

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT

(A CASE STUDY AT IAIN SYEKH NURJATI CIREBON)

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Abstract *Language and gender have become a comprehensive issue in language learning. One aspect that is highlighted in language and gender is reading skill. The term of gender plays different performance and achievement in reading comprehension. There are some influences of gender differences toward reading comprehension achievement. This study aims to investigate such gender differences in achieving comprehension of factual text. This thesis is qualitative study case analysis. The primary sources of data are conducted through reading comprehension test and interview in order to investigate gender differences among EFL learners of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon in reading comprehension achievement. The result shows that gender differences influence in reading comprehension achievement. Different trait from family and society will influence students reading achievement. It is found that 25% of boys' participants get high score in reading comprehension test and 33% girls participants get high score in reading comprehension test and those differences are caused by different trait of their family and society toward reading. The study also comes to gender differences in achieving factual text. Boys tend to use such discussion in post reading strategy while girls tend to use writing activities in post reading strategy. Girls are strong in the skills of determining meaning of unfamiliar words while boys strong in the skills of find particular informations from the text.*

Keywords: *Gender and Reading, Reading Comprehension, Gender Differences in Reading Comprehension*

BACKGROUND

Language and teaching is salient to cultural and behaviour. The way that the teacher teach students and the environment will influence students output and characteristic. One of the important factor is gender. Especially in reading, gender is the gap which separate the characteristic and ability between boys and girls. The discussion of gender in relation with reading has already resulted some claim which stated that girls is better than boys in languages or the opposite.

Carr & Pawels (2006:145), said that girls is strong in reading skills and they can cover their under ability in abstract concept, rules and pattern with their interest in reading and literacy. The issues of boys under achievement and girls' domination in reading achievement come out in IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, but the fact is not completely true, because there are some boys who can reach good achievement in reading, instead there are some girls also under achievement in reading.

Gender is the social construction, how the society treat and built the characteristic of persons. In case of different treatment from the society toward boys and girls in reading comprehension achievement result different effect of reading comprehension achievement. The previous studies finding across the literature is that girls have a more positive achievement in reading than boys. Gender differences in language skill has become a study of language and gender. Bucholtz (2003:43), argued that "the study of language and gender has increasingly become the study of discourse and gender". Most of language and gender study essentially take broad concern in discourse area. So that, in this study would give much attention in the frame of reading.

This study is about gender differences in reading reading comprehension which concern to students' ability toward comprehending such factual text. It investigates a case study at English Language Teaching Department Tarbiyah and Teacher Training of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon on the 6th semester. The reseracher only focus on the use of factual text in relation with students comprehension and achievement. The term of achievement refers to student performance in relation to a range of text types and text difficulty and different cognitive processes include students' ability in comprehending the text; determine main idea, recognize the organization of idea, getting stated and unstated detail infromation.

This study investigates the role of gender in relation with reading comprehensioin and achievement. It is based on the issues that girls better in languages than boys. The formulation problem of this study is mentioned in the questions of research.

Questions of the Research:

- 1) Do gender differences influence reading achievement?
- 2) How do such gender differences reach comprehension in factual text?

Frame of Thought

The term of sex and gender have different construction in its definition. According to Bcholtz (2003), people use the term of sex to speak of biological differences between males and females or biology construction that can be identified in some physical indicators. The term of gender refers to the social,

cultural, psychological constructs that are imposed upon biological differences. In most societies, men and women differ in the activities they undertake, in access to and control of resources, and in participation in decision-making. And in most societies, women as a group have less access than men to resources, opportunities and decision-making. Gender is social construction that need explore social treatment on its investigation

Post-structuralist or deconstructive feminist approach

The approach stated that gender differences refers to “what differences does gender make?” and “how did gender come to make a difference?” It is argued that the differences found in people’s behaviour, including their speech behaviour. It extends the term of behaviour from family trait and social trait toward people behaviour in appearance, speech and act.

Gender and Reading

The discussion of gender and reading has been influenced in the work of feminist stylistic. According to Miles (1995:50), the reader is subject to many discursive pressures which lead them to read in particular ways. Further more the text it self addresses the reader either in a direct or an indirect way, and presents certain ways of interpretation as the most likely to make sense of the text, it is also clear that the text influence the way that people read.

