Approaches to Language Teaching: Criticism from Theory to Practice

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The criticism of any approach should be based on clear regulations. When we criticise any theory, our intention is that this criticism should meet some crucial requirement that should be systematic and not sporadic. "Systematic", means that it is based on a specific set of principles or criteria, which are the same set of principles that are used in such a way as to evaluate all the existing teaching/learning theories. These principles are described as psychologically motivated principles, which are the richness of the input, the building of the students' competency, and their involvement in meaningful communicative acts. The exhibition of an approach such as the Audiolingual methodology pushes us to investigate the question, what is problematic with it in the light of the learning criteria? One of the Audiolingual methodology's apparent weaknesses is the output and the comprehensibility of the input. The Communicative Approach is good, but it is criticised because it does not provide a rich input. How can students communicate if the teachers fail to expose them to some linguistic stimulus? The Total Physical Response is known for the richness of the input, but the performance is poor. This paper is about learning how to criticise any language teaching approach and how to define a good one. The evaluation is not based on the students' outcome, but on the benefit of finding out why a certain approach did not work in terms of what is taking place in the learners' mind during the learning process.

Keywords:
Systematic, sporadic, learning components, comprehensibility, linguistic stimulus, learning process.

1. INTRODUCTION

Balas and Moraru (2011) defined the learning theory (LT) as a conceptual learning framework that indicates how information is acquired, processed, and retained during the process of learning. It is a theory that provides clear instruction for students in such a way as to help them learn how to use information in a learning context. In this paper, our intention is to shed some light on some of the existing approaches to language teaching such as Suggestopedia, the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, the Total Physical Response (TPR), the Direct Method (DM), and The Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory.

The criticism of these approaches is based on specific and concrete requirements. When we criticise some theories T1, T2, T3 … Tn, we want this criticism to meet an interesting requirement that should be systematic and not sporadic. For a criticism to be systematic, it means that it is done on the basis of a specific set of principles or criteria C1, C2, C3 … Cn.

It is the same set of principles that are applied in order to evaluate all the existing teaching/learning theories. These principles are described as psychologically motivated principles, which are the variety and richness of the input, communicativeness where the lessons contribute to the building of competency and the construction of the grammar of the target language, and the richness in terms of students' active engagement in terms of communication.

When we exhibit one of the approaches, for example the Audiolingual methodology, we try to answer the question, what is problematic with it in terms of the three learning principles. For instance, one of the main criticisms that has been levelled against the Audiolingual methodology is the output, because students just memorise conversations, which does not help them to produce. It has also been criticised for the comprehensibility of the input. Sometimes students are given conversations in which they imitate the speaker. They do not even understand the content of these conversations. Another example is that of the Communicative Approach that is good, but it does not provide students with a varied and rich input. How can students communicate if they are not exposed to some strong linguistic stimulus? The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach is good as far as the input is concerned, but the output is poor. This analysis is about

learning how to criticise these language teaching approaches and how to define a good one. The criticism is not based on the outcome of what is done in class. The benefit of the study is to find out why a certain approach did not work in terms of what is taking place in the mind of the learners during the process of learning.

2. SUGGESTOPEDIA

According to Lozanov (2005), Suggestopedia is a pedagogical system of teaching where the teacher tries to activate the hidden reserve capacities of the mind in order to accelerate the students' learning competence in comparison to the traditional methods of teaching. The failure of the Audiolingual Method in the 1960s paved the way for Lozanov's approach to emerge as a new learning/teaching method. Georgi Lozanov coined the term "Suggestopedia" and identified it publically for the first time in 1965. "Suggestology is the science of the art of liberating and stimulating the personality both under guidance and alone" (Lozanov, 1978, p. vii). It is a theory in which he compared the human brain to the muscles by claiming that the brain can be developed in the same way the muscles do. This method stimulates that all the senses and the learning acquisition process take place in an easy and fun atmosphere where the baroque music[1] is most of the time played as a means of inspiration for the students. There is an emphasis on the use of music as a source of relaxation for both teachers and students.

Emotionally, the teacher should be very relaxed, caring, and open. The classroom should be well decorated and equipped with the necessary learning materials. The seats should be very

comfortable. The students should feel that they are learning in an anxiety-free environment where they are able to use their reserve capacities perfectly and try to desuggest their fear of failure as a main obstacle that hinders their learning (Lozanov, 1978).

