A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF AMERICAN ENGLISH AND PHILIPPINE ENGLISH NEWS LEADS

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an analysis of American and Philippine English news leads. This study of one week's news leads of six leading American and Philippine newspapers over internet online publications shows that there is no significant difference in the number of words used between the two Englishes. Moreover, both samples demonstrate similar preference for summary lead with who, what, and when as the most frequently used elements and who as the heavily used starting element. The recurrent patterns of similarities may be attributed to the tendency of Philippine writers to adhere to the expectations of international journalism as propagated by European and American journalists or as a trace of American influence in the Philippine educational system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Rhetoric is more than just the production of structures in a discourse. It involves a selection of linguistic and structural units aimed at producing an effect on an audience (Purves, 1988, as cited by Noor, 2001). Therefore, rhetoric is malleable to the uses of language which children learn in schools, many of which are closely interwoven in the culture of the people (Connor, 1996). This is to say that linguistic and rhetorical patterns in discourse are produced and interpreted in the context of culture (Kachru, 1995). This is the claim of contrastive rhetoric (henceforth, CR), which has evolved out of Robert Kaplan's (1966) investigation of the underlying differences in the writings of ESL students. Due to some criticisms, CR has expanded its framework and included the processes and contexts of writing (Connor, 1996; Leki, 1991). The embeddedness of discourse and writing in culture and the roles that education play in the integration of this embeddedness have become its important tenets (Connor, 1996).

CR took another step of expansion when it applied the concept of genre analysis. With the advent of genre-based studies, CR included other modes and domains such as research reports, abstracts, articles, grant proposals, business letters, political writings, and newspaper genres, specifically editorials (Connor, 1996; Swales, 1990; Reynolds, 1993; Hinds, 1983).

One promising area of research on cross-cultural differences in writing is the genre of news writing. Research on cross-cultural news writing is important because ESL students are news readers. According to Scollon (1998), "with the ever closer convergence of telephone, newspapers, and television in the internet, we seem to be coming nearer to Borges's library of Babel...in all of the possible languages..." (p. 14). This means that ESL readers have ubiquitous resources at hand that enable them to access news accounts in many parts of the globe. Awareness of the rhetorical differences in news writing cross-culturally will help ESL readers to become more flexible with their expectations. In addition, it will increase their understanding of the embeddedness of writing in culture and of the role of education in shaping rhetorical styles.

At the present time, however, little is known cross-culturally about this genre because only a few researchers have paid attention to it. Consequently, literature in this area of study is scant. Connor's (1996) review of genre-based studies in CR does not include news writing. The only known investigation is Scollon's (2000) study of five consecutive days of three editions of the same newspaper in its Chinese and English editions, but even that has a very limited review of studies on news writing. In his study, Scollon identified genres of news stories based on the major differences found in the stories that had appeared in the same newspapers. He warned against jumping into generalizations that the differences in the news stories are culturally or ideologically driven.

The present study aims to uncover the similarities and differences in the rhetorical styles used by American and Philippine English writers in constructing a news lead, considered to be the most important part of the news story because it "sells" the story (Sebastian, 1994).

In particular, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Are there similarities and differences in the types of leads used in Philippine and American English news stories?

2. Are there differences in the placement of the important elements of news leads between American and Philippine news leads?

3. What is the preferred voice of verbs employed in news leads by the two groups of newspapers?

For the purpose of this study, a news lead is used to refer to the beginning of a newspaper story. It is usually contained in the first paragraph and is considered the most important paragraph of the entire account because it is meant to attract the readers' attention and sustain their interest to read on (Sebastian, 1994; Malinao, 1997; Itule and Anderson, 2000; Ramirez, 1989). In some instances, a lead can be written in two or more paragraphs called the lead block. This kind of writing is usually found in special or novelty leads (Itule and Anderson, 2000).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Data

A total of 42 news leads were extracted from the online edition of six newspapers of general circulation in the U.S. and the Philippines. The American news leads were taken from *Washington Post* (henceforth, WP), *USA Today* (UT), and *Washington Times* (WT). The sources of Philippine news leads were *Manila Bulletin* (MB), *Philippine Daily Inquirer*

(PDI), and *Philippine Star* (PS) - three of the leading newspapers in the Philippines. The news leads of the six newspapers studied over seven consecutive days (on August 5-11, 2002) came from main headline news located in the front page section of the newspapers.

