

## FACTORS CAUSES ORAL COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN PRESENTATION CLASS AT RIAU ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

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### ABSTRACT

*Ability to communicate orally in Foreign Language still meets some obstacles for language learners in Indonesia. It seems a hard task to do. The learning experiences on English subject are still not sufficient for the language learners to enable them to communicate in English orally. Some previous studies showed that the students' external factors are the obstacle cause their inability to communicate in Foreign Language such as the lack of the vocabulary, low of motivation, the lack amount of practice and the monotonous teaching strategy. However, since the communication process is not only involving the physical aspect, the psychological aspects should be recognized as the potential factor that might hinder students' ability to communicate orally in Foreign Language. The present study showed that the students' psychological factors, namely apprehension plays the role hinder the students' ability to communicate. The findings showed that there were four factors cause the students' inability to communicate in English as foreign language, namely 1) the ability on language, 2) the lecturer's evaluation, 3) the communication task type, and 4) lecturer's feedback.*

**Key Words:** *Communication, Causal Factors, Oral Communication Apprehension*

### Introduction

Acquiring English as Foreign Language in Indonesia still meets some obstacles. Teaching English as the compulsory subject in Junior High School and Senior High School is not sufficient to help the students' to have ability in speaking. The students' experience in English language learning for many years still makes them struggle to speak in English.

In today's world, particularly in the work world, the ability to communicate orally in foreign

language is one of the considerations of the applicant for being accepted in certain work field whereas. Those applicants who have actively and passively communicated in English have some opportunities to join in the work field. Throwback to this condition, it focuses on the applicants' preparation to compete in the work field. The fact showed ability to acquire English in communication is hard. The English Department students, the language learners, English is used as their medium of learning still struggle to be confident

to communicate in English orally particular.

It was found that some English Department Students at Riau Islamic University are still in problems to speak in English, especially in Public. The students experience fear in speaking in public.

A number of studies have confirmed on the students' problem in speaking in public. Al Nahkalah (2016) states that one of the main factor contributes to the students' problem in speaking is fear of mistake. The language learners experience fear in speaking deals with the correction and the negative evaluation. Most of the students are interrupted by the communication situation, for instance the audience. In addition, Afisa (2015) states that the amount of students' practice and the students' mental are also factors contribute to the students' problem in speaking. Since English is the foreign language, the students need to have a great effort to enable to speak in English. Meanwhile, the students' mental is also the important factor that support the students to acquire the foreign language. The students should be trained to be accustomed with the situation that encourages them to speak in English.

The students' motivation, attitude, anxiety and self-confidence are also factors contribute to the students' difficulties in speaking (Krashen in Al Jamaal, 2013). Being enables to speak a certain language needs to have a great effort. The effort comes from the students' motivation. The students confirmed that they do understand on the communication about but they are difficult to express their thoughts. It relates to their wants to engage

themselves to use English in oral communication. Besides, the students' psychological factors is also as an integral part of the acquiring the language. It plays the role in the process of language acquisition.

The findings of previous study above showed that the internal factors are the most common factor causes the students' struggling in speaking. It deals with the students' psychological factors such as fear of making mistakes and anxiety. The psychological factors are explicitly not give the influential effect in speaking, but it effects it unconsciously.

Some previous studies are not conscious on the existence of the internal factor as the causes of the students' difficulties to use the language to communicate. Some studies state that the external factor such as the students' lack of vocabulary, the inhibition to speak, the students are lack of grammar mastery are the causes of the students' difficulties to communicate orally. Unfortunately, some studies do not highlight the possibilities of the other factors that might contribute to the students' difficulties in doing oral communication. Then, Mc Croskey proposed his theory on communication apprehension. It comes from the existence of the silence students in speaking class. It was attracted his attention to gain the information on the causes of the silence students. The findings come to the conclusion that the students' psychology sides affect to their confidence to speak. They felt of the negative evaluation on the communication situation given. The present of the audience, communication setting affects the students' inhibition to speak.

It becomes an interested focus, since psychology is part of the students' internal themselves. It is supported by some findings of the previous studies (.....) that the existence of psychological factor, namely communication apprehension contribute to the students' oral communication.

