Translating Repetition in Political Speeches

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Abstract

This paper mainly engages with the area of rendering Arabic political speeches into English. The study basically tries to classify and figure out the most common linguistic and cultural problems that translators could face during the translation process. Moreover, a number of strategies will be presented to handle such obstacles. Needless to say, these strategies will be presented according to the way translator has rendered the words or sentences that are considered to be problematic. It is worth mentioning that this study concentrates on linguistic issues with special emphasis on repetition as this device is highly motivated within the nature of Arabic. Furthermore, a number of cultural problems will be addressed within the study specifically religious ones. The case study of this paper is a number of speeches that were given by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, about various subjects. These speeches and their translations can be found on the official website of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. After data analysis, the results will be drawn illustrating a number of examples extracted from the case study. A connection will also be established between the various strategies that have been used by the translator and the different types of translation norms specially initials norms classified by Gideon Toury (1995).

Keywords: translation studies, translation norms, translation strategies, repetition, political speeches, political discourse.

Introduction

At the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century, a number of scholars such as Itamar Even-Zohar, Gideon Toury, and Theo Hermans started to address translation through systematic studies. Translation was basically influenced by linguistics. Translation was discussed as a linguistic phenomenon, as a process that occurs between various languages. This operation was seen as the "transcoding" method between the language of the original text and the language of the target text.

Studying translation from a linguistic point of view could lead to obvious differences between the source language and target language that could occur within any translation. These variations found in translations could have resulted due to differences of the linguistic systems of languages. Within this context, translation norms are defined as rendering linguistic units by their recognized and accepted equivalents. When talking about norms, this means addressing how to present utterances and translations that are correct according to rules and norms. To make it clearer, some specific translations are agreed upon by the majority of translators at certain time whether the translations are accurate or inaccurate due to social or linguistic reasons. Thus, such translations become acceptable with the passing of time even if there are variations between the source and target text related to content and form.

Translation norms

Gideon Toury (1995) is considered to be the first who applied the concept of norms within the area of translation studies. Translation norms are described by Toury (1995, p. 55) as:

> The translation of general values or ideas shared by a community- as to what is right and wrong, adequate and inadequate- into performance instructions appropriate for and applicable to particular situations, specifying what is prescribed and forbidden as well as what is tolerated and permitted in a certain behavioural dimension.

Generally speaking, translational norms are what translators in a specific culture and at a particular period have normally agreed upon. They would usually be detected through scrutinising a corpus that consists of original texts and their translation for any regularities, strategies and repeated instances made by translators. These regularities and actions that are accepted by translators could occur on the level of both strategic details and the product of translations. In fact, within any area such as society, literature, politics and translation, norms systematically function as standards that regulate modes of actions. It should be noted that different modes of behaviour and actions can happen within a fixed limit referred to as scope of behaviour. The mode of behaviours is not random; but rather, it is delineated. Therefore, types of regularities can be thus predicted within a limited region.

The concept of norms by Toury is basically considered to be a fundamental concept that shifted the field of translation studies where translations started to be addressed from descriptive point of view. That is to say, translation quality assessment was addressed with regard to accuracy, however, Toury emphasizes on the point that translations should not only be studied based on accuracy but also the reasons and motivations that make translators to render utterances in a certain way. Any target text would be an accurate translation of the source text as long as it is accepted and familiarized by a given society (Toury, 1980). With Toury's model, one does not address the translation process "prescriptively"; therefore, the "perspective approach" was

replaced with "descriptive studies" of translations. By adopting "descriptive studies", translation scholars study translations via observing and scrutinising the target text for any regularities and repeated behaviours, and then trying to determine the reasons that could motivate translators to adopt these strategies, regularities and repeated behaviours. In addition to that, many translation scholars proposed specific points and systems to evaluate the quality of any translation or even how to produce "good" and accurate translations. These strategies and methods used to be standards in finding the accurate equivalents of the source text. However, the model of Toury and the concept of translation norms indicate that scholars would only describe and observe the different translated texts without judging the translation.