Gender is the factors influncing reading comprehension. As Rumelhart 1977, argued that schemata is one of the factor influencing reading comprehension. Other factors affecting text comprehension include: text genre, topic familiarity and readers’ gender. There are differences between boys and girls in using language. (Lackoff, 1975).

METHOD

The study took place at English Language Teaching Department Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. The researcher considered it was the place that the researcher had known well and the reading activities was learned in this university through the course of EFL reading. Beside that, it was an appropriate place to investigate gender differences of EFL since the issues of boys under achievement and girls’ domination in reading achievement came out in this institution, where mostly who get the best rank in the class was dominated by girls.

The respondents were purposefully selected from the students of English Language Teaching Department Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon on 6th semester. The respondents were chosen because they claimed as students in the level of appropriate reader which had had many experiences in reading factual texts from first until fifth semester. The researcher had investigated six choosen students with the criteria; two students consist of female and male students whose low score in reading, and two students consist of female and male students whose high score in reading, also two students consist of female and male students whose midle score in reading

This study was framed under qualitative case study method and rather ethnographic with the identification on the gender differences of EFL learners in

reading achievement. According to Alwasilah (2015:68), a qualitative case study refers to phenomenon which is believed will give the source of insight and ideas. Case or phenomenon which already exist in particular places is investigated more deeply which can give a hypothesis of the case itself. According to Creswell (2012:464), ethnographic case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system (e.g., activity, event, process, or individuals) based on extensive data collection. This study stands as the continues study from previous study in the area of gender and reading.

The instrument of the study is the researcher him self. According to Moleong (2008:9), in the qualitative research the intruments of the study is the researcher him self or with other people as a tool to collecting data. In this study, the researcher him self was the instrument to collect data through observation, interview and study of document.

The main data of this study is gender investigation toward reading comprehension achievement. The researcher use observation, interview and study of document. The techniques of the research are explained bellow: According to Cohen, Manion & Marrison (2007:258), the purpose of observation is to probe deeply and to analyze intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs. The observation in this study includes observing the condition of the place where the study took place; it is English Language Teaching Department of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon, identifying the respondent's background and condition to be interviewed, looking at the class situation to conduct research.

Qualitative data was collected via interview of students of EFL learners regarding their background and attitude toward reading. The interview used to investigate their social construction. Bucholtz (2003) defined the term of gender as social construction, because of that the investigation on gender differences should implicate interview. The interview refers to social treatment of respondents, such as motivation and support in reading from their parents. The interview contained some questions to analyse how the respondents constructed by the society.

The present study uses the study of document as the technique in conducting data. According to Alwasilah (2015:140), study of document is collecting data from non-human source. It refers to systematic analysis of the data which is collected from documents or notes from source. It could be periodically report of politic and law, media report, television script, yearbook, meeting note, individual document. In this research, the study of document refers to data which are taken from the university; in this case it is sixth semester students' score of reading comprehension course in EFL classroom of English Language Teaching Department of IAIN Syekh Nurjati Cirebon. The score it self was taken from reading comprehension test. The data ware used for identifying students reading ability. The researcher needs to know background of students' reading ability as supporting data for interview section.

The data were analyzed from the result of reading comprehension test and interview by using data analysis. According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984 in Alwasilah 2015:144), the purpose of data analysis is to come up with reasonable conclusion and generalizations based on a preponderance of the data. The data

analysis includes a descriptive explanation regarding the result of the reading comprehension test, interview and study of document. It was elaborated more with the categorization of finding to make complete analysis. The data from test showed students' skills and ability in reading comprehension and the interview provided the relation between gender and their background reading attitude.

FINDING and DISCUSSION

The researcher has found some finding regarding reading and gender. Those finding relates to gender evidence and environment which influence a lot in shaping their characteristic and reading ability. Here are the finding that the researcher found.