2.2 Physical Analysis and Frequency Count

The physical analysis of the news leads consisted of a simple count of the number of words per lead. This was done in order to examine which of the two Englishes have longer or shorter news leads. To see which kind of pattern each group of news leads (American vs. Philippine) used more frequently, the researcher counted the number of tokens for type of lead, the placement of *when*, the multiple-element lead combination, and the voice of the verb.

2.3 Content Analysis

The identification of the types of leads in this study was based on the categories described by journalism textbooks written by Philippine and American authors. American textbooks list 17 types of lead, namely, summary lead, punch, picture, contrast, question, background, quotation, freak, narrative, staccato, direct address, parody, literary allusion, astonisher, descriptive, a complex story lead, none of the above (a combination of two or three leads). Most of these American English news leads are found in Philippine textbooks which also include 17 kinds of leads as follows: cartridge, punch, picture, contrast, question, freak, sequence, suspended interest, staccato, figurative, epigram, direct quotation, background, descriptive, parody, literary allusion, and summary. These leads fall under two general classes: the summary or the conventional lead, which gives the gist of the story, and the special or unconventional lead which lures the readers into the body of the report (Itule and Anderson, 2000; Warren, 1951; Agee, Ault and Emery, 1983; Sebastian, 1994; Malinao, 1997; Ramirez, 1989). The focus of this study was on summary lead, the most commonly used lead in the two samples.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Physical Analysis

Table 1 shows the total number of words in American and Philippine English news leads. As can be seen, the total number of words in American English leads is greater than in Philippine English leads. Consequently, the average number of words per lead is higher in American English than in Philippine English (40.43 vs. 33.86). However, a simple *t*-test shows that there is no significant difference between the figures.

Table 1. Physical comparison of the number of words in news leads

	American English	Philippine English
Total number of words	849	711
Average words per lead	40.43	33.86

3.2 Types of Leads

American and Philippine Englishes construct leads in forms that best introduced their stories. Table 2 reveals their preferred news leads.

Table 2. Summary of the types of news leads

American Newspapers			Philippine Newspapers		
Type of Lead	No. of uses	Percentage	Type of Lead	No. of uses	Percentage
Summary Lead	19	90.48	Summary Lead	19	90.48
Special (Contrast)	1	4.76	Special (Punch)	2	9.52
Unidentified	1	4. 76	Unidentified	0	0
TOTAL	21	100	TOTAL	21	100

As can be seen in Table 2, American newspapers use three kinds of leads, in contrast to Philippine newspapers which use only two types. The most notable pattern is a preponderance in the use of *summary leads* for both samples with equal frequency. This shows that the preferred structure of news leads in both Englishes is the summary lead. Extracts (1) and (2) exemplify the summary lead.

(1) *The D.C. Court of Appeals ruled yesterday that Mayor Anthony A. Williams's nominating petitions were so rife with forgeries and apparent fraud that the city's election board was justified in barring him from the Democratic primary ballot.* (WP, 08-08-02)

(2) *Two of the biggest business groups in the country have rallied behind the Philippine National Police (PNP)'s anti-crime effort, which in the past days has reaped what President Arroyo described as "a bountiful harvest" of busted criminal gangs.*
(PS, 08-08-02)

The two extracts summarize the body of the story by providing the *gist* of the story. According to Itule and Anderson (2000), the major points are given in the news leads because people who spend little time in news and do not read the whole story expect to find the most important points at the lead of the story.

While the two varieties of English show similarity in structuring the news leads, we can find instances of differences. *Contrast lead* is found only in the American sample. It uses turn words such as *after* and *now*, as extract (3) shows.

(3) *The Joint Chiefs of Staff, after months of some members resisting a new war, now fully back using military force to oust Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.* (WT, 08-07-02)

The lead shows a change of decision on the part of the Chiefs of Staff by contrasting months of resistance with the present view to back military force against Hussein.

Another type which was not found in the Philippine sample is the seven-sentence lead, which starts with a multiple-element summary lead. It defies the definition of a summary lead in that it does not only provide the gist of the story but supplies the minor details of the news account. This unidentified lead (it did not fit in any of the described types listed by American writers) is replete with statistical data, as seen below.

