mastering the English completely” . In the sentence, the students should not put the article “the” to express the noun ‘English’. This error happened because they had less understanding about the use of the articles in the sentences they wrote. Besides, it is influenced by their native language in which it is seldom for Indonesians to say the number of noun when we speak. It is classified as an interlingual error. Richard, et. al. (1992) stated that interlingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. Therefore, it would be necessary for the students to learn more about the use of auxiliaries and articles.
Moreover, the errors were related to misformation. Errors of misformation can be characterized by the use of the wrong form of the morpheme or structure (Dulay et al. 1982). In this study, the researcher found that some students did not know about the use of tenses. They used the past form of the verb to express present events or condition. For example: “…the teacher doesn’t managed the time…”. The errors happened because they did not have enough knowledge about the use of tenses.

In addition, the errors were also related to disordering. The researcher found that the errors related to disordering made by the students when they attempted to write a noun as the modifier for the other noun. These errors are characterized by the incorrect placement of a group of morphemes in an utterance. In this study, errors of disordering were found in word order. The students made errors because they thought that the way of ordering modifiers is the same as in Indonesian. For example, they wrote “study document ….”. Beside,

Based on the students’ errors explained above, the source of errors can be discussed in two terms of language transfer. The first one is called Interlingual Transfer. Interlingual Transfer is an error due to the influence of students’ mother tongue or their first language. It may occur at different levels such as transfer of phonological, morphological, grammatical and lexical-semantic elements of the native language into the target language. It is a significant source for language learners. Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992) defines interlingual errors as being the result of language transfer, which is caused by the learner's first language. From the errors that the students made in this study, the researchers can tell that they are affected by their first language (Bahasa Indonesia) which has no specific verb form for actions. They students failed to use the correct form of verbs in their sentences. For example the students wrote “…they are seldom in pronouncing the correct words”. Furthermore, the use of auxiliary verbs such as ‘are’ and ‘were’ in nominal sentence also leads the students to make the errors in their writings. This error is simply affected by the grammar of Indonesian which has no specific auxiliary in nominal sentences just like in English grammar.

CLOSING

Based on the data, analysis, and discussion in the previous chapters, the researcher concluded that most of the students writing thesis proposal at English Department of Teacher Training and Education Faculty of IAIN Lhokseumawe in the academic year 2017 / 2018 made grammatical errors in all type of errors proposed by Ferris (2002). Those are errors in verb tense,
verb form, subject-verb agreement, plural, possessive inflection, definite article, the indefinite article, word order, run-on, and fragment.

All in all, it can be concluded that the students made the errors in all types of errors. The students made 22 errors or 10.19% in verb tense, 23 errors or 10.65% in verb form, 12 errors or 5.56% in subject-verb agreement, 32 errors or 14.8% in plural, 3 errors or 1.39% in possessive inflection, 8 errors or 3.70% in definite article, 1 error or 0.46% in indefinite article, 5 errors or 2.31% in word order, 74 errors or 34.26% in run-on, 36 errors or 16.67% in fragment type of error.

Based on the data, the researcher concluded that the students made the most errors with 74-time error occurrences in Run-on type of errors.

Concerning the result of the study, there are some suggestions that the writer intends to offer, as follows:

1. To the students. They should learn more about the ways of constructing sentences, the use of verbs in tenses, auxiliary verbs, articles, and word order. Notably, the students should give severe attention to learn about word order.
2. To the lectures. They understand the source of the errors so that they can provide an appropriate remedy, which will resolve the learner's problems and allow them to discover the relevant rules. Thus, the source of the error is an essential clue for the lecturers to decide on the sort of treatment. Harmer (1998) suggests three steps be followed by the lecturers when errors occur. The lecturers first listens to the students, then identifies the problem, and puts it right in the most efficient way. Secondly, the lecturers should create the class comfortable and can stimulate the students to study. Finally, the lecturers should give more exercise and explanation about the students’ common errors.

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