### **Communication Apprehension**

Ability to communicate helps people to build relationship easily. Delivering the intention or wants to fill the need is the function of communication. In the sequence of communication, some components involved. Koehlr (1981:18) argues that there are five communication components, namely sender, message, channel, receiver, and feedback. Sender is the key component of the communication process, determine the message and the appropriate way of the message given (Koehlr 1981:18). Message is the product of the encoding process (Koehlr 1981:18). It can be in form of the ideas, information and thought. The extract of the communication process is message. In the process of conveying message in communication, medium is importance, in term of communication, it is called as channel. For instance, telephone call, face-to-face, e-mail, letter, etc. To get a meaningful and effective communication is determined by the appropriate channel. It is importance since the effectiveness of the conveying message is dependent on the communication channel. Kory (2015:6) states that receiver is the individual to whom the message is sent. It seems that the receiver has a simple role in communication. The message will be translated by the receiver. The interpretation of the

message is ended by the receiver. The receiver takes role whether the message given is suitable with the sender's intention.

In addition, Kory (2015:6) states that coding and decoding are part of communication process. These two components are involved in the process of the fifth component simultaneously. Encoding is involved in the process of delivering the message, while decoding helps the receiver to understand the message given. It can be seen that communication is the continual process. Among the components of communication process cannot be skip one and another. To get the meaningful communication the all components should be in one sequence.

It is important to know the role of each components of communication. As Keyton in Lunenburg (2010) says that the elements of communication determine the quality of the communication. These all components must be in unity in order to have meaningful communication.

Communication can be done into two ways, namely oral and written communication. Each modes of communication brings the strengthens and the weaknesses. Most of the communication mode use in daily live is oral communication, either in group, peer or in public. The ability to carry out oral communication particularly in public leads to the anxiety of communication. Mc Croskey labeled this phenomena as Communication Apprehension (Mc.Croskey,1977). Mc.Croskey (1970) states that communication apprehension deal with the fear of facing oral communication across the wide range of communication situation. It deals

with the individual reaction toward the communication situation given. It is implicitly stated that the individual might feel negative reaction on the communication situation given. The present of the communication setting given such as the audience, the context of communication or the members of the communication affects uncomfortable situation.

In further, Boston (2001) adds that communication apprehension links to the psychological response of an individual when given the communication setting. Implicitly, during the communication process, the individual's mental is involved. It is resulted a response on the communication situation. Furthermore, the response comes from the uncomfortable situation is the negative response.

Due to apprehension in communication raises the individual's fear in doing communication even withdrawing, Mc.Croskey (1987) states that experiencing communication apprehension in oral communication in foreign language particularly is the common phenomenon. Experiencing apprehension in communication is also experienced by the native language user. It can be assumed that apprehension cannot be apart from communication. It cannot be avoided as long as the communication occurred.

Since the existence of apprehension in communication, Mc.Croskey and Richmond (1995) classifies four types of communication apprehension based on the communication components. First, Trait Communication Apprehension (TCA). TCA deals to the individual's reaction on the time and situation of

the communication given. (Mc.Croskey,1987). Booth-butterfield (1992) adds that trait communication apprehension is considered as the personality traits. Some individuals are afraid to face a certain situation given, but they are confident to face another communication situation given. It occurs as the consideration on different view that human being was created. Since people has its own view on a certain situation, the response depends on the view.

Second, Context-based Communication Apprehension. It deals with the communication tells about (mc.Croskey,1978). The theme or the material given on the communication resulted apprehension for some people. The individuals might experience fear since they are not familiar on the theme of the communication given. It leads the uncomfortable feeling and resulted the negative response. Mc.Croskey (1997) adds that there are four common context where communication apprehension occurs: (1) public speaking, (2) meetings, (3) group discussion, and (4) interpersonal conversation.

Third, Audience-based Communication Apprehension. Mc.Croskey and Richmond (1995) state that audience is one of the factor causes the emergence of the communication apprehension. There are some underlying reasons of this, namely subordinate status. Communication is the process between sender and receiver. In certain situation, for instance in the office, there is particular attitude in communication regarding the individual status. The communication between employee and the leader results the anxiety for the employee.

The other setting, the communication between the student and the teacher. The students might experience apprehension while communicating with the teacher. It seems that it is a personality-based. Some individuals experience audience-based communication apprehension while some others are not.