Types of norms
Norms function in two scopes. First, norms function in all types of translation. Second, norms function in every stage of the translation process. Accordingly, this can be clearly seen in the output of the translation product. "*Romeo and Juliet*", for example, was re-translated because the elements it had were not interesting for the Egyptian people, Therefore, it was modified into a melodramatic product. This means that norms affected the translation as the readership and the audience influences the trajectory of the translation tone (Salama-Carr, 2006).
Toury (1995) lists three groups of norms in descriptive translation studies to be considered: *preliminary norms, operational norms and initial norms* (ibid, pp. 56-61). Generally speaking, the translator deals with the preliminary norms which account for the directness of translation policy to establish the basis of his or her work, as well as the nature of a translation. It can be seen that the preliminary norms are established by factors external to the translational process itself.
On the other hand, the operational norms refer to the translator's decisions while translating, and will tend to reflect his or her choice for following whatever pole chosen when selecting the initial norm. Nevertheless, as far as the relation between operational and preliminary norms is concerned, as Toury himself states, there may be "mutual influences" between them or even "two-way conditioning" (ibid, p. 59).
        It seems that there are two types of norms that could be easily observed to study any translation. Shedding light on those kinds of translation norms will definitely help in understanding the whole image of descriptive translation studies.

Preliminary Norms: these are the norms that are connected with two sets. These two sets are of course interrelated and overlapping. The two sets on the one hand are interlinked with the reality of the translation policy adopted in doing the task. On the second hand, the sets are connected with the way the translation is guided and directed. This would include the source texts, text types and text subjects chosen to be translated. For example, political speeches could be more interesting for publishing houses nowadays, especially that Middle East region is witnessing Arab spring and a lot of changes of Arab countries in politics. Syrian political speeches, for instance, could be really significant for the western mass media as it is now the focus of attention for the whole world. Consequently, this could affect the choice of texts, types and subjects according to their authors to be translated i.e. these factors could effectively determine the translation process.

Operational Norms: here we are talking about the decisions taken when the translation is in progress, i.e. when the translator is doing the translation task. This of course includes how the translator chooses to change, modify, add, delete, any linguistic components which can then

affect the text in hand. Textual elements such as wording, rewording, rephrasing, formulating the text, tweaking, and other stylistic or textual touches are done effectively to produce the translation. All these decisions are taken to make the TT and the ST as close to each other as possible.

The **initial norms** would rather refer to the translator's decision about adhering to the norms of the source system "adequacy" or adhering to the target system "acceptability". Within descriptive studies' usual terminology, the former is labeled as a choice for *adequacy* to the source pole, whereas the latter refers to the search for *acceptability* in the target pole.

It is not surprising that the approach of translation that is source-text oriented deviates from the ST. This may be occasional or frequent. This is of course not a defect in translation. It is widely accepted for different reasons. Therefore, this deviation from the ST is not random; it is controlled by the norms of translation so that everything will be systematic. This is really significant because illogical deviations are viably ruled out and the translation product can be justified no matter how deviant from the ST it can be. It is ascertained that changes can occur in the process of translation from the ST to the TT either at micro-level decisions or macro-level decisions. All these decisions must be taken to account for adequacy and acceptability. That is to say, translation norms should not be randomly occurred; but rather based on making translation decisions as well as motivations related to social, political, linguistic reasons.

The actual translation will definitely necessitate some specific parameters between the two extremes of the norms as drawn up earlier. Hence, the two extremes need to be adopted as two salient poles for theoretical and methodological purposes. The norms are not applied to literary translation only, but they are also applied to other types of translations such as biblical, philosophical, inter-disciplinary or political translations (as in this study). This is not a direct or indirect confirmation that all translation types are dealt with in the same way; each type has its own parameters, as well. Most importantly, the norms can be applied to all societies and all the time. This is true because the norms do not govern one certain kind of translation and disregard other types, nor do they govern one community or one period and ignore others. The norms are ever-present in their validity in translation across languages and all over the time. It is worth mentioning here that the main focus of this study will be the initial norms. Having explained the term of translation norms, it is significant now to discuss the nature and role of political texts in general and specifically political speeches.