Potrait of EFL Learners Gender

The role of gender is salient to its environment where the role of men and women are separable. It is influenced by Islamic religion culture which stated that men have more responsible than women. In the family the girls usually tend to help their mother for cooking, washing the dishes, ironing, and cleaning the house. While boys tend to do father job or masculine job such as cutting the grass, washing motorcycle or all the job which require much energies. Both boys and girls in family are not allowed to do such the opposite jobs. For example, girls do boys job such as washing the motorcycle. When this happen the society do not accept that activity or claim it as violating the gender role which lead to the labeling of gender such as tomboys or effeminate.

Leadership

In Islamic perspective boys are expected to be a leader. They must take responsibility toward their family and people around them. Because of that, when there is a woman becomes a leader, it would be problematic. Some people will not agree with the woman who becomes a leader. But in our society this phenomenon could be avoided since the society not only takes a look at the cultural view but also they take a look at the performance which is shown by the woman leader. But the limitation in woman freedom still exists in this society. Some of the evidence that woman have many rules in the way they dressing or speaking.

Appearance

Women have to wear hijab to cover her body (aurot) which is the rules of Islamic religion. There are rules which set to cover their body from the hair until the legs. Obviously, they have many limitations in dressing. Even the rules to wear jeans for woman are problematic; some people will see them differently because it does not fit with Islamic religion. When they speak they have to be calm and show their beauty. They are not allowed to speak or laugh out loud. In line with the norm of acting. Woman must show their beauty by managing their manner when they sitting, walking, eat the food, and soon. While boys do not have such those rules in their appearance or behavior. The most important thing for them is they have to show their appropriate attitude as a boy. They have to be neat in dressing and cleaver in speaking. As long as it fit with Islamic religion boys can do whatever they want. Boys do not have such specific limitation for playing or for going to some places. They are allowed to play outside home do

many things because boys tend to be a leader of the family they have to find (nafkah) for the family. While girls in Islamic religion are not allowed to go far away from home and to spend their time in home help their mother preparing every household activity.

Education

In the term of education, the role of gender still leaves the bias issues between boys and girls in education. In this study found that some of the society thought that girls are not necessarily take high education. The nature of women is to be mother house and taking care of household activities. So that the perspective like that still exist in this society. It also happens toward boys who are claimed, it is not necessarily to get high education because boys responsibility to find jobs and give money to the family. However, there are many boys and girls who continue their education until bachelor degree. Because the need of education is unavoidable in this era, many people think critically to get high education for their successfulness.

Role in the society

Men tend to have more roles in the society such as in the government or in the social activities. The role of women in the society does not too significant since they are expected to be in home and taking care the entire household. Girls have solid relation with other girls in society, this pattern because they have nurturing nature and sensitive in feeling so that when they meet other girls they will easily interact and make relationship. The relationship usually goes to social grouping such as “arisan” regular social gathering whose members contribute to and take turns at winning an aggregate sum of money, group of prayer, or other groups. Women in our culture are usually follow the rules and seldom break the rules. They obey the norm of social convention. While boys in the society have to standing strong, play many roles in society and confident, dominant or independent. In every social activity man should be exist and tend to be a leader of those activities.

Role in the family

Boys are expected to be a leader in family. They will go outside home and get foods for his family. Boys’ jobs are giving guaranty toward the family and fulfill what family needs. While girls tend to spend more time in house. In our culture, women stay at home and look after the children (nurturance). Girls build a positive relation with other women such as relation with sister or aunt. In the Islamic perspective boys and girls are differ in the activities or jobs that they undertake in the family. That is what happens in our society. Boys follow what father does and girls follow what mother does. Boys tend to guide their sister and do such men jobs such as cutting the grass or fixing electronic devices. While girls usually help their mother cooking in kitchen or washing the dishes.

Boys and girls are different in skills ability. The gender difference can also lie in different strategy use. Males and females usually use different strategies to learn and use language. This difference is also evidence in reading comprehension. The pattern can be draw from reading skills result of boys and girls. However, there is specific reason why does some boys are high in reading

comprehension and girls are low in reading comprehension. There must be some influences in that phenomenon.

Gender Differences in Reading Comprehension Achievement

Boys and girls have differences in reading comprehension achievement. The term of gender obviously is one of the factor influence reading comprehension achievement beside topic and genre. The test shows that girls have higher score than boys in reading comprehension test. From 50 items, the average score of 12 girls in reading comprehension test is 23,5 while boys get 19,08. Both boys and girls have same lowest score 12 in the test. There is no significant differences between boys and girls who get the highest score in this test eventhough girls still be the highest score. Girls' highest score is 36 while boys' highest score is 35. Only one point separate them in the highest score.