2.1. The demonstration of a Suggestopedia lesson

In a joint project by Diane Larsen-Freeman and the U.S. Information Agency, the American English (2013) introduced a demonstration of Suggestopedia as a language teaching method through a teaching video session for intermediate level ESL students under the theme of a house. Lise Sparrow, an ESL teacher, conducted the lesson, which is shorter than the original one because it is just meant to introduce Suggestopedia as an effective teaching method by focusing on its best practices.

Ms. Lise started her lesson by playing the baroque music. Once the students seemed to be very relaxed, she began reading a text in a comprehensible way. It was about a

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[1] The baroque music is a Western art music style that is composed between 1600 and 1750. Georgi Lozanov used it as a background music for the Suggestopedia lessons in order to make the students well relaxed and eager to learn.

story of a woman who was doing some housework such as preparing some coffee, cleaning the house, etc. While the teacher was reading for the first time, she was at the same time performing exactly what she was recounting while the music was still on. In the second reading, which was passive, she played a different kind of music and read the same text using a normal English tone. In this case, the students were supposed to understand the text without having her repeating the dramatic movements. In the third reading, she provided the students with the text and started to read it altogether in a form of drilling. At some point during the lesson, the teacher used a tape recorder to read the same text again. She ended the session by working on vocabulary and pronunciation.

2.3. The analysis of a Suggestopedia lesson

In defining the input as the first component of learning in this teaching session, we can mention the use of the baroque music and the reading of the text. That is to say, the first reading with dramatic techniques, and the second reading by doing it in a normal English tone, as well as the use of the tape recorder with a different voice. In terms of multiplicity, the teacher was trying to create variety by using different voices. She was also trying to create some variety in terms of modality. There are two voices, one is physically present because she was speaking to the students and the other one is just played by using a tape recorder. The use of the tape recorder brings what is called "distortion" due to the distorted voice of the tape. It is similar to what happens in daily life when two people are talking to each other in the street in a noisy background, which is part of the competence. That is why there is a need for a kind of variety. If the English language that one listens to is always neat and clear, then his or her competence will never be built in a similar way as an English native speaker. Therefore, there must be some input in which the discourse of the conversation is spoilt by some background elements including noise. Sometimes the use of the citation markers is very important in the sense that while talking, one usually uses some ''hums'', ''hisses'', and "pops" as hesitation markers. The distortion factor should be taken into consideration as well. It means that the creation of a variety of input is so crucial. Therefore, when doing the evaluation of the lesson as a whole, these factors should also be taken into consideration due to the impact that might have on the learning process.

2.4. Pros and cons of the teaching method

In the light of criticising Suggestopedia as an approach to language teaching, the analysis of the lesson should be conducted on the basis of three main principles. The principle of the richness of the Input, the principle of Competency and how it is built with the students, and the principle of engagement and to what extent the students are actively involved in meaningful Communicative Acts.

The first thing that can be noticed in this lesson is that there is a unique Input. Numerically speaking, the teacher uses the same text of the same story. She reads it by trying to include some variety, but this variety is not numerical. That

is to say, there is no multiplicity. In fact, multiplicity is not about modality, variety, or even making it different. It is about having Input that is numerically distinct such as listening to a conversation, watching a movie extract, or listening to a text that the students are reading. Therefore, this fact should be scored negatively while evaluating this Suggestopedia lesson because the teacher should have included a numerically distinct input, which she did not manage to do.

In terms of Competency Building, the students did not pave the way for any conversation or interaction at all. There was a drilling, which is very important, but the problem is that the students' Energeia (Humboldt, 1988) or expressivity is not activated. Thus, the students just kept repeating the text and learned the vocabulary they were using during the teaching session, and at one point, one of them was selected to act it in terms of movements while the other students were reading the text and reacting to it. It was good as a drill for building competency, but it was not enough. The problem again is that the students were not involved in any communicative acts, which simply means that they were not learning properly. This is then one of the weaknesses of Suggestopedia as a language teaching approach. There are many quality drills, which are competency builders. There is a difference between building a competency and facilitating the building of a competency. Among the drills that this teacher used, a pronunciation task where she conducted an activity in which she was teaching her students how to pronounce the suffix "-ed" at the end of the past tense verbs. She provided them with envelops that contain two cards with two different colours. One card with the letter "T" and the second one with the letter "D". The teacher pronounces some verbs in the past tense and the students raise either the card with the letter "T" or the one with the letter "D", depending on the sound they hear at the end of each word. It is the quality drill that helps students to build a competency of pronouncing the past form of the verbs. This is a good example of a facilitator of building a competence.

