EXPRESSING VOICE IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: MULTIWRITING HAIKU PEDAGOGY IN THE EFL CONTEXT

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Abstract: One of the crucial perspectives in the teaching of second language (L2) writing is to develop voice (Iida, 2010; Paltridge et al., 2009). While scholars have discussed the significance of teaching voice from theoretical viewpoints, there is scant reporting on how to teach the concept and how to train L2 writers to express their own thoughts in the target language in the composition classroom. The aim of this article is to discuss how L2 writers can develop their voice through poetry writing in the L2 composition classroom. After describing the concept of voice and the feature of multiwriting, this article will explore the potential of multiwriting haiku pedagogy as a way to develop and express voice in the EFL freshman college writing classroom. It will also present a step-by-step approach for multiwriting haiku in the EFL classroom and then illustrate how Japanese EFL writers express voice and articulate self in the poetic text with the pedagogical guidelines.

Voiceless Voice
I can write
grammatically correct sentences.
I have gotten all As
in graduate courses at an American university.
But…
I feel NO VOICE in my papers.
I feel UNATTACHED to my writing.

This poem addresses the problem I encountered when I was a graduate student in the United States. As a Japanese English as a Second Language (ESL) student, I studied in both Master's and Doctoral programs for six years. During the time, I experienced a lot of writing assignments in various courses. While I worked on these assignments, I was always feeling that my papers were very dry and emotionless. This might probably be due to the genres (e.g., research papers, annotated bibliography, response papers) I worked on. Or, it might simply come from a lack of my second language (L2) linguistic and structural knowledge. *Voiceless* was my problem in L2 writing.

Even now, many English as a Foreign Language (EFL) college students have very little idea on how to use the English they learned in junior high and senior high school (Iida, 2010, 2011). However, they are expected to learn to write academic papers in the same way as native speakers of English do. In this context, students may be able to produce, as being expected, grammatically correct sentences but they struggle in expressing their thoughts or emotions in their papers. In other words, with so much emphasis on matters of accuracy or correctness in secondary school education, students too seldom have the opportunity to learn how to develop *voice*, which is defined as "the articulation of their personal needs, interests, and ideas—in a social context that presumes an audience—the teachers, classmates, and even the community at large" (Iida, 2010, p. 28). Traditional ESL/EFL teaching approaches including the teacher-orientation, grammar-translation method, teaching lexical and structural knowledge for entrance exams, provide students with limited opportunities to use English practically and left them at a disadvantage in using the language outside the classroom.

This article discusses the issue of voice in L2 writing and explores how Japanese EFL students use English to express themselves through poetry writing. Focusing on haiku― a three-line Japanese poem with a specific number of syllables― this article examines how L2 writers express and communicate their emotional insight in the text.

EXPRESSING VOICE TROUGH MULTIWRITING IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

One of the crucial perspectives of the teaching of writing is to develop voice. The significance of teaching voice in the composition classroom has

been discussed by expressivists. Murray (1996) defines voice as "the music of your language, the music of your meaning" (p. 39) and states that "voice reveals the writer, the character of the writer, the way the writer views the world" (p. 41). Elbow (1998) also regards the concept as "the sound of an individual" (p. 287), and argues that voice empowers individuals to take action in the world. Furthermore, Romano (2004) regards voice as the sense each writer has: "the sense we have while reading that someone occupies the middle of our mind, filling the space with the sound of a voice, the sense we have while writing that something is whispering in our ear" (p. 6). Voice in this sense is a crucial dimension in writing, which is tightly connected to the writer's identity (Brown & Lee 2015; Paltridge et al., 2009).

With the prevalence of technology in the 21st century, various teaching approaches for developing voice and articulating self have been applied in the composition classroom. One approach is multiwriting which is used in the first-year college composition in the United States. Davis and Shadle (2007) define multiwriting as "a practice of composing in which multiple genres, media, disciplines, and cultures are potentially open to use" (pp. 13-14). A prominent feature of this pedagogy is to produce texts by focusing on one particular genre while incorporating different media so that it can allow students to engage in work on assignments with their own preferred approach. The integration of visual images (e.g., photos or pictures) into the text is a typical example of this approach. For example, one student who is good at taking photos may incorporate them into their writing in a multiwriting project; another who is good at drawing may add some pictures to their work; and others whose major is computer science may incorporate computer graphics into the writing. In this way, multiwriting relies on both written and visual literacies. A written product generated through this approach is not simply a work for the writer to express opinions, but a creative art to articulate self.

Multiwriting consists of some key concepts in L2 learning. One concept is learner-centeredness. This approach places learners at the center in the writing process. It enables students to choose their own topics, conduct research, compose texts, and design, organize and generate a final product. From this perspective, multiwriting can encourage learners to be self-directed and to take responsibility for their own learning in the writing process. In addition, the negotiation process of deciding on what *genres* to use, what *forms* to use, what *media* to use, or in what *disciplines* to use, can allow for students' engaged learning and motivate them to write about themselves (Davis & Shadle, 2007). An-

other concept of multiwriting is process-orientation. Multiwriting usually requires a long time span to produce texts and there needs to be a concentration on the process of writing. Davis and Shadle (2007) argue for writing instructors to have student reflect on and inquire into their experiences and gain awareness of the multiple and complex relationship between the internal and external worlds of the individual in the writing process. This is the key principle of this pedagogy, and learners can develop their discourse sensitivity. Hence, multiwriting is viewed as an effective approach to recognize that "language, meaning, and texts are always and inevitably socially constructed" (Tobin, 2001, p. 9).