Overall girls get better reading comprehension achievement than the boys. Girls can answer the the questions with true value 47% while overall boys can answer the questions with true value 38%. The result shows that boys have under achievement of reading comprehension. Of course, not all of the boys get low score in reading comprehension test, some of the boys also have good score in reading comprehension test.

The result has shown that girls are better in reading comprehension ability than boys. This is the old issue of gender and reading which stated that boys underachievement in reading comprehension achievement includes their reading ability. In line with this study, boys under achievement is still happen in this research. But the focus is not about boys under achievement, it refers to the influence of gender differences in reading achievement. In fact, the most crucial question appear here, why are some boys better than girls in reading comprehension and have good score in reading comprehension? Why some girls appear to get low score in reading comprehension achievement while the other girls have good score in reading comprehension.

The average boys who get high score in reading comprehension test, there are only three boys who get high score in reading comprehension while the rest are the boys who get middle and low score. Mostly boys get low score in reading comprehension test, it is shown by the chart bellow. From 12 boys participants, there are seven boys who get low score in reading comprehension test. While girls shows the equal patten of low, middle and high score. There are four girls who get low score and middle score and high score. This pattern shows that girls dominant in reading comprehension achievements. The chart bellow shows the result of the reading comprehension test which girls show better reading achievement than boys.

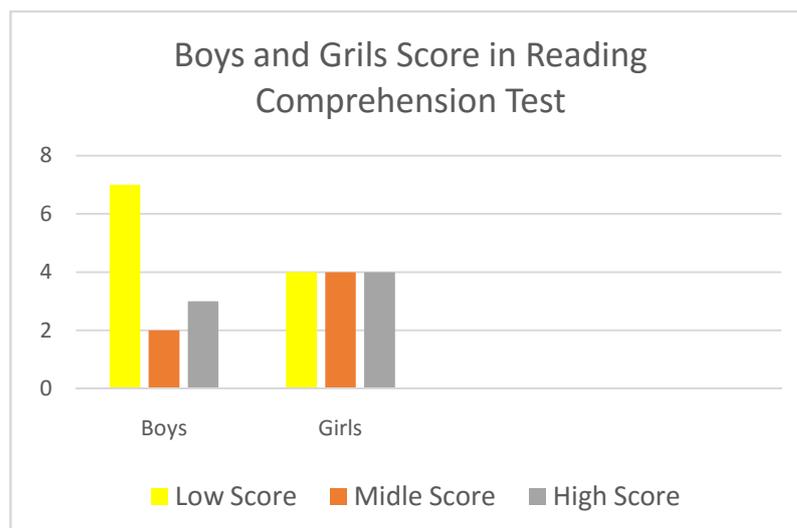


Figure 2.1. Gender Reading Achievement

As notice above that girls are strong in reading ability since they prefer reading as their activity when they have leasure time. The comparison shows that many boys are under achievement than high achievement in reading comprehension. They are lack in reading for comprehensions. Boys under achievement may happen not only in this study, it may happen in other countries since boys and girls have different interest and motivation in reading. Generally, the term of gender about boys and girls all over the world are same, girls do interest in reading activity while boys commonly dislike reading activity. But, not all of the countries shows the same fact about boys under achievement. In fact there are some countries where boys are tend to be better than girls in reading comprehension achievement.

Factors Influence Reading Achievement

The data have shown that boys and girls have their own characteristic in reading comprehension achievement. In the context of EFL learners, the researcher found some factors influences gender differences in reading comprehension achievement. The differences between boys and girls in reading achievement might be influence by some factors. The researcher has been considering some factors that potentially influence the boys and girls in reading achievement in this present study. 1) *Topic familiarity*, 2) *reading attitude* and 3) *environment*.

Gender and Reading Strategies

It is found that boys and girls perform different strategies in reading comprehension strategies in pre, during, and post reading strategies. Girls tend to be aware to the strategies during and post-reading where they can make writing activities after reading and affect to their long term memory. The table below shows the differences between boys and girls in reading comprehension strategies.

Pre-reading**Table 2.1. Pre-Reading Strategies**

Strategies	Boys	Girls
Specifying a purpose for reading	Mostly boys specify their purpose to find information or reading for information	Mostly girls tend to specify their reading purpose for pleasure such as reading novel etc.
Previewing the text	Boys preview the text by looking to the topic to make them easier in comprehending the text.	Girls usually use the context of the text to preview and sometimes they do not make previewing and go directly to the text.
Make a prediction	Boys always make prediction by looking to the topic and keywords. This strategy helps them to have a portrait of the content of the text.	Girl also performs this strategy to help them understand the content of the text. They look at familiar words that they know and make a relation with the topic so that they able to make a prediction toward the text.

During Reading**Table 2.2. During Reading Strategies**

Strategies	Boys	Girls
Connecting text to background knowledge	They usually connect their background knowledge to the text specifically to determine meaning of unfamiliar words that they do not know.	Girls will connect their background knowledge to determine words part, definition words and skills regarding the meaning of particular words in the text.
Summarising information	Boys do summarizing information strategy but not specifically. For them, it would be the strategy that they need when they have to find particular information which is found in several passages	Girls usually skip this strategy. They are able to use the context and relates information in the text to its categories.
Making inferences	Boys make inferences when they need to find implied information. They will make a relation regarding the topic and stated information in the text.	Girls also do make inference when they need to find unstated information in the text. They will relate the topic and keywords in the text to find unstated information.
Connecting one part of the text to another	The strategy uses to find meaning of words which contain definition. Boys usually connect one part of the text to another to find the prediction of the next paragraph.	Girls usually make connection to some sentences to find definition or unfamiliar words. For girls, the strategy refer to make sense some particular words, phrases, or sentences which difficult to understand so that as the reader we have to find clues from other sentences in the text.

Rereading	Boys need to reread the text only when they do not get comprehension at the first reading. They prefer to read the text once if they get all the keywords they need and relates the keywords to the topic.	Girls usually always use the strategy. They will reread the text again and again when they do not get comprehension in the first reading. It helps them to understand the text and the information inside.
Guessing the meaning of the new words from the context	Boys guess meaning from new words using the context of the text. Boys have more positive attitude regarding this strategy.	Some girls do not use the context to guess the meaning of new vocabularies that they found in the text. They prefer to look at dictionary

Strategies	Boys	Girls
Checking comprehension	Boys do check their comprehension toward the text by discussion activities. They will discuss it with their friend when they need to explore more comprehension	Girls check their comprehension toward the text in writing activities. They will rewrite it on small note or if they feel their purpose is already reached
Reflecting on what has been learned from the text	Boys usually prefer to share what they have read to their friend and make it as the topic of discussion.	Girls prefer to reflect what they have been learned from the text by making summary or writing activities.

Post-Reading

Table 2.3. During Reading Strategies

Boys and girls also different in the term of reading comprehension skills. Their ability to master reading comprehension skills also different. Here are the differences between boys and girls in reading comprehension skills.

Table 2.4. EFL Learner Reading Comprehension Skills

READING SKILL	ITEMS	BOYS	GIRLS
Skill 1 : Find main idea of the passage	4	16	17
Skill 2 : Find stated information	15	77	84
Skill 3 : Find unstated information	4	24	24
Skill 4 : Find implied information	5	17	17
Skill 5 : Predicting preceding and following paragraph	2	11	9
Skill 6 : Find definition from structural clues	1	1	2
Skill 7 : Detemine meanings from words parts	6	30	52
Skill 8 : Dertemine meaning of difficult words	5	21	22
Skill 9 : Determine meanings of simple words	4	20	28
Skill 10 : Determine where specific information is found	1	3	5

Skill 11 : Determine the tone purpose or course	3	9	19
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The table above shows the number of skill in the reading comprehension test. Every skill has different number of item. Skill number two about answer stated detail question is the most frequent item which contain 15 items in the test. While skill number six about find definition from structural clues and skill number 10 about determine where specific information is found are the less frequent which contain only one item in the test. The use of reading skills in comprehending text is really important, the eleven skills above are represented of the linguistic process.