Still, competency fails when students do not activate their Energeia by using language in a conversation for resolving a conflict. That is why we need to distinguish between facilitating the building of competency and the building of competency. The absence of the third principle, which is related to the students' active engagement in communicative acts during the process of learning, shows that they are not learning properly. This scarcity of active communication situations or events that are usually referred to as Energeia in any Suggestopedia lesson indicates its failure and inadequacy in terms of adopting a good quality context that paves the way for the students' full communicative involvement and successful interaction. In fact, Energeia represents a stage where real learning takes place.

2.5. Limitations of Suggestopedia

However, Suggestopedia did not endure for long for different reasons. Steinberg, Nagata, & Aline (2001) claimed that after introducing this method as a teaching approach for more than thirty years, "the method, which has been given a fair try in many countries, has still not provided convincing evidence in support of its extravagant claims" (p. 206). In relation to Constructivism and Behaviourism, we can say that, on one hand, Suggestopedia builds upon its activities on the interaction that takes place between students. This kind of interaction foreshadows the main concept of Piaget's learning theory in terms of the way knowledge is built. On the other hand, a Suggestopedia class will not be operational unless there is a reception of what the Behaviourists call response from the student's part. The response that should be based on a stimulus representation. Therefore, the crucial common features between Suggestopedia and these two learning theories did not intercede for it to survive. It is mainly because it did not offer an extra value that would benefit its users. The deterioration of this method was emphasised by Scovel (1979) when he claimed that, "Suggestopedy, taken as a self-contained method for language instruction, offers at best nothing much that can be of benefit to present day, eclectic EFL programs, and at worst nothing more than an oversold package of pseudoscientific gobbledygook" (p. 258). However, no one can deny the importance of Suggestopedia as a teaching and learning method, but its limitations put an end to its overspread and implementation, and its "only legacy today seems to be that some teachers play music before they begin class in order to calm students down" (Steinberg, Nagata, & Aline, 2001, p. 206).

3. EXAMPLES OF SOME ENERGEIA PRACTICES
3.1. Introduction

When teachers introduce a variety of input in the teaching process, they automatically help in the activation of Energeia among their learners (Humboldt, 1988). When the facilitating competency builders are used, the goal behind it is the actual building of competency among students. Therefore, whatever the level of the students is, we should never lose sight of the fact that there are facilitators, instruments of building competency. The distinction is of paramount importance that it should be highlighted. It is like a chemical equation where one is building a kind of cognitive equation in which he or she brings different components together expecting an effect, taking into consideration that he or she is talking about competency. When we talk about competency, what we need is those facilitators of building competency. The most mundane example is the use of translation in teaching as a genuine facilitator competency builder. Another example is the correction of pronunciation. On the other hand, whenever you find students talking about things that have to do with their opinions, or with what they think to be right, or what happened or might happen to them as an expression in the conversation in which they are

engaged, it should be considered as a significant sign that shows that the learning acquisition is taking place and that the students' Energeia is properly activated.

3.2. Group discussion

Group discussion, which is a form of a positive and creative interaction that takes place through discussion, is an example of Energeia activity. While dealing with such discussion activities, we need to take into consideration three crucial questions in order to identify as many Energeia criteria as possible. The questions should go in the following way:

a. What is the component of learning we are dealing with? (The answer is the "Input").

b. What is the phenomenon of learning we are going to study? (The answer is "Group Discussion").

c. What is the aspect of the phenomenon we are dealing with? (The answer is "Quality").

Group discussion, as an Energeia activity, helps in the creation of variety in terms of good quality input in which students are fully engaged through meaningful conversations and communicative acts. This kind of variety in terms of the richness of the activities triggers the students' learning and boosts their language performance.