Fourth, Situational Communication Apprehension. Mc.Croskey and Richmond (1995) say that situational communication apprehension is transitory orientation toward communication with a given person or group of people and situation. Individual experiences apprehension in communication because of the existence of the uncomfortable feeling toward the combination of situation components (audience, place, and context). However, it does not occur permanently. The individual might experience apprehension in communication when facing the certain communication situation given since the apprehension emerges as part of the individual's reaction.

Overall, communication apprehension grouped into two, namely personality-based and situational-based. In term of communication apprehension, it is known as Trait Communication Apprehension and Situational Communication Apprehension.

Furthermore, the existence of communication apprehension can be seen through oral communication mostly. Mc. Croskey in his early research focuses on oral communication only. On the other hand, research on apprehension is also conducted in other focus, such as in written communication.

#### **Oral Communication Apprehension**

Oral communication is the most use of the communication mode. It is used since the process of communication involved is required direct feedback. In the past, it has been argued that previous study on communication apprehension focuses on communication apprehension in oral communication apprehension. As mentioned above, communication apprehension links to the fear experienced by the individual in facing either real or anticipated communication. Since it focuses on oral communication, it deals with the individual's fear related to the oral communication activities.

Oral communication apprehension concerns with a fear of speaking or talking to other people in different contexts, such as on a one-to-one, groups, in meeting, or public speaking (Marran et.al, 2014:4). Generally the individual might experience low and high level of Oral Communication apprehension. However, those individuals experiences high level of oral communication apprehension becomes difficult to share their opinion or speak in certain communication situation. Individuals with high level of oral communication apprehension experience fear, tension, and physical symptoms such as increased heart rate and sweating (Beatty and Dobos in Marran, 2012:5). In the context of Education, the existence of oral communication apprehension occurs in the classroom setting. Most of the students, even the English students are afraid of evaluation while speaking. The fail control of oral communication apprehension by the students in speaking activities influences the students' achievement besides psychological side. In other word, the

students who have high level of oral communication apprehension might get low achievement of the learning outcome. It seems that it becomes the potential inhibitor for the students to get a better learning achievement (O'Marra et.al,1996).

### **Potential Causes of Oral Communication Apprehension**

The findings of some previous studies showed that oral communication apprehension is the potential inhibitor causes the students' inability to communicate orally. Moreover, it causes to the students' low achievement. It is known that the exist thing occur because of the other thing. There are some underlying causes of the situation. Some experts already found it.

Friedman (1980) states that general personality traits (such as quietness, shyness, and reticence) is the cause of students' oral communication apprehension. Student's personality plays the role in engaging themselves to participate in some communication situations. Since it is personality, there is tendency that some individuals experience oral communication apprehension in certain communication setting, while some others are not.

Moreover, Young (1991) adds some other components as the factor causes students' communication apprehension. The first, the interpersonal relation. It is related the relationship among the students in the classroom, and also between the teacher and the students. The second, teacher interaction and instructional practice. Teacher's factor is considered as the determinant in students' success or failure. Most of the time of teacher's role in the

classroom is having interaction. The way of teacher in giving instruction and the way of teacher in assessing the students might become the cause of students' apprehension. *The third*, self-esteem. It means that the students believe on their own capability to successfully perform the activities. It is personal mindset related to the task given by the teacher. However, peer's opinion and judgment makes the students become more sensitive. *The fourth* cause of the apprehension is expectations. The students expect for being a good performer in each activity of the classroom. It is unconsciously stuck on students' mind to prepare themselves as well as they can. *The fifth*, envision of the language skill. Some students think that their language skills is lower than those of the other students in the classroom. Irrespective of what the reality of the situation is, it seems that it is the perception.

Thaier (2005) is also classifies some factors that lead CA inside an English Language Classroom. There are three factors, they are psychological factors, instructional factors, and socio cultural factors. The first cause of communication apprehension is psychological factor, which includes emotion, self-esteem, anxiety, attitude, fear and motivation. The second, instructional factor, such as learning goals, teachers, method, intensity and means of evaluation. The third cause of communication apprehension is socio cultural factor, which includes acculturation, social distance, Foreign Language learning, and culturally accepted thought.