> (4) *Wall Street's hopes for a turnaround dimmed Monday after another dose of disappointing economic news sent the Dow Jones industrials down nearly 270 points, a third straight triple-digit loss. The selling came after 11 weeks of heavy selling and further eroded the July rally that many investors had believed might be the beginning of a recovery. Analyst said without any encouraging economic data, there was little reason to buy. Doubts about the banking sector also pressured stocks. The Dow closed down 269.50, or 3.2 %, at 8043.63, for a three-session loss of 692.96 points. The sell-off also pulled the index 192.18 points, or .3%, below the low of 8235.81 it hit Sept. 21, following the terrorist attacks. Broader stock indicators also fell. The Standard & Poor's 500 I Dex lost 29.64, or 3.4%, to 834.60, and the Nasdaq composite index ropped 41.91, or 3.4%, to 1,206.01-- a new 5-year low. It last closed lower on April 21, 1997, when it stood at 1,203.95.* (UT, 08-06-02)

In a similar vein, Philippine newspapers used a lead type that was not found in the American newspapers. The *punch lead,* written in 'arousing' sentence to intrigue the reader, was used twice in the Philippine sample. To illustrate:

> (5) *Just an analysis, not an order for the communist New people's Army to topple electrical towers and lines. Exiled communist leader Jose Maria Sison made this clarification after his directive to the NPA to destroy power installations was met with howls of protest as it would adversely affect the people he claimed to be fighting for.*
> (PDI, 08-08-02)

In extract (5), the writer put the punch lead in an eighteen-word-one sentence paragraph. The second paragraph immediately gives the main elements of the story which are meant to give the readers the main idea of the news account.

> (6) *The senate brawl is far from over. Fireworks are expected to flare up anew at the Senate today as the majority bloc is bent on putting to a vote the contentious issue on the legality of the June 3 to 6 sessions conducted by the opposition.* (PS, 08-05-02)

Example 6 is an example of a short punch lead that intrigues the reader. As can be seen, "the senate brawl is far from over" does not give the synopsis of the story. It serves as a 'catchy' introduction to the summary lead which immediately follows in the second paragraph.

In analyzing the examples, it appears that a punch lead is a kind of a delayed lead that serves as an interesting introduction to the second paragraph containing the summary of the news account.

Overall, there seem to be two tendencies for these news leads. First, the Philippine and American news writers have a similar preference for the summary lead, a direct presentation of the main events of the story. Second, American news leads use special leads, a feature that is not shared by Philippine news leads. American news writers use a contrast lead and an unidentified seven-sentence lead, while Philippine writers use a delayed but 'catchy' punch lead which is meant to arouse the reader's interest.

3.3 Placement of the Most Important Elements in the News Lead

Of the six important elements that could be placed in a summary lead, the news writers chose the elements which they considered important for the particular news that they report. Table 3 summarizes the important elements placed in the summary leads of both samples.

Table 3. Comparative summary of important elements placed in the summary lead

American Newspapers			Philippine Newspapers		
Elements of the lead	Number	Percentage	Elements of the lead	Number	Percentage
who, what, when	7	33.33	who, what, when	6	31.58
who, when, what	4	21.05	when, who, what	2	10.53
what, where, when	1	5.26	who, what, why	4	21.05
who, what	2	10.53	who, what	3	15.79
when, what	1	5.26	where, what, why	1	5.26
why, who, what, when	1	5.26	who, what, when, why	2	10.53
who, what, where, when	2	10.53	what, who	1	5.26
who, what, when, why	1	5.26			
Total	19	100	**Total**	19	100

Table 3 shows that American writers utilized eight multiple-element lead combinations, while the Philippine sample had seven. Of the combinations for each group, only three were found in both groups: who-what-when, who-what, and who-what-when-why. Extracts (7) to (12) demonstrate this point:

Who-what-when

(7) Philippine English

The Pasig City Regional Trial Court tossed to the Supreme Court yesterday the decision on whether the public should continue paying the controversial purchased power adjustment (PPA) in electricity bills. (PS, 08-10-02)