3.3. Paragraph reading

Among the Energeia activities, we can also mention the interactional activities that inspire students. Paragraph reading is a perfect example of it. In this activity, for instance, the students can work on a wh-word chart while reading a paragraph. In the first step, the students are set into pairs. One of them is 'A' and the other one is 'B'. 'A' will read the paragraph for 'B' while 'B' is just listening, then 'B' will read it for 'A' while 'A' is just listening. In the second step, the students will do the same thing but in a reversed way. Hence, 'A' will be 'B' and 'B' will be 'A'. In the third step, the students will do the reading again, but they will do a task such as to underline something in the text. For example, they might be asked to underline all the wh-questions in the paragraph or all the proper nouns that are mentioned in it. They are also asked to do something with the text after reading it such as finding the main idea, etc. The fourth step is about collective reading. It means that I am reading the text and you are following. When I stop reading and snap, you continue the reading. Then, I snap and you stop reading and then I keep reading myself. When I snap again, I stop reading and you follow. In the fifth step, the students change the pairs and the teacher asks them to read the paragraph for each other and fill the given chart. This activity is not a conversation, but an interactional activity where learning is taking place in a different but a serious way. Paragraph reading is then another type of Energeia activities in which students invest some effort in such a way as to develop their learning by being engaged in meaningful conversations and interactions.

3.4. Reverse-engineering

We can also talk about what is called the teacher's assumption about learning. In order to avoid it while dealing

with group discussion and students' engagement, especially when it has to do with the number of groups, the number of students in a group, and the number of the topics to be discussed, in addition to the setting as an important factor, there is a strategy that should be followed which is called Reverse-engineering. That is to say, one should start from quality, from what he or she is supposed to do and not from what one does in class as part of the practice or what one has just read about it in teaching books. According to Lambert (2004), Reverse-engineering is "an approach to planning sequences of communication tasks that require learners to become personally involved in their learning" (p. 18). In Reverse-engineering techniques, one starts from the end, from what is useful for the students in terms of available opportunities of engagement in any conversation or quality group discussion. The "stand-up surveys" activities in which one has series of questions that the students ask each other while going around and at the same time reporting about their classmates is also an example of it. It is composed of a series of activities in which the students are actively engaged in non-stop conversations while using the English language interactively. A Reverse-engineering task is based on three different phases: the identification of the different constituents of the communication task, the designation of the task in such a way as to deal with each component alone, and its improvement into instructional unit (Lambert, 2004).

In the reverse way, teachers should first think about what they want to do and then try to find a creative way through which the students can perform it. Learners may go beyond their expectations in terms of performance and develop the quality of their learning capacities through a learning process. It is another way of getting out of the box and see other ways of doing it the right way.

4. TOTAL PHYSICAL RESPONSE (TPR) APPROACH

According to Asher (1968), the Total Physical Response (TPR) is a method that is "designed to accelerate listening comprehension of a foreign language by having subjects give physical response when they heard a foreign utterance" (p. 2). It is a learning/teaching method, which is developed in the 1960s by James Asher as an alternative to the existing methods such as the Audiolingual approach after more than twenty-one experiments spent in observing young children learning their first language. The use of body movements is one of the main aspects of the TPR method. It is designed to help young learners learn a foreign language by responding physically to different commands given either by their teachers or classmates as a kind of demonstration for their understanding. The commands are also performed by the teachers and repeated by the students in a continuous and repeatedly way until they memorise them. The activities may vary between simple and complex ones. In a TPR class, the process of learning takes place by adopting some procedures that start by the choice of vocabulary and matching it with the learners' body movements, and ends with the practical phase

where the teacher makes sure that these learners are performing well before introducing the new commands. TPR is a teaching method that combines between language learning and body movements. The learners learn the target language in a funny and easy way, and the teachers feel at ease with both the preparation of the lessons that are not too demanding and the size of the class that does not make any difference whether it is big or small. It is one of the ideal methods for learning vocabulary in action by using body language in a process that involves a listener who acts what the mentor demonstrates in an anxiety-free and engaging environment where the conditions are created in a similar way for learning the first language or any foreign language.