Lahtinen (2013) classifies the causes of oral communication apprehension into two factors, internal factors and external factors. Internal

factors derives from personality mindset, fear of errors, low competence, low self-esteem, previous communication experience, fear of peer assessment and judgment. Meanwhile, the external factors are group size and atmosphere, social pressure, laughter and comments from the peers and teachers, and failing to perform.

Regarding the ideas given by some experts above it can be seen that the experts discussed the same factors but in different term based on their thought. It can be inferred that there are some factors causes the students' oral communication apprehension. Simplify, it can be divided into internal and external factor. Internal factors include personality traits, psychological factors and the competence of the language skills. External factors include instructional factor and socio cultural factor.

### METHODOLOGY

This research employed descriptive research. According to Gay (2000:275), descriptive research determines and describes the ways things are. The study focuses on describing the factors cause the students' oral communication apprehension. It was conducted for the English Department students in Riau Islamic University who enrolled Presentation Class. The course required the students to speak in Public Speaking setting.

The source of data was the 8<sup>th</sup> semester of English Department students at Riau Islamic University who enroll presentation class in the academic year 2015/2016. There were 29 participants chosen in this research as they have the same criteria. The first, the students enroll in presentation

class. The second, the students were not join in some English courses. The third, the students were not join on some English activities in the university.

The questionnaire and the interview guideline were used to gain the information on the factors cause the students' oral communication apprehension.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the questionnaire administered and the result of interview, there were five factors cause students' apprehension to do the individual presentation performance. First, the language ability. In the research, the students were asked the possibility of the audiences in understanding the material given in term of the language use. 93% students confirmed that they believe the audiences understand on the material given. The students said that their friends, the audiences, are able to catch the ideas on the material given. To ensure the data given by the students on the questionnaire, the researcher did interview. Here is the selected quote of interview of the students:

*Researcher : Do you understand on the presentation given by your friend?*

*Student 1 : I try to listen my friend's presentation, but sometimes I am confuse on what they are saying. I cannot catch the meaning easily.*

*Researcher* : is there any students that you can understand easily?

*Student 1* : yaa..about 3 or 4 students.

*Researcher* : So..how about you?

*Student 1* : I do not think so.

*Researcher* : Why?

*Student 1* : I have limited vocabulary. I cannot explain the presentation well.

Even the questionnaire reported that the students admitted that they are able to make the audience understand on the presentation, the result of the interview showed that the students were not sure on their ability on presentation.

On the contrary, the students confirmed that they have poor ability in using English especially for speaking. 63% students confirmed that they were in problem to use English to communicate. It occurred since the students were less practice of speaking English. It resulted such as the lack of vocabulary, the students tended to combine their L1 and foreign language. The students combine Bahasa Indonesia and English during the presentation.

*Researcher* : Have you ever practice your English outside the classroom?

*Student 5* : No. I just practice it during the learning process if the lecturer asked me.

*Researcher* : Do you have difficulties in doing

the presentation in English?

*Student 5* : Yes. I cannot speak English fluently.

*Researcher* : Have you ever join in some English activities?

*Student 5* : Never.

The data told that these students were in problem in using English during their performances. It can be indecisive that the audiences were hardly to understand the material given by the presenter except the material was familiar. Here is the selected interview of the students.

Second, psychological factor. The students performed the presentation in front of their classmates and the other students from the other classes. They were gathered in the hall for twice to do individual presentation. It deals with the situation given, the other component of communication activities. In the classroom, the students were only considered on the audience and the evaluator (lecturer), meanwhile in the hall, the students should be aware on the situation also. Psychologically, it leads them to be more apprehension. In the research, it was found that these two conditions resulted students' fear in making mistakes, but the presentation in front of the new audience resulted more apprehension rather than presentation in front of the classmates. 83% students confirmed that they were worry of making mistakes in front of the new audience, and 70% students confirmed that they were worry of making mistakes in front of the classmates. These data told



that presentation in front of the novel situation resulted more apprehension.

*Researcher : Are you worry of making mistakes in front of your classmates in giving oral presentation?*

*Student 20 : Yes I do. I am afraid that my friend do not understand on my presentation.*

The interviewee said that they were afraid that the classmates do not get the idea on the presentation. Considering the audience (classmates) understanding on the students' performance is one of the reason that make the students worry of making mistakes.