Although very few studies have discussed the application of multiwriting into the L2 context, the usage of visual literacies in this approach can provide alternative ways for the teaching of L2 writing. New media do not necessarily need to be digital. They come from any media product, and the importance of using the texts is "whoever produces the text and whoever consumes it understand –because the text asks them to, in one way to another– that the various materialists of a text contribute to how it, like its producers and consumers, is read and understood" (Wysocki, Jonson-Eilola, Selfe, & Sirc, 2004, p. 15). From this perspective, multiwriting is regarded as literacy practice through which students effectively use different media to express themselves. This alternative, open approach helps to gain a greater sense of the writer's voice, audience, and context by reflecting on how each element is intertwined to the text and how effectively learners incorporate new media into the text in order to articulate self.

However, what is a good genre for L2 writers to engage in multiwriting? Providing freedom or flexibility in a writing task helps to develop the sense of authorship and enhance self-regulated learning, but this may not be true for novice or less-experienced writers. Having lots of choices can sometimes confuse them. Many Japanese EFL students have limited genre knowledge and very little experience of writing in the target language (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2002; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Yasuda, 2011). From this viewpoint, it would probably be better to choose a particular genre which is manageable for those L2 writers. In the case of Japanese EFL students, *haiku* can be appropriate because of its cultural familiarity[1]. The fact is that previous studies on Japanese

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[1] Japanese students study the concept of haiku in Japanese classes in elementary school.

language and culture have valued the use of haiku in elementary and middle school: reading and writing haiku activities encourage Japanese students to develop their communication skills and to learn to write creatively (Minagawa, 2005; Mitsuhashi, Kuroda, & Kikuchi, 2008; Uesaka & Koushima, 2009).

Haiku consists of 17 syllables in a three-line 5-7-5 syllable form. It is a form of expressive writing in which writers can freely express their emotions. Higginson (1985) points out a fundamental concept of haiku: Haiku shows us what was happening, and that should make us feel something. In this light, haiku should not be just word sketches, but must have something deep and thoughtful as the poet's direct response to the natural world (Blasko & Merski, 1998). The essence of haiku is to describe, as it is, what the poet sees and feels in their life. This humanistic approach allows the writers to explore and express the relationship between the internal and external worlds of the individual. As Iida (2008) asserts, haiku is a literary text that represents "writers' voices reflecting cultural contexts" (p. 174).

In addition to the structural pattern, haiku contains a seasonal reference and cutting word. A seasonal reference[2] is a word or phrase associated with a particular season. For instance, 'cherry blossom' or 'skylark' represents spring, and 'sunflower' or 'cicada' is a seasonal reference for summer. A cutting word which can be seen as either an actual word or an exclamation mark including a colon or semi-colon has a specific rhetorical function: it is to divide one haiku into two parts; this creates an imaginative distance, although both sections remain, to some degree, independent of each other (Iida, 2010).

TEACHING VOICE THROUGH MULTIWRITING HAIKU PEDAGOGY IN THE L2 COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

I have proposed the teaching of haiku writing for different purposes from practical viewpoints in the L2 classroom: developing voice by composing haiku (Iida, 2010); writing haiku for L2 literacy development (Iida, 2011); and exploring personal life experiences through haiku composition (Iida, 2016b). Following the core nature of the teaching of poetry writing, this paper aims to explore how multiwriting haiku pedagogy can help L2 writers not only to construct their voices but also to express themselves in the learning process. This section, therefore, identifies some issues of traditional L2 learning, discusses

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[2] A seasonal reference is not always shown in English haiku.

the potential of multiwriting haiku pedagogy as a way to handle the problems, and illustrates a practical guideline for the pedagogy in the L2 composition classroom.

Many EFL first-year college students have struggled with the situation in which they do not know how to use the English they learned in secondary school though they studied grammatical rules and vocabulary items as preparation for college entrance examinations (Iida, 2010). The overemphasis on memorization, correctness and accuracy in the learning process results in the students' having difficulty in using English, especially when trying to produce their ideas. Multiwriting haiku pedagogy can have the potential to overcome this difficulty and provide students with different avenues to learn English in that it focuses on their written fluency and appropriate lexical choice to express voice in the target language. The key principle of English education in EFL contexts is for students to learn English for communicative purposes. Regardless of whether their language use is grammatically correct, their focus should be on its *appropriateness* to express their voice. In other words, of particular importance in this pedagogy is for teachers "to understand whether L2 writers feel attached to their poems and if not, to help them to express themselves accurately – in a phenomenological sense and not necessarily a linguistic sense – in English" (Iida, 2016a, p. 133). From a communicative viewpoint, it is also important to have teachers reflect on how effectively students can convey their voice to the audience. In so doing, the students can gain a strong sense of writer-reader interaction by composing haiku. Multiwriting haiku pedagogy consists of the following five steps.

Step 1: Understanding the concept of haