

A COMPARISON ON CATEGORY CLASSIFICATION OF *RED* AND *ĐỎ* COLOR TERMS IN ENGLISH AND VIETNAMESE DATA

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Abstract: *This study is to make a comparison and contrast between the categories of red and đỏ color terms in English and Vietnamese data from a semantic-cognitive perspective. Mixed and contrastive method is used in this study to investigate and to describe the categories of these color terms in two languages. The data were on 55 examples containing red colour term in English data and 106 examples containing đỏ color term taken from literary works. Further divided according to the 06-category classification of Flora, Fauna, Inanimate nature, Food and beverage, Man-made object, Body and bodily product, the findings show that 06 categories of red color term in English data and those of đỏ color term in Vietnamese data have been identified. Hopefully, the results of this study can help English and Vietnamese use these 06 categories effectively in daily conversation.*

Keywords: *categories; red, đỏ color terms; a semantic-cognitive perspective*

I. Introduction

Color perception in individual nations depends on cultural features of each own nation: one community language or one national language demonstrates how native speakers perceive, cognize, experience, express and classify the world based on their national distinctive features so that this linguistic usage can express their personal values. Due to the fact that no research has been performed on category classification of *red* and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese data, this paper concentrates on investigating as well as comparing and contrasting

06-category classification of Flora, Fauna, Inanimate nature, Food and beverage, Man-made object, Body and bodily product in order to find out the similarities and the differences.

II. Literature review

This study on categories of red and đỏ color terms in English and Vietnamese data is based on the theoretical background of Cognition, Culture, Category as below:

Cognition, from cognitive view, as a human ability, assists this experience to be accessible to the conceptual system by introducing concepts as well as their

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controlling information processing (Barsalou, 1999) whereas cognition, depending on the body and its sensorimotor systems in a fundamental way, emerges from our bodily-based experience and our sensorimotor interactions with the world that is both physical and socio-cultural (Violi, 2008). Cognition, considered as both physical (the processes of receiving, storing and producing information into knowledge) and socio-cultural (the processes of introducing concepts and controlling information), assists human beings to perceive the world outside in a special way with the emphasis of language factor in cognitive processes. This study aims at the cognitive viewpoint related to cognition term as the initial borderline to be researching in more details: Cognition is the most fundamental background for human beings to develop different viewpoints to each color term.

In a deeper definition on the relation between culture and human beings as social members, culture is confirmed to denote a historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which people communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life' (Clifford Geertz, 1979: 89). To be defined in a simplified way, human beings, based on the connection between *culture* and cognition, create one culture (in distinction from nature) during the interaction with nature and society (Phạm Đức Dương, 2000: 15). In this study, *culture*, comprised of thought linguistics, belief values, customs, regulations, rules, tools, technology, artistic activities, rites

and ceremonies and so on, is valued as material and spiritual properties created by human beings, carrying representative features for one nation, distinguishing English nation to Vietnamese nation. This viewpoint in terms of the attached components above is also the specific content included and applied in terms of cultural explanations in this study.

The development in categorical research has proved that category is the most common and fundamental definition reflecting the internal characteristics as well as the basic relations of those events in reality and cognition. *Categories*, in Cognitive view, are defined as sets of weighted attributes, in which, one category contain the object referents as the most representative items inside as well as the least representative ones outside (Rosch, 1978: 30) whereas, in Prototype-theory view, *categories* are represented by a set of features carrying more or less weight in the definition of the prototype; therefore, things belonging in the category and sharing commonalities with the prototype should be particularly easy to be categorized (Rosch 1975, 1978, 1983; Rosch & Mervis, 1975).

In terms of category classification, focusing on broad classes of names referred to object referents, categories within these and the inventory of color terms, 06 classes of object referents are identified: *Flora, Fauna, Inanimate nature, Food and beverage, Man-made object, Body and bodily product*; in which, the inventory of color terms is also language-specific, reflecting social practices, preferences and views entrenched in one traditional culture (Griber YA et al. 2018). This

expanded research orientation proves to be helpful towards identifying the objects as culture-specific referents of color terms in one linguistic system, especially in novel evocative color terms in marketing and advertisement fields. This 06-category classification (*Flora, Fauna, Inanimate nature, Food and beverage, Man-made object, Body and bodily product*) is applied in this study as the foundation in classification issue because this classification criterion does provide fundamental material regarding category division from object referents associated with basic color terms in English and Vietnamese data for further detailed explanation task, based on cognitive and cultural basement, on the subject of the similarities and the differences between the two linguistic and cultural systems.

III. Methodology

3.1. Aims and objectives

This study, based on Cognitive linguistics and the theoretical foundation of Cognition, culture and Category, is to identify the similarities and differences between categories of *red* and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese data. This study is directing at the three following objectives: (i) To identify categories of *red* and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese data; (ii) To compare and contrast these categories to find out the similarities and differences; (iii) To explain these categories based on cultural and cognitive features.

3.2. Methods

This study is designed as a comparative study, using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative

method is to identify the percentage of object referents (Object referents associated with basic color terms in each language are arranged from the highest to the lowest percentage; in which, the object referent with the highest percentage is as the prototype of this particular basic color term) whereas qualitative method is to identify the similarities and the differences between English and Vietnamese data towards *red* and *đỏ* color terms.

3.3. Data

In terms of data collection criteria, data was collected with *as + basic color terms + as + object referent X* structure in the scope of the study in English and Vietnamese data.

All the examples in Comparative idiom structure; in which, *red* color term and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese languages are the key words to be concentrated, particularly on *as red as X* and *đỏ như X* structures, are collected.

In terms of the final results, 5 examples containing *red* colour in English data and 106 examples containing *đỏ* colour term in Vietnamese data collected from comparative idioms expressed in literary works by English and Vietnamese authors is for a more enhanced variety of data source.

3.4. Procedures

In order to fulfill the task of data analysis, procedures take place in the following steps: Step 1: From English and Vietnamese data (literary works) with the above criteria; Step 2: Complete collection associated with *red/đỏ* from every 'X' object referent from English

and Vietnamese data is finally determined; Step 3: Identifying the frequency of *red/đỏ* containing each single X object referents above; Step 4: From the list of object referents associated with one basic color term, a color category is defined as comprising the complete list of object referents having the characteristics of one color or looking like a color; Step 5: The categories of basic color terms should be explained from cognitive and cultural features particularly distinctive for English and Vietnamese communities.

IV. Findings and discussion

After investigating the data respectively, further details relating to the similarities and the differences among categories are presented as below:

4.1. Object referents and category classification of red colour term in English data

After investigating the data on 55 examples containing *red* colour term in English data, **25 object referents** associated with *red* colour term in English data are identified.

In terms of individual frequency from English literary works and private appearance percentage of individual object referents, *blood*, *rose* object referents occupy the highest appearance percentage of 16.36%. 9.09% is of *fire* object referent whereas 7.27% is of *turkeycock* object referent. At the 4th place is of *peony* object referent with 5.45% whereas *dawn*, *ruby*, *lobster*, *sunset*, *beetroot* object referents with the same appearance of 3.64%. The remaining object referents: *arms of the reaping machine*, *bell of a penny trumpet*, *copper*, *cherry*, *collar-stud*, *light of sunset*,

cross of St. George, *lion*, *moustache*, *raw meat*, *scarlet*, *slaughter*, *uncooked beefsteak*, *watering pot*, *wine* have the lowest percentage of 1.82%.

For the purpose of understanding more about the class classification and category sub-classification within *red* colour term in English data, these 25 object referents are sub-divided into the following 06 classes: Flora class (*rose*, *peony*, *beetroot*, *cherry*); Fauna (*turkeycock*, *lobster*, *lion*, *raw meat*, *uncooked beefsteak*); Inanimate nature class (*fire*, *dawn*, *sunset*, *light of sunset*, *ruby*, *copper*); Food and beverage class (*wine*); Man-made object class (*arms of the reaping machine*, *watering pot*, *bell of a penny trumpet*, *scarlet*, *collar-stud*); Body-and-bodily product class (*blood*, *moustache*, *cross of St. George*, *slaughter*).

In terms of total appearance percentage, Flora class occupies 27.27% - the highest percentage of appearance. At the 2nd place is Inanimate nature class with 23.65% while 21.82% goes to Body and bodily product class. Fauna class with 15.37% ranks at the 4th place whereas Man-made product class is at the 5th place with 9.10%. Last but not least, Food and beverage class occupies the lowest appearance percentage of 1.82%.

With reference to category sub-classification within one class of *red* colour term in English data, further details are figured out as below:

Flora class, achieving the highest percentage of 27.27%, is comprised of 3 categories: Flower, Fruit and Cherry. Flower category, having the highest percentage of 21.81%, includes *rose* and

peony object referents. 3.64% is of Fruit category with only *beetroot* object referent whereas Cherry category holds 1.82% with only *cherry* object referent.

Generally of a pale complexion which never tanned, he was now as red as a peony, and his grey beard made a startling contrast with his flamboyant face. (John Buchan, John Macnab, adapted from www.gutenberg.com)

Occupying the 2nd highest appearance percentage is Inanimate nature class with Natural object and substance category, Milieu category, (Semi)-precious stone category. Milieu category, with the highest 9.10%, consists of *dawn, sunset, light of sunset* object referents. Natural object and substance category, with 9.09%, includes only *fire* object referent. (Semi)-precious stone category holds 5.46%, the lowest percentage, with *ruby, copper* object referents.

“Oh, I say, Honor! Stow it!” murmured the boy in an agonized tone, turning as red as fire, and trying to back away from her. (A. Brazil, The New Girl at St. Chad’s, adapted from www.gutenberg.com)

Body and bodily product class has 21.82% of appearance and is made up of 3 categories: Human organ, Human faith and Occupation. 18.18%, the highest percentage goes to Human organ category with *blood* and *moustache* object referents whereas 1.82% is both shared by Human faith category (with *cross of St. George* object referent) and Occupation category (with *slaughter* object referent).

She turned as red as blood at his word; she knit her brows, and her eyes

flashed as she answered. (M. William, Child Christopher, adapted from www.gutenberg.com)

Fauna class, occupying 15.37%, consists of Poultry, Fish, Animal and Raw material categories. 7.27%, the highest percentage, goes to Poultry category with *turkeycock* object referent. Fish category (*lobster*) and Raw material category (*raw meat, uncooked beefsteak*) both have the same 3.64% of appearance. Animal category, consisting 1.82%, has only *lion* object referent.

I had acquired perfect familiarity and nodding acquaintance with the early Roman and Latin tongues, and offering my services as interpreter of “quicquid agunt homines,” and the entire “farrago libelli,” which rendered her red as a turkeycock with delight and gratitude. (Anstey F., Bamboo Jabberjee, adapted from www.gutenberg.com)

Man-made object class, holding 9.10%, is comprised of Tool, Musical instrument, Fabric and Clothing categories. Tool category has 3.64% with *arms of the reaping machine, watering pot* object referents. 1.82% is all shared by Musical instrument with *bell of a penny trumpet* object referent, Fabric category with *scarlet* object referent and Clothing category with *collar-stud* object referent.

‘Here was my lady herself -- red as scarlet (T. Hardy, Desperate Remedies, p. 649)

Food and beverage class, with the lowest percentage of 1.82%, includes Drink category with only *wine* object referent.

And at the high altar of Christianity stands another figure, in whose hand also

is the cup of the vine. "Drink" he says "for the whole world is **as red as this wine**, with the crimson of the love and wrath of God. (G. K. Chesterton, *Heretics*, p. 47)

In short, *red* colour term in English data introduces **55 examples** with **25 object referents** divided into **06 classes** and **18 categories**: Flora class (Flower category, Fruit category, Cherry category), Fauna class (Poultry category, Fish category, Animal category, Raw material category), Inanimate nature class (Natural object and substance category, Milieu category, (Semi)-precious stone category), Food and beverage class (Drink category), Man-made object class (Tool category, Musical instrument category, Fabric category, Clothing category), Body and bodily object class (Human organ category, Human faith category, Occupation category).

4.2. Object referents and category classification of đỏ colour term in Vietnamese data

Investigating the data, **106 examples** containing *đỏ* colour term in Vietnamese data are identified.

In terms of individual frequency from Vietnamese literary works and private appearance percentage of individual object referents, *son* object referent has the highest percentage of 15.09% and the 2nd place goes to *gấc* object referent with 11.32%. The 3rd and 4th places go to *máu* object referent with 10.38%. *lửa* and *tiết* object referents both share 3.77% whereas other 10 object referents (*cua luộc, đào, gà chọi, mặt trời, máu Chúa, quả bồ quân, râu ngô, tôm luộc, vang, vỏ chôm chôm chín*) rank at the 6th place with 1.89%.

The remaining object referents (*cà chua, các kê lửa, cục sắt trong lò rèn mới rút ra, da chum, dây tơ hồng, đóa phù dung, đom đóm rừng, đồng, đồng tỵ, hổ phách, hoa anh đào, hoa hường, hoa mào gà, hoa niêm phong, hòn gạch, hòn than, hòn than đang cháy, hạt lựu, lá cờ hiệu, lá mần đĩnh hồng, lá móng một ngày Tết Đoan ngọ, lò gạch nung, lòng đỏ trứng, ma trời, mâm xôi, mâm xôi gấc, mào gà, miếng hồng tàu, miếng thịt sống, miếng vông, môi con gái, củ nâu, ớt, quả nhót, sánh, sợi đờm máu, than hồng, tôm chín, viên gạch nung, vừng lửa*) occupy the lowest percentage of 0.94%.

For the purpose of understanding more about the class classification and sub-classification within *đỏ* colour term in English data, these object referents are further divided into the following classes: Flora class (*gấc, đào, hồng tàu, cà chua, quả bồ quân, râu ngô, củ nâu, ớt, quả nhót, hạt lựu, vỏ chôm chôm chín, dây tơ hồng, hổ phách, vông, hoa anh đào, hoa hường, hoa mào gà, hoa niêm phong, đóa phù dung, lá móng một ngày Tết Đoan ngọ, lá mần đĩnh hồng*); Fauna class (*cua luộc, tôm luộc, tôm chín, gà chọi, các kê lửa, đom đóm rừng, tiết, da chum, mào gà, lòng đỏ trứng, thịt sống*); Inanimate nature class (*ma trời, lửa, vừng lửa, mặt trời, đồng, đồng tỵ, sắt trong lò rèn mới rút ra*); Food and beverage (*xôi, xôi gấc, vang*); Man-made object class (*son, lá cờ hiệu, sánh, than, than hồng, than đang cháy, gạch, gạch nung, lò gạch nung*); Body-and-bodily product class (*máu, máu Chúa, môi con gái, sợi đờm máu*).

In terms of total appearance percentage, Flora class occupies the highest percentage of 33.96%. Man-made

object class possesses the 2nd highest percentage of 21.57%. Fauna class, with 16.04%, is at the 3rd place. Body and bodily product class ranks at the 4th place with 14.15%. 10.37% is of Inanimate nature class. Food and beverage class occupies the lowest percentage of 3.78%.

With reference to category sub-classification within one class of **đỏ** colour term in Vietnamese data, further details regarding sub-categories are figured out as below:

Flora class is composed of Fruit category, Fauna organ category, Plant category, Flower category and Leaf category. Fruit category, with the highest percentage of 22.66%, occupies the largest number of object referents included: *gấc, đào, hồng táo, cà chua, quả bồ quân, râu ngô, củ nâu, ớt, quả nhót, hạt lựu*. Flower category, with 4.70%, possesses *hoa anh đào, hoa hường, hoa mào gà, hoa niêm phong, đóa phù dung* object referents. Plant category, holding 2.82%, is made up of *dây tơ hồng, hổ phách, vông* object referents. Having the lowest percentage of 1.89% are Fauna organ category (*vỏ chôm chôm chín* object referent) and Leaf category (*lá móng một ngày Tết Đoan ngọ, lá mần đình hồng* object referents).

Hôm nay, mặt Trương A. đỏ như gấc, có vẻ vừa trịnh trọng vừa vội vàng. (Trọng Lang, Làm dân, p. 1098).

Man-made object class consists of Cosmetic category, Decoration category and Material category. Cosmetic category, with the highest percentage of 15.09%, has *son* object referent. Material category, with 5.64%, includes 6 object referents (*sành, than hồng, than đang cháy, gạch,*

gạch nung, lò gạch nung). Decoration category, with only one *lá cờ hiệu* object referent, has the lowest appearance percentage of 0.94%.