The table shows the result of reading comprehension test. Girls are better overall in reading skills than boys. They can use their skills in reading comprehension to find the answers of the questions provided. From 11 skills, girls are good in determining meaning of unfamiliar words includes simple words with uncommon daily meaning, difficult words, word parts, also the word which contain definition. The boys under achievement have already discussed in chapter 2 and more discussion about that will connect to the reader strategies towards those eleven skills. The result specifically is presented in the chart bellow which show girls domination in reading comprehension skills and ability.

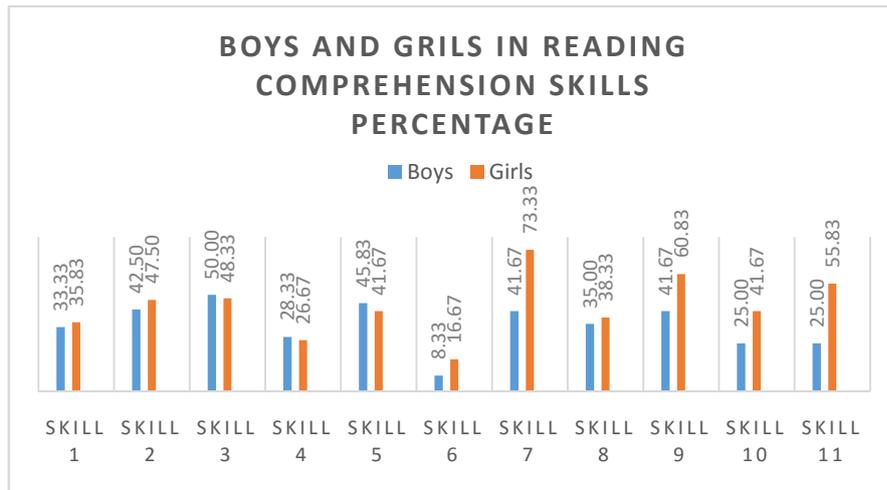


Figure 2.2.. Gender Differences in Reading Comprehension Skills

The chart show the percentage of boys and girls in reading skill toward factual text. Boys and girls have different ability in answering the questions given. Girls appear prominent in skills number 7,9,11. They are better in detemine meanings from words parts, use context to determine meanings of simple words, determine the tone purpose or course. While boys strong in skills number 3,4 and 5. They are better in find unstated information, find implied information and answer transition questions correctly. Both boys and girls are less in find definition from structural clues. Overall girls better than boys in aslmost all skills, while boys better than girls only in some skills, it is unstated information,find implied information and predicting preceding and following paragraph.

There are some strategies in facing reading comprehension skills. For main idea, look at the firs line of each paragraph, for directly and indirectly answered

detail questions, choose a key word in the question and skim for that key word in order in the passage. For vocabulary questions, the question will tell the reader where the word is located in the passage. It means that, boys tend to be better in find information through the use of key words in the passage. While girls are good in using the context of the passage to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words. The differences between boys and girls in reading skills obviously influenced by some factors. The factors influencing reading comprehension have already discussed in chapter 2, those are topic familiarity, role of family, motivation, personality, and reading attitude.

CONCLUSION

Gender differences does influences reading achievement through some aspects. Different trait from family and society shape students gender and personlity which take role as the influence toward reading comprehension achievement. Gender differences also influence reading preference and reading attitude which lead to make differences in reading achievement. The result shows that girls are better than boys in reading achievement, in fact there are boys whose high achievement and girls whose low achievement. The phenomenon is caused by some points influence gender differences, those are topic, reading attitude, environment, parent support, and motivation.

Gender differences also take role in achieving comprehension toward factual text through reading strategies. Boys and girls have their own reading strategies characteristic in comprehending factual text. Boys tend to do such discussion activities in the post reading. While girl prefer to do such writing activities in post reading. Girls are better in reading skills ability, from eleven skills, they are better in nine reading skills than boys. Although, the most prominent skills for girls are determining unfamiliar words, while boys also strong in the skills of find particular information in the text. Boys interest to read informational text while girls interest to read literary text.

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