However, Byram and Hu (2013) stated that Asher's method is criticised because it is an approach that fits best beginning students only. Systematically speaking, TPR is a good method as far as the richness of the input is concerned, and the output is not required until the students are ready for it. Still, it is considered by the Audiolingual teachers as a weakness because "Asher would provide as many as ten to twenty hours of pure listening tied to body movements before speech is attempted" (Sutherland, 1978, p. 205). Another criticism is related to the way Asher deals with error correction and feedback. Accordingly, Asher (1977) implies that one does not have to disturb the students when they start to speak because they would not be able to express their thoughts correctly. Asher's idea of restricting students' correction is based on the fact that "production is primarily a developmental phenomenon and therefore errors in speaking are necessary distortions which will gradually be reduced over time as are errors of native-speaking children" (Sutherland, 1978, p. 206).

Actually, the focus of the TPR method on the students' physical response to the teacher's commands restricts their creativity in terms of reading and speaking and prevents them from producing anything else apart from what the teacher provides them with. It is a teacher-centered method where the students are learning passively with a poor output and less creativity. The largest part of a TPR lesson is spent on drilling in an imperative mood and the students are supposed to listen more than to speak. The TPR method takes the teacher for an ideal model and commander of classroom activity rather than a facilitator and a learners' classroom colleague (Rodgers, 2001).

5. THE DIRECT METHOD (DM)

The Direct Method, or Natural Method, was developed by Maximilian Berlitz at the end of the 19th century as a reaction to the Grammar Translation Method. In the 1980s, and in a quest for the development of alternative methods of language teaching, Diane Larsen-Freeman identified the Direct Method as an alternative method that can be used to narrow the gap between theory and practice in the field of teaching. The Direct Method is a method that does not allow the use of the first language. In terms of communication, the meaning is conveyed in the target language by demonstrating, using visual aids, and giving examples as a way of prioritising fluency over accuracy. The teacher allows students' self-correction for both pronunciation and grammar by asking them helpful questions. In order to persuade their students to communicate and think in the target language, teachers focus on production rather than memorization (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Among the principle techniques that the Direct Method adopts in teaching a language, we can mention reading aloud, self-correction, dictation, paragraph writing, and conversation activities which are based on asking and answering questions in the target language with no resort to the first language (Richard and Rodgers, 1999; Rogers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The Direct Method is criticised for comparing students to children who are acquiring their first language, a fact that makes the learning process difficult for them. This difficulty is embodied in the fact that while children are learning their first language, they have no background experience, which is totally different from the learner of a foreign language who has already acquired one. Another aspect of difficulty in the use of this method is related to the amount of time the teacher needs in order to explain some abstract or difficult words in the absence of the use of the first language. This difficulty also becomes apparent when the teacher is dealing with large classes where the number of students is big, which requires more effort, preparation, and energy.

As a conclusion, we can deduce that the successful implementation of the Direct Method in order to improve the learners' speaking skills by focusing on the oral practices depends largely on the teacher's good teaching abilities more than on the method itself. In the light of the impossibility of using a unique method to teach a foreign language due to the absence of the consideration of the language characteristics such as creativity (Chomsky, 1957), it has become an urgent need to combine different methods in order to achieve the required goal which is the learning of a foreign language adequately.

6. MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES (MI) THEORY

The Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory is another approach to language teaching and learning. Gardner (1983) realized that teachers and educators are looking forward to developing human intelligence through the adoption of a new adequate thinking framework, which should be totally different from the classical perception of intelligence. According to Gardner (1983), the MI theory suggests that there must be other aspects of learning styles that should be taken into consideration while dealing with the learners rather than what we know as Linguistic or Mathematical abilities. He stated that there are eight different individual kinds of intelligences, which are distinct from the famous standardized or general intelligence IQ tests. He combined these

intelligences in such a way as to pave the way for every learner to meet his or her individual abilities (Nolen, 2003). He identified them as (1) Visual-Spatial Intelligence, (2) Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence, (3) Musical Intelligence, (4) Logical-Mathematical Intelligence, (5) Verbal-Linguistic Intelligence, (6) Interpersonal Intelligence, (7) Intrapersonal Intelligence, and (8) Naturalistic Intelligence (See table 1).