*Researcher : Are you worry of making mistakes in front of the new audience?*

*Student 5 : Yes. The unfamiliar audience makes me afraid of making mistakes.*

The interviewee said that the unfamiliar audience or the novel situation makes the students afraid of making mistakes. The students' thought on their position makes them worry of making mistakes during the presentation.

It also found in the research that the students were worry of being laughed by the audiences. Based on the questionnaire administered the presence of the new audience resulted more apprehension rather than the classmates. The students said that they were not worry of being laughed by classmates since they know their

friend's ability. They did not think that their friends' laughed were kind of response that was resulted of the evaluation. It was contrary with the presence of the new audience. 70% students confirmed that they were worry of being laughed in presenting in front of the new audience. The audience' response such as laugh was viewed as the evaluation of the poor performances. The students were likely think that they were failed.

The result of the questionnaire reported that the students' response were divided into the same percentage. 50% students reported that they were worry of being laughed at the classmate, meanwhile the 50% students also reported that they were not worry of being laughed at the classmates. The results of the interview give more explanation on it.

*Researcher : Are you afraid of being laughed at you classmates?*

*Student 29 : No.*

*Researcher : Why?*

*Student 29 : My friends are laugh because they do not understand on the presentation. It also happen when others doing the presentation. It is not an odd thing.*

The interviewee said that they were not afraid of being laughed by their classmates because the students already have known their friend's habit. It does not make them worry on it.

It was significantly different with the response given by the students on the questionnaire related to

the audience given. The students feel more apprehensive when they face the new audience. It was reported that 70% students were worry of being laughed by the new audience. It is in line with the result of the interview.

*Researcher : Are you afraid of being laughed at the new audience?*

*Student 25 : Sure. The new audience creates new situation. I am afraid that the audience will be laughed at me when I make mistakes during the presentation.*

It can be inferred that the presence of the new audience influences the students' thought on presentation. The students think on many things, such as their ability on presentation. They will think critically on their preparation on the presentation.

The other form of psychological response found in the research is the students' nervousness to face the presentation. Based on the questionnaire administered, these two communication settings above resulted students' nervousness. On the contrary, the result of interview showed that the students were nervous in presenting the presentation in front of the new audience. The students said that the expectation of a presenter to give the best performance in front of the new audience was the cause of their nervousness. Since, it seems like a competition among the other English students who enroll presentation class, a presenter have to prepare themselves as good as they are. Hence, the students became more nervous since

the students are aware on their responsibility.

It was showed that 70% students were nervous to have presentation in front of the classmates. In contrast, the result of the interview reported that the students were not nervous to do presentation in front of the classmates.

*Researcher : Are you nervous to do presentation in front of the classmates?*

*Student 29 : No. I have known my friends' ability. The only thing that makes me nervous is the lecturer's judgment or evaluation.*

The students said that they know their friends' ability. They were not afraid or nervous to do the presentation. The students said that the lecturer factor is considered as the cause of the nervousness.

Meanwhile, the data showed that almost all of the students (93%) confirmed that they were nervous to do presentation in front of the new audience. It was explained more through the information given on the interview:

*Researcher : Are you nervous while having presentation in front of the new audience?*

*Student 8 : Yes I am. I cannot control my heartbeat. Even I have a good*

*preparation, the situation given makes me nervous. I have to think on my ability. I do not know on the audience' ability. I think it is normal when I am nervous in front of the new audience.*

The student said that the presence of the new audience makes them nervous. Even the student prepare the presentation few days before the turn, the students cannot avoid the feeling. She thinks that it is a normal situation.

Third, instructional factor. The third factor relates to the course designed that the lecturer arranged. It deals with the communication activities given. Based on the questionnaire administered, 63% students are likely enjoy the communication task given. On the contrary, the students confirmed that they did not enjoy the communication task given. They said that they prefer to do group presentation rather than individual presentation because it was easier to prepare the material.

Based on the questionnaire given, more than half students were reported that they were comfort on the task given during the learning process. Meanwhile, 37% students were confirmed that they were afraid on the task given in this course. In this case the students have different arguments. Most of the students said that they were afraid to do individual presentation while others were not.