(8) American English

Assailants hurled grenades at worshippers leaving a hospital chapel yesterday, killing three Pakistani women and reinforcing fears that Islamic militants are targeting Christians in Pakistan in retaliation for the government's support for the U.S.-led war on terrorism.
(WT, 08-10-02)

Who-what

(9) Philippine English

Two of the biggest business groups in the country have rallied behind the Philippine National Police's anti-crime effort, which in the past days has reaped what President Arroyo described as " a bountiful harvest" of busted criminal gangs. (PS, 10-08-02)

(10) American English

WorldCom Inc.'s internal auditors have uncovered an additional $3.8 billion in improper accounting, deepening the company's already severe financial crisis and doubling the amount of its known accounting errors to more than $7.6 billion over the past two years. (WP, 10-09-02)

Who-what-when-why

(11) Philippine English

Undaunted by criticism, President Arroyo vowed yesterday to pursue her practice of parading arrested crime suspects in public in a bid to humiliate them into repentance. (PS, 10-09-02)

(12) American English

Thousands of immigrants have been forced to leave their jobs in the last few months, the result of a little-publicized operation by the U.S. government to clean up Social Security records, immigration experts say.
(WP, 10-06-02)

Moreover, the writers have different emphasis as to which element comes first in a summary lead. Table 4 shows the occurrences of the first element preferred in both Englishes.

Table 4. First element of multiple-element lead combinations in summary lead

American Newspapers			Philippine Newspapers		
Elements of the lead	Number	Percentage	Elements of the lead	Number	Percentage
Who	16	84.21	Who	15	78.95
What	1	5.26	What	1	5.26
When	1	5.26	When	2	10.52
Why	1	5.26	Where	1	5.26
Total	19	100	Total	19	100

Who, what, when, where, and *why* were all used as first elements in summary leads. However, *who* topped the list in both samples. American English used *who* on 16 occasions, and the Philippine sample in 15 combinations.

In summary, Table 3 and 4 show the following results: First, news leads in both varieties of English tend to put more importance on three elements: *who, what,* and *when.* This is evidenced by the fact that both American and Philippine newspapers used more combinations with *who, what,* and *when* elements. Second, newspapers in both languages seem to use more combinations which start with the *who* element. However, the data do not suggest that *who* is the preferred starting element of the readers and that *who, what,* and *when* elements are what the readers want to look for in a lead.

3.4 Placement of *When* Element

The *when* of the story is an important element of the summary lead in that it conveys immediacy to the reader. Itule and Anderson (2000) listed six positions in which *when* could be situated: after the verb, after the object of the verb, after an adverb, after a prepositional phrase, between the subject and the verb, and at the end. In this study, only three of the six positions were found in the American sample: after the verb, between the subject and the verb, and after a prepositional phrase.

Sometimes, however, writers do not include the *when* of the event but indicate the *when* of the attribution. In this study, the *when* after an attribution was counted if the *when* of the event was not placed in the summary lead (see example 20).

The following extracts exemplify the foregoing analysis.

Time element between the subject and the verb

(13) *A defiant Iraqi President Saddam Husein* **yesterday** *warned the "forces of evil" that they shall "carry their own coffins" if the United States organize a military invasion to bring down his regime.* (WT, 08-09-02)

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Time element after a prepositional phrase

(14) *A suicide bomber detonated a powerful explosive on a moving commuter bus in Northern Israel **today**, killing at least nine people and himself and injuring more than 40. Hours later, three men were killed in a shooting involving a Palestinian gunman and Israel police in front of the Damascus gate entrance to Jerusalem's historic old city.* (WP, 08-05-02)

Time element after the verb

(15) *Worldcom said **Thursday** that it improperly accounted for an additional $3.3 billion, mostly from 2000 and some from 1999.* (UT, 08-09-02)

Other positions of the time element were found in the following positions: between an appositive of a subject and a verb, after an infinitive phrase, in the first part, after an object of a participle, and after the verb of attribution, as seen in excerpts (16) to (20).