Nhìn theo đoàn tàu chạy đã có đà, chỗ quá đầu ghi, Bạch chỉ còn thấy ở cái toa cuối cùng đoàn xe mỗi lúc một xa ấy một miếng sắt tròn báo hiệu, sơn đỏ ngòm, cũng đỏ như màu lá cờ hiệu cắm ở cạnh toa chót. (Nguyễn Tuân, Thiếu quê hương, adapted from www.vietmessenger.com)

Fauna is composed of Marine animal category, Poultry category, Reptile category, Butterfly category and Fauna organ category. Fauna organ category, with the highest percentage of 7.55%, includes the highest number of object referents: *tiết, da chum, mào gà, lòng đỏ trứng, thịt sống*. Marine animal category, with 4.72%, consists of *cua lược, tôm lược, tôm chín* object referents. Poultry category, with 1.89%, possesses only *gà chọi* object referent. Both Reptile category holding *cắc kè lửa* object referent and Butterfly category comprising only *đom đóm rừng* object referent share the same lowest percentage of 0.94%.

Trất nhìn hàng rào những cây vông hoa đỏ như tiết, mà ngẫm nghĩ về câu chuyện trộm cướp tối hôm qua ở đình Hàng Hòm. (Tô Hoài, Kẻ cướp bến Bôi, adapted from www.vietmessenger.com)

Body and bodily product class, holding Bodily product category, is comprised of *máu, máu Chúa, môi con gái, sọt đờm máu* object referents.

Tôi lấy làm thú vị khi nhận thấy rằng đang được ngồi gần một người mắt đau đỏ như máu, một cô con gái có đôi mắt đen quá, có lẽ đen hơn cả nhưng,

và - đã đếm đi đếm lại kỹ rồi – hai người toét mắt, toét có lẽ nhất thế giới. (Trọng Lang, *Thầy lang*, adapted from www.vietmessenger.com)

Inanimate nature class is formed from Natural object and substance category and metal category. Natural object and substance category, with the higher percentage of 7.55%, includes *ma trời, lửa, vầng lửa, mặt trời* object referents whereas Metal category, with the lower percentage of 2.82%, has *đồng, đồng tu, sắt trong lò rèn mới ra* object referents.

*Lọ thấy hàm râu cá chổi, con mắt trông đồng, mặt mày đỏ như lửa của ông Cò thì đã rụt rè, sau nghe ông nạt rậm lên thì muốn nhảy qua cửa sổ mà về, nhưng vì muốn vào khám nên nán lại. (Bửu Đình, *Mảnh trăng thu*, adapted from www.vietmessenger.com)*

Food and beverage class, with Food category and Drink category, occupies the lowest percentage of 3.78. Food category has *xôi* and *xôi gấc* object referents whereas Drink category has *vang* object referent.

Mặt thẳng nào cũng còn đỏ như vang, mà còn cứ há mãi mồm ra buộc tội

*kẻ khác say rượu. (Vũ Trọng Phụng, *Một huyện ăn Tết*, p. 182).*

In short, *đỏ* colour term in Vietnamese data brings in **106 examples** with **54 object referents** divided into **06 classes** and **18 categories**: Flora class (Fruit category, Fauna organ category, Plant category, Flower category, Leaf category), Man-made object class (Cosmetic category, Decoration category and Material category); Fauna class (Marine animal category, Poultry category, Reptile category, Butterfly category, Fauna organ category), Inanimate nature class (Natural object and substance category, Metal category), Food and beverage class (Cosmetic category, Decoration category, Material category), Body and bodily product class (Bodily product category).