Political discourse
Reisigl (2008, p. 243) explains that political speeches could be defined as the art of a structured oral chain of coherent speech given about a specific social or political event in order to serve a particular purpose by a single person and used to address a specific audience. In addition to that, speeches could differ from each other in length, topic and function (i.e. to convince, warn, make arguments, give idea, etc.), according to the speaker, audience, style, event and according to the aim. Generally speaking, political texts are considered to be texts that are written to persuade, affect and change the public opinions (Fairlough, 1995, p. 182).
Schaffner (1997, p. 119-120) in her essay, *Strategies of Translating political speeches* emphasizes that the term 'political text' is vague as it covers a wide range of genres, such as political speeches, multilateral treaties, editorials, commentaries, press conferences with politicians, a politician's memoir etc. She also emphasizes that political texts are part of political discourse. This means that language used within political texts is primarily political and certainly, this language could be presented in many ways and forms. The criteria of a political

text could mostly be functional and thematic. Moreover, political texts are deeply connected with politics and they could be written according to history and culture. The main aims of political texts differ to assist politicians according to their different activities as well as to convince people of their ideas and to gain the confidence of the audience. Their topics would be mainly presented to successfully serve their ideas, programs, etc. Furthermore, in most cases, they are written to address the wider general public in society (Schaffner, 1997, pp. 119-120).

Characteristics of political discourse
According to Newmark (1991, p. 146), there are four points in connection with political concepts: **culture-bound**, mostly **value-laden**, **historically conditioned** and, **abstractions just** like all concepts. These four political points are, indeed, utilized to affect people, persuade them and change their minds. The following is an exemplification of such political concepts that are found within the case study of this dissertation. The use of phrases, which are specifically related to the basic system of governance in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, could noticeably be found within the speeches of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. That is to say, these phrases could only be found within the Saudi Arabia context, thus such phrases would be vague for people that are not familiar with the Saudi culture and politics. The following example, extracted from the case study, will clearly explain the **culture – bound** point.

• وفي المجال السياسي تم إصدار   نظام هيئة البيعة لتعزيز البعد المؤسسي في تداول الحكم ، وبدأت المجالس البلدية تمارس مسؤولياتها المحلية بعد انتخابات نزيهة ومشرفة...

• In the political field, the system of pledge of allegiance commission has been issued to enhance the constitutional dimension of assuming power.

Municipal Councils have practiced their local responsibilities following impartial and honorable election.

In this example regarding culture-bound concept, it clearly appears that the phrase "نظام هيئة البيعة" is specifically related to the Saudi culture and politics. This phrase could be defined as a Saudi commission that chooses the King and Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This commission includes the sons and grandsons of King Abdulaziz Al Saud. With regard to translation, it seems that the translator, in this example, has opted for literary translation and rendered the phrase as "the system of pledge of allegiance commission." If someone reads the phrase in English for the first time, he/she might be able to know that there is a kind of "pledge of allegiance" commission in Saudi Arabia. However, one might not understand the deep meaning of the phrase and the commission's mission unless he/she is familiar with Saudi culture. A number of phrases related to **"historically-conditioned"** point have been detected in the case study. King Abdullah, for example, has mentioned that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been founded by the late King Abdulaziz. Moreover, he mentioned that the late King Abdulaziz has united the people of Saudi Arabia on the basis of Islam. The following examples, taken from the corpus, will illustrate the "historically-conditioned" point. Furthermore, he also mentioned that King Abdulaziz has helped in making Saudi Arabia one of the safest and most stable countries in a relatively unsafe area. The following examples, taken from the corpus, will illustrate the **"historically-conditioned"** point further.

• لقد أرسى الملك عبدالعزيز / طيب الله ثراه / أسس هذه الدولة ووحدها على هدي الشريعة الاسلامية...

• Late King Abdulaziz founded and united this state on the basis of Islamic Sharia.

• ... واصبحت المملكة وطن الاستقرار في محيط مضطرب بالفتن والحروب...

• The kingdom became the homeland of stability in an environment surrounded by troubles and wars.

Some instances with regard to **"value-laden"** concept have also been found in the case study. Such a political term refers to positive and negative events, objects or activities (Newmark, 1988). For example, King Abdullah, in one speech, warns that security forces and people of Saudi Arabia should cooperate and unite to eliminate terrorists who try to destabilize security in the country. Furthermore, He warns that government and people will confront terrorism whatever it costs until all forms of terrorism are completely eliminated. Consider the following examples, taken from the case study, on **"value-laden"** point.