Time element between the appositive of the subject and the verb

(16) *Christian leaders, stunned by two deadly attacks by Muslim militants in less than a week, **yesterday** vowed that they will not let fear deter them from worship.* (WT, 08-11-02)

Time element after an infinitive phrase

(17) *Thousands of immigrants have been forced to leave their jobs **in the last few months**, the result of a little publicized operation by the U. S. government to clean up Social Security records, immigration experts say.* (WP, 08-06-02)

Time element at the first part of the lead

(18) ***A year after** President Bush's controversial decision to allow only limited federal funding for stem cell studies, the research is proceeding slowly, and scientists are working with only a fraction of the cell lines that Bush said would be available.* (UT, 08-07-02)

Time element after the object of a participle

(19) *Assailants hurled grenades at worshippers leaving a hospital chapel **yesterday**, killing three Pakistani women and reinforcing fears that Islamic militants are targeting Christians in Pakistan in retaliation for the government's support for the U.S.-lead war on terrorism.* (WT, 10-10-02)

When of the attribution (after the verb of attribution)

(20) *The United States has "no choice but to eliminate" the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's arsenal of weapons of mass destruction, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said **yesterday** – and that "probably" means war with Iraq.* (WT, 10-05-02)

Extracts (21) to (24) show the positions of time element found in the Philippine sample.

(21) *Undaunted by criticisms, President Arroyo vowed **yesterday** to pursue her practice of parading arrested crime suspects in public in a bid to humiliate them into repentance.* (PS, 08-09-02)

(22) *The Pasig City Regional Trial court tossed to the Supreme Court **yesterday** the decision on whether the public should continue paying the controversial Purchased Power Adjustment (PPA) in electricity bills.* (PS, 08-08-02)

(23) *Malacanang expressed readiness **yesterday** to conduct an immediate evacuation of 117 Filipinos who, it is feared, may be trapped in Baghdad would the united States wage a military offensive aimed at forcing Iraqi President Saddam Hussein out of power.* (MB, 08-10-02)

(24) *For President Arroyo, who has taken on the role of chief crimebuster, it was "a bountiful harvest" **yesterday**.* (PS, 10-06-02)

In extract (21), the time element appears after the verb *vowed*. Extract (22) shows the time element after the prepositional phrase *to the Supreme Court*. Example (23) shows the time element after the object of the verb. In the last example, the time element is situated at the end. These were the only four positions in the Philippine sample that matched Itule and Anderson's (2000) framework .

Other positions of time element in the Philippine corpus are illustrated in the following excerpts.

(25) *President Macapagal Arroyo's "strong republic" continued to flex its muscles **over the weekend**, arresting 12 robbery suspects in the North and seven suspected Abu Sayyaf Bandits in the South.* (PDI, 08-05-02)

(26) ***After declaring war on crime syndicates and Abu Sayyaf Bandits**, President Macapagal Arroyo is taking on communist guerillas.* (PDI, 08-06-02)

As can be seen in extract (25), the time element could also appear after an infinitive phrase, such as in the case of *over the weekend* after the infinitival phrase *to flex its muscles*. When the time element was the focal point of the lead, it appeared in the first part, as is the case of extract (26).

Table 5 summarizes the placement of *when* in the American and Philippine news leads. As can be seen, American news leads that included *when* in the summary lead (17 occurrences out of 21) placed it in eight different positions, in contrast to the Philippine sample (10 occurrences) which had six positions. Despite this difference, news leads in the two varieties of English shared similar patterns. Of the seven placements of the time element in the American sample, four of these were similarly found in the Philippine sample: after the preposition, after the infinitive phrase, first element, and after the verb. In addition, both languages tended to use more after-verb positions for the time element.

Table 5. Comparative summary of the positions of time element in news leads

American Newspapers			Philippine Newspapers		
Position of *when*	Number of occurrences	Percentage	Position of *when*	Number of occurrences	Percentage
After prep. Phrase	2	11.76	After prep. phrase	1	10
After inf. Phrase	2	11.76	After inf. phrase	1	10
First Element	1	5.88	First element	2	20
After verb	5	29.41	After verb	4	40
Between appositive of the subject and the verb	1	5.88	After the object of the verb	1	10
After participial phrase	1	5.88	Last element	1	10
After verb of attribution	2	11.76			
Between subject and verb	3	17.65			
Total	17	100	Total	10	100

3.5 Voice of the Verb

Most journalism textbooks surveyed in this study prefer the use of active voice rather than the passive voice in news leads. This is because the active voice is more direct and vigorous than the passive voice. Editors resort to passive voice when the receiver of the action is more important than the doer of the action (Itule and Anderson, 2000).

A frequency count of the voices of verbs employed in the corpus of the study (Table 6) reveals that the use of active voice outweighs the use of passive voice in both

samples. There is only one instance of passive use in each group. This similarity shows the agreement of both Englishes on the standard use of active voice in news leads.

Table 6. Comparative summary of the voice of the verb

American Newspapers			Philippine Newspapers		
Voice of the verb	Frequency of use	Percentage	Voice of the verb	Frequency of use	Percentage
Active	20	95.24	Active	20	95.24
Passive	1	4.76	Passive	1	4.76
TOTAL	21	100	**TOTAL**	21	100

4. CONCLUSION

This study attempted to investigate the similarities and differences in the rhetorical structures of news leads between American English and Philippine English. To pursue this objective, 42 news leads from six newspapers written by American and Philippine writers were analyzed. The investigation centered on the physical comparison of the number of words, types of news leads, the important elements placed in the summary lead, the position of time element, and the preferred voice of the verb.

The data yielded results that attest to the recurrent patterns of similarities and contrasting patterns that differentiate American news leads from Philippine news leads. The physical analysis of the number of words failed to establish contrasting difference between the two samples as the differences in figures did not appear to be significant. In terms of the types of news leads, both American and Philippine writers employed more summary leads. They showed differences, however, in the use of special leads. American writers used contrast and 'unidentified' lead, while Philippine news leads favored a delayed punch lead.

The next area investigated was the placement of the important elements of the summary lead. This study found that American English used more multiple-element lead combinations than Philippine English did. The two showed a similarity, however, in the use of *who, what,* and *when* as the most frequently used elements in the summary lead, with *who* as the preferred starting element.

In terms of the placement of *when*, in some instances the position of *when* in the American sample did not have similar placements in the Philippine sample and vice versa. Both had a similar preference for the positioning of *when* after the verb. Finally, in terms of the voice of verbs used, similar patterns were observed in that American and Philippine writers preferred the active voice of the verb in constructing news leads.

It can be presumed that the similarities found in the data reflect the tendency of the Philippine writers to adhere to the expectations of international journalism as articulated by European and American journalists. Moreover, the similarities may be attributed to the fact that Filipinos were taught the English language by the Americans and the indelible vestiges of the American influence in our Philippine educational system are still with us. There was a point in the history of Philippine-American relations that Filipino writers in blind imitation followed the structures and forms dictated by the Americans (Hosillos, 1968). Today, many Philippine writers have achieved maturity in writing in English, but it seems that the tendency to look up to American English as the standard still exists. Filipino

writers of journalism textbooks have been drawing from American English materials for their references. It is no wonder that Philippine journalistic conventions seem to display adherence to the American English norm.

The differences between American English and Philippine English may be a reflection of the editorial boards' intention to present the most appropriate and effective structures for particular types of news accounts. Since the data for this study involved only 42 news leads from front page news, the features ascribed to news leads included in this study are not reflective of all American English and Philippine English newspapers. It is suggested that more inquiry be done to verify these findings using larger data. Perhaps, for future research, it would be better to compare news leads from newspapers with similar news accounts such as those appearing in the world news section or main headline news that are reported in both foreign and local newspapers. Another study worth conducting will be a comparison between news leads in the two Englishes and those in Filipino.

5. IMPLICATIONS

It is interesting to see how news leads, a type of news discourse read almost everyday by millions of people, could shed light on cross-cultural influences interwoven in the fabric of writing norms practiced by a certain group of people. The similarity between the two Englishes in terms of structuring the news leads may point to the effects of the American influence in the Philippine educational system.

An understanding of this basic idea can help teachers guide their students in news writing classes in English. They can emphasize two things. First, they can encourage the students to adhere to the present journalistic practices propagated by the American system. In this way, Philippine writers can meet the expectations of Inner Circle English readers. Second, they can stimulate students to formulate unique structures characteristic of mature Filipino writers who can bring something new out of their assimilated foreign influences. The second emphasis may reflect the uniqueness of writing in Philippine English.

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