*Researcher : Which one is do you prefer, individual presentation or group presentation?*

*Student 20 : I prefer to do group presentation. We can share each other among the member of the group. It reduces the apprehension during the presentation.*

*Student 13 : I prefer to do individual presentation. It eases us to search the material. We do not need to think others' preparation. We just need to focus on ourselves.*

The lecturer's evaluation was also included as the instructional factors cause students' oral communication apprehension in the research. In the research, it was questioned that the important of the evaluation given by the lecturer after having students' performance. The students argued that they need to know the lecturer's evaluation related to their performances on the individual presentation. The data showed that 87% students need on the lecturer's evaluation, but the students confirmed that the way the lecturer evaluate the students' presentation caused the apprehension of presentation. They said that the lecturer tended to give negative evaluation. The lecturer seems like to seek out the students' weaknesses in doing the presentation. Some students were down after being evaluated by the lecturer. The student said that this condition led them to be more apprehension however they still need it.

*Researcher : Do you think the lecturer have to evaluate your performance?*

*Student : Sure. I want to know my performance.*

*Researcher : Does it make you afraid?*

*Student : Yes. Since I heard that the lecturer is 'killer', I feel so nervous. Sometimes, the evaluation makes me down.*

Fourth, general personality traits. The data showed that 67% students enjoy the communication activities given. The data told that the students like to speak in English. They did not view the task given as a load for them, while it seems like a chance to train themselves to be better in speaking English. On the other hand, the result of the interview showed that some students prefer to speak in Bahasa Indonesia during the presentation since it was easier to make the audiences understand the ideas given. The audiences were quite hard to understand the ideas if the presenter presented the presentation in English. It resulted some responses, such as laugh, neglect or make a noise. Then, the presentation was not effective. Even, some students felt that they were forced to speak in English.

*Researcher : Do you enjoy the presentation in English?*

*Student : I do.*

*Researcher : If the lecturer asks you to choose the*

*language in presentation, which one do you prefer to choose Bahasa Indonesia or English?*

*Student : Bahasa Indonesia. It is easier to make the audience understand on our material. But, as it is known that we are English students we have to force ourselves to speak in English.*

Furthermore, based on the questionnaire administered showed that the students participated actively in some speaking courses. 60% students showed that they were likely to be a volunteer in some speaking activities. The more information related to the students' response on the questionnaire, they participated in speaking courses since the lecturers promise to give a good mark for those students who want to speak up. It can be inferred that the students were not voluntarily to speak up.

*Researcher : Which one is prefer to you, being a volunteer in presentation or waiting for called on by the lecturer?*

*Student : Waiting for the turn. We asked the lecturer to decide our turn in the first meeting.*

Then, the students were also asked about the motivation to participate in speaking classes. The data on the questionnaire showed that the number of the students who are motivated to speak with those who are not

motivated to speak were same. Then, based on the result of the interview, it was found that the students experienced some symptoms at the time the lecturer asked them to speak. Some of them tended to avoid the activity.

### Conclusion

Related to the existence of the Oral Communication Apprehension, there were some causes cause students' apprehension. First, the awareness on the students' low ability in using English during their performances. The students realize that they were lack of vocabulary which is hinder them to present the communication task given fluently. It was caused by the students' careless on the practice. Second, the communication task given. The previous speaking courses required the students to have group work. The students asked to do the task given in group, even presentation. Meanwhile, the Presentation course required the students to have individual presentation. The changing of the learning activities resulted clumsy. The students have to prepare by themselves in presentation course. It resulted a problem since in group work the students shared the ideas together. The students became less confidence on their own ability. The situation created apprehension then. Furthermore, the third cause was the way the lecturer evaluate the students' performance. Since the students were not provided by an illustration at the beginning of the course, they were in problem to present the ideal one. However, the lecturer did not care on it. Moreover, the lecturer did not try to appreciate the students' performance.

### SUGGESTION

For the lecturer, it is suggested to give an adequate information related to the course design given. Since it is a practice course, it is suggested for the lecturer to model or to illustrate the way to do the task designed.

For the students, it is a must to improve the ability on language use even there is no instruction by the lecturer. The language students must be think on the measurement of a successful language learners. It is suggested to join on some speaking activities.

For the next researcher, it is suggested to use interview guide to find out the causes of the communication apprehension rather than to use the questionnaire. Due to the questionnaire is not qualified to gain the depth data of the sample.

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