• فلقد سعى مرتكبوا تلك الاعمال الى زعزعة الامن والاستقرار في اهم معقل للإسلام بيد اننا نؤكد لكم أن   التماسك والتعاون بين الشعب والحكومة ويقظة الاجهزة الامنية وشجاعة رجالاتها سوف تقف بعون الله بالمرصاد لتلك الفئة الضالة...

• The perpetrators of these acts have sought to destabilize security in the most important stronghold of Islam.

I stress that cohesion and cooperation between the people and the government and vigilance and courage of security forces will withstand this deviating group.

• وهذا يجعلنا عازمين وبكل حزم على التصدي للإرهاب ومظاهره مهما طال الزمن ومهما كلف الثمن حتى ترد الفئة الضالة الى رشدها او يتم استئصالها من المجتمع السعودي.

• We are <u>firmly</u> determined to <u>confront terrorism</u> in all its forms <u>however it might last</u> and <u>whatever it might cost</u> until this deviating group comes to its sense or is uprooted from the Saudi society.

One can easily see through the illustrative examples that King Abdullah directly warns people and terrorists at the same time. Regarding people, he urges people to unite and cooperate with security forces to tackle terrorism. On the other hand, he warns that security forces and united people of Saudi Arabia will firmly face and confront terrorists whatever time it takes and whatever it costs. To make it clear, the speaker sometimes persuade people to act in a certain way and at other times intimidates that there will be bad consequences.

A number of examples have also been found in connection with abstractions which refer to the political terms and phrases that are used to convince the audience about proposed issues. The following examples will further explain this concept.

• ولقد ركزت هذه الخطة على أولويات يأتي في مقدمتها المحافظة على القيم الاسلامية وتعزيز الوحدة الوطنية والامن الوطني والاستقرار الاجتماعي ورفع مستوى المعيشة وتوفير فرص العمل للمواطنين وتنمية القوى البشرية ورفع كفاءتها وتنويع القاعدة الاقتصادية وزيادة اسهام القطاع الخاص في التنمية وتحقيق التنمية...

• The plan has focused on a package of priorities, led by the preservation of Islamic values, <u>enhancement of national unity, national security</u> and social stability, <u>upgrading standards of living</u>, <u>provision of job opportunities for Saudi job-seekers</u>, development of human labor force,

upgrading his skills, diversification of economic base, increase of private sector contribution to the development...

• ونظرا لاهمية الاستثمار في التنمية الوطنية فسنواصل / إن شاء الله / دعم القطاع الخاص وسنجعل منه شريكا استراتيجيا في التنمية الاقتصادية كما سنقوم بتذليل العقبات التي تواجه المستثمر السعودي والاجنبي وذلك بالاستفادة / ما امكن / من المزايا النسبية في الاقتصاد السعودي.

• Due to the importance of <u>investment</u> in the national development, we are planning to <u>continue our support for the private sector</u> to become a strategic partner in the economic development and we are planning to <u>remove all obstacles facing Saudi and foreign investors</u> to make them benefit, whatever possible, from the proportional privileges in the Saudi economy.

The underlined concepts are considered to be strongly connected with the political texts especially the speeches that intend to present the government's plan. These concepts, which refer to abstractions, are merely general phrases that could be used to address the people about the economic situation of the country. Using such persuasive phrases would indicate the attempt of convincing people that the government is doing the best to enhance the economy of the country by, for instance, enhancing national unity, encouraging investment and creating more opportunities for the people who are in need for jobs. By doing so, the addresser is basically convincing the people that the government is supporting them.

Having identified the context of study and case study, it is really significant to identify the role that repetition device plays within Arabic as well as English. Moreover, it is also useful to figure out the frequency of utilizing repetition in political discourse.

Repetition in Arabic

Repetition can frequently be used especially in the area of political speeches within the nature of Arabic. On the other hand, it appears that repetition is not really used within the system of English. Henceforth, employing repetition in English would make the text appear strange for an English audience. Eventually, this could normally result in odd sentences and sometimes unacceptable texts (see Holes, 1995, pp. 269-272; Johnstone, 1991, pp. 41-46; Hatim, 1997, p. 32). Accordingly, repetition is almost dissuaded in the English language.

Such a contradistinction in the use of repetition among the two languages would clearly command and condition the translator's preferences and strategies. Consequently, this could result in strategies and shifts adopted by translators when performing repetition, especially in the area of Arabic-English political speech translation. Bearing in mind that the target audience is an English speaking audience, these strategies seem to be motivated as a result of adhering to the target language norms. It is significant to point out that translators are not forced to adopt these strategies or translation "shifts", but rather it is their own choice to adhere to these strategies and procedures. When talking about strategies that have been optionally adopted, one would certainly consider the accurate instances to detect and "reconstruct" the different types of translation norms (Toury, 1995).

Repetition in English

Repetition is calculated negatively in the English sophistication. Haiman (1997, pp. 65-66) argues that English favours economically motivated non-repetition though; this is not to say that repetition does not occur in English. However, the repetition device is most likely used in English as a figure of speech or to emphasize on an important and particular issue and in some

cases, it is rarely used to make the text coherent. According to Gutwinski (1976, p. 80), repetition of the same linguistic item in English can be cohesive if it occurs in an adjacent environment as well as it can help the reader call to mind a lexical item and relate it with another repetition of the same item, which in turn creates coherence.

Corpus of the study

The corpus of the research consists of a number of speeches delivered by King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques. These speeches have been translated into English on the official website of King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. The speeches used for this study have been chosen because repetition seems to be used more than the other speeches.

It is significant to identify the various translation strategies in order to point out the different norms that are responsible for translating the instances of repetition. Therefore, a comparative analysis has to be done between the source texts and their translations in order to detect the "translation shifts" during the translation process.

Paraphrase

This strategy consists of paraphrasing the occurrences of repetition found in the source text. Within this strategy, the translators seem to adopt the free translation method where they reproduce "the matter without the manner, or the content with the form of the original" (Newmark, 1988, p. 46). The following example extracted from the case study illustrates this strategy.

• وإني على ثقة إن شاء الله من أن حكمة ودراية أخي سمو الشيخ حمد، كفيلة بإنجاح مداولاتنا وسط ظروف عربية وإقليمية بالغة الدقة والحساسية.

• I am quite sure that the confidence, wisdom and experience of Sheikh Hamad are suffice to make the summit , which is held amid Arab and regional <u>critical</u> circumstances, a success.

Within this example, one can clearly see that the speaker has used the words "بالغة الدقة والحساسية" to describe the circumstances "ظروف" that Arab countries face at that time. From a translational point of view, the translator has chosen to render the three aforementioned words with one word in the target language as "critical". By doing so, the translator adapted the paraphrase strategy where "critical" used to render the words "الحساسية" and " الدقة ". Despite the fact that the translator could render the aforementioned words as "critical and sensitive circumstances", the translator has chosen to render them with only one word in the target text.

Use of synonyms

This strategy includes translating the occurrences of repetition by using various synonyms. That is to say, the translator seems, within this strategy, to render the repeated words found in the source text by using different words in the target text that have almost the same meaning. Consider the following example extracted from the case study.

• سمو الرئيس أيها الأخوة الأفاضل أمامنا   جدول أعمال حافل بقضايا وهموم وطننا العربي الكبير سياسية واقتصادية واجتماعية وثقافية ومؤخراً استضافة المملكة العربية السبع ودية مؤتمر القمة العربية الاقتصادية التنموية والاجتماعية الثالثة والتي صدر عنها العديد من <u>القرارات</u> التي تهدف إن شاء الله إلى تعزيز التنمية العربية و دعم التكامل   الاقتصادي وقد جاءت <u>قرارات</u> قمة الرياض ولله الحمد استكمالاً <u>لقرارات</u> قمة الكويت وشرم الشيخ...

• His Highness the President,

Dear brothers,

We have a wide-range agenda of our Grand Arab nation's political, economic, social and cultural issues and concerns, the most recent of which was the 3rd Arab economic, developmental and social summit held in Saudi Arabia and issued a number of <u>resolutions</u> aiming to further enhance Arab development and promote economic integration. Riyadh summit's <u>outcome</u> was complementary to the <u>decisions</u> of Kuwait and Sharm Al-Sheikh previous summits...