4.3. Comparison of categories of red and đỏ color terms

The summary of the categories accompanied by the most representative object referent in each category of *red* color term in English data and those of *đỏ* color term in Vietnamese data is presented in Table 1 as below:

Table 1. Categories of red color term in English and those of đỏ color term in Vietnamese

No	Category	In English			In Vietnamese		
		TAP (%)	CR		TAP (%)	CR	
			Rep.	AP (%)		Rep.	AP (%)
01	Flora	27.27	rose	16.36	33.96	gấc	11.32
02	Fauna	15.37	turkey cock	7.27	16.04	cua/tôm luộc	1.89
03	Inanimate nature	23.65	fire	9.09	10.37	lửa	3.77
04	Food and Beverage	1.82	wine	1.82	3.78	xôi (gấc)	0.94
05	Man-made object	9.10	arms of the reaping machine	1.82	21.57	son	15.09
06	Body and bodily product	21.82	blood	16.36	14.15	máu	10.38

As seen in Table 1, there exists the full completion of 06 categories *red* and *đỏ* color terms in both English and Vietnamese data; in which, both Flora in English data and that in Vietnamese data occupy the highest percentage, resulting in the dominance of object referents belonging Flora category towards *red* and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese data.

On the subject of the highest percentage comparison among the categories of *red* and *đỏ* color terms in English and Vietnamese data, Flora category in English data holds 22.27% whereas that of Vietnamese data is 33.96%; Fauna category in English data has 15.37% whereas that of Vietnamese data is 17.04%; Inanimate nature category in English data takes up 23.65% whereas that of Vietnamese data is 10.37%; Man-made object of *red* color term category in English data possesses 9.1% whereas that of Vietnamese data is 21.57%; Body and bodily product category in English data occupies 21.82% whereas that of Vietnamese data is 14.15%.

In terms of the particular object referents occupying the highest percentage in each category, in Flora category are *rose/gấc* object referents; in Fauna category are *turkey cock/tôm/cua luộc* object referents; in Inanimate nature category are the same *fire/lửa* object referents in English and Vietnamese data; in Food and Beverage category is *wine/xôi gấc* object referents; in Man-made object category are *arms of the reaping machine/son* object referents; in Body and bodily product category are the same *blood/máu* object referents.

It should be concluded that *blood/rose* are mostly typical for *red* colour term in English data whereas *son* is

mostly representative of *đỏ* colour term in Vietnamese data. Similarly, in encyclopedic meaning, *red* colour term is defined as having the colour of *blood* or *fire* whereas *đỏ* colour term is defined as having the colour term of *son* and *máu*. That *blood, fire, son, máu* object referents are selected as culture-specific referents of *red/đỏ* colour terms is similar to the findings of this article.

To be more specific, *red* colour term means *blood* as what English people have in mind; in other words, *blood* object referent mostly refers to the *red* colour. In addition, *red* colour term means *rose* as what English people have in mind. In short, *rose* flower – the flower symbolizes English nation of brightness and life-energetic value. On the other hand, in Vietnamese, *đỏ* colour term is associated with *son*. “*Lầu son gác tía, son son thếp vàng, đẹp vàng son*” expressions can be seen in all palaces and high-class people’ living destinations to express beauty. This magnificent Royal Palace, with tall red-lacquered pillars always in red and yellow, seems to be strange to visitors (Nguyễn Văn Huyền; 2019). Another usage is that *son* object referent is the comparison standard of bright red, beautiful lips with the highest number of responses (Nguyễn Đức Tồn, 2015).

In short, the general picture regarding multi-aspect social life with explanations from cultural and cognitive features, especially, in terms of *red* and *đỏ* colour terms, does provide more information clarifying the similarities and the differences between English and Vietnamese nations through the use of representative object referents (similar or different between the two data systems) typical for English and Vietnamese language systems.

V. Conclusion

06-color-category classification (*Flora, Fauna, Inanimate nature, man-made object, Food and Beverage, Body and bodily product*), accompanied by further explanations from cognitive and cultural characteristics, result in the obvious picture sketching the similarities and the differences between English and Vietnamese data on the subject of prototypes of basic color terms. Similarities and differences between English and Vietnamese data reflect the completely typical for English and Vietnamese thinkings towards the same physical subject nature world, originating from psychological features, local regulations among native speakers as well as the overwhelming dominance from natural contexts, social-cultural features in individual nation. From this paper, more knowledge in regard to the similar and different uses of **red** and **đỏ** color terms in English and Vietnamese data is revealed to those in need. This study concentrates on **red** and **đỏ** color terms in English and Vietnamese data; therefore, it is recommended that this data scope should be expanding more at more basic color terms for the more complete and overall outcomes.

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