These intelligences reveal the existence of some hidden powerful intellectual competences displayed among human beings that need some development in such a way as

to enable them to touch upon their strong and weak intelligences and be aware of them. "Yet the possession of an intelligence is most accurately thought of as a potential: an individual in possession of an intelligence can be said to have no circumstance that prevents him from using that intelligence" (Gardner, 1983, p. 73). It has been 39 years since Howard Gardner published his famous book, *Frames of Mind,* 1983. He stated that this theory is based on purely empirical research.

Table 1: Characteristic Features of the MI Theory

N°	Intelligences	Characteristic Features	Observation
1	Visual-spatial intelligence	- Learn better through visualization - Good at arts and design	Eye contact
2	Bodily-Kinesthetic intelligence	- Learn better through movement	The focus on the body
3	Musical intelligence	- Learn better through music and rhythm - Talented in music	Enjoy the use of rhythm
4	Logical-Mathematical intelligence	- Good in Mathematics - Like to use logic and numbers	Reasonable
5	Verbal-Linguistic intelligence	- Have good memory - Like conversations	Sociable
6	Interpersonal intelligence	- Good communication	To consider others' feelings and emotions
7	Intrapersonal intelligence	- Focus on oneself - Aware of their strengths and weaknesses - Able to control their emotions	To have access to one's feelings and manipulate them.
8	Naturalistic intelligence	- Love the natural world and cope with it.	Linked to nature

The first field that is influenced by Gardner's ideas is that of education. Through the adoption of the MI theory, teachers succeeded to decipher their students' intelligences and combine them in such a way as to help them unveil their own intelligences and make use of them. The teachers' new perceptions of the students' performances through the use of their intelligences marks the beginning of a new era in the domain of education in terms of language acquisition, language learning, and language teaching. The implementation of the MIs theory provided teachers and educators with satisfying answers to the students' individual differences, which implies that there is no so-called stupid or low acquiring students in comparison to the so-called intelligent ones. All what we have is that there are some students who are aware of their intellectual strengths and make use of them, and others who are still waiting to discover them. It is a fair way that reinforces the learners' equal chances in the process of learning (Boughoulid, 2021).

The fact of incorporating a variety of educational tools and strategies in the classroom reflects a positive effect on the learners in terms of their self-confidence, success, and learning. Hence, these intelligence domains portray the learners' individual learning capacities, which exposes us to the reason behind the success or failure in one subject and not in another.

7. CONCLUSION

In the light of the different approaches to language teaching, we can state that group discussion is very important in the sense that it a creative and engaging teaching activity that enhances the students' learning in terms of communication and language development. Nevertheless, there is a need for creating a variety in terms of activities in which students are fully involved. There is also a need to make sure that the teacher is dealing with it in terms of reverse-engineering. This does not only inspire the teachers to demonstrate it in a certain way, but to show them how to do it in a reversed way. Nowadays, most of the teachers, if not all, believe that there is no such thing like a perfect theory of learning that they are required to follow step by step. They would claim that they believe in what they call the post-methodological era. It is no longer about methodology. It is about many methodologies, which are combined in order to come up with the Holistic or Eclectic approach. What we need then is an alternative model that teachers and educators do not have. It is true that the use of a single methodology seems to be characterized by a lack of critical judgment nowadays, but we should find an alternative. One way of doing it is to try to answer the question, "what is learning?" as a radical question, and then try to think reflectively about what to do with each one of the components of language learning in the

process of learning rather than thinking of an approach of teaching per se (Boughoulid, 2022).

Actually, another way that helps students engage into conversations is to think about building reverse-engineering communication tasks. By doing so, one can see the invitation of what is being done in the classroom. Hence, one can evaluate well, especially this quality aspect of it. If it is thought of in terms of the reverse-engineering way, the evaluation will be very satisfying in the scale system.

Therefore, on the basis of the learning process, if there is a lack in terms of variety, diversification, and richness of the input, there will be no serious learning. If there is a lack in terms of quality building of the students' competency, there will be no learning. If there is no varied and rich activation of the students' Energeia, there will be no learning (El Haloui, personal communication). The learning components should be taken in their totality as one pack that does not accept any division. All the three learning elements are important in the sense that one completes the other in a harmonic way.

Conflict of interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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