One can clearly see that the underlined words "قرارات" have been repeated three times within the source text. However, the translator has chosen to render it with three synonyms in the target text as "resolutions", "outcome" and "decisions". Needless to say, the translator could have translated the repeated word "قرارات" as "resolutions" or "decisions" repeated three times in the target text. It is significant, henceforth, to figure out the reasons that motivate the translator to adopt such strategies when handling the translation of repeated words.

Deletion

Within this strategy, one element of the repeated words is deleted in the target text. This could be done by adopting "semantic translation" where the translators emphasize on the intended meaning rather than rendering repetition patterns (see Newmark, 1988). By doing so, the translator appears to see that there is no need to render all the repeated words found in the source text. Henceforth, one can see some words are repeated twice or three times in the source text but rendered with only one word in the target text. The following example taken from the corpus study is presented below with a brief discussion.

• ومن هذا الواقع المرير فإن الشعب الفلسطيني وقياداته مطالبون اليوم أكثر من أي وقت لتجاوز كل الخلافات والوقوف <u>جبهة</u> واحدة تستند في نضالها إلى <u>جبهة</u> عربية متراصة توفر لها كل الدعم والمساندة خاصة...

• Out of this bitter situation, the Palestinian people and leadership are required more than any time before to overcome their differences and stand united leaning, in its struggle, on an Arab orchestrated <u>front</u> that should provide them with all kinds of support and assistance...

It is obvious within this example that the word "جبهة" has been repeated twice by the speaker within the boundary of the same sentence. As explained above under the sections on "Repetition in Arabic" and "Repetition in English", the usage of repetition seems to be highly encouraged within the structure of Arabic. On the other hand, it appears that repetition is rarely used within the structure of English. Henceforth, one can clearly see that the translator has chosen to delete one occurrence of the repeated word "جبهة". It is obvious that there is no obligatory grammatical rule urging the translator to do this deletion.

Merging

This strategy contains merging the two repeated words found in the source text to be rendered as one word in the target text. In other words, when two words have nearly the same meaning, the translator has chosen to merge the two words in the target text. This strategy will be further explained by analyzing the following example extracted from the case study.

• ... من حيث ملامستها لاحتياجات المواطن العربي والاستجابة <u>لتطلعاته وطموحاته</u> غير أن بلوغ الأهداف المرجوة من هذه القرارات يتطلب نقلة نوعية في منهج وأسلوب العمل العربي المشترك سواء من حيث إعادة هيكل الجامعة العربية...

• ...as they touched the needs of Arab citizens and met their <u>aspirations</u>. However, reaching the targeted goals of those decisions requires a qualitative leap in the method and style of joint Arab Action including the restructuring of the Arab League...

Within this example of repetition, the words "تطلعاته" and "طموحاته" have been mentioned in the source text. The two words are mainly considered to be synonyms within the source language that literally mean "ambitions" and "aspirations". However, one can see that the two words are merged into one word within the target text as "aspirations". Therefore, the translator seems to be aware of the target language system and has not chosen to translate it, for example, as "their ambitions and aspirations" because this will sound redundant.

Discussion of findings

Having analyzed the data and compared the repetition examples found in the source text with their translations in the target text, it appears that the translator has adopted various translation strategies when handling the occurrences of repetition. These strategies mainly seem to avoid and minimize the instances of repetition found in the original text whenever possible. It is crucial to identify the reasons that motivate the translator to adopt the aforementioned strategies explained in the previous section when rendering repetition. It seems that there is no binding rule that could motivate the translator to avoid or minimize the occurrences of repetition. However, any translation process involves two forces namely the source text language and the target text language. In other words, the translator basically deals with two sets of norms: the norms of the source text and its culture "adequacy norms" and the norms of the target text and its culture "acceptability norms". Henceforth, the translator seems to be aware of the target text language, thus, the translation process appears to be affected by the constraints of the target language "acceptability norms". As far as the norms of English language are concerned, it was previously explained that repetition seems to be rarely used within the structure of English and sometimes could be discouraged. On the other hand, it is highly functional, used and encouraged within the system of Arabic. Accordingly, it could be safely concluded that this variation between the norms of the source text (Arabic) language "adequacy" and the norms of the target text (English) language "acceptability" can be responsible of adopting such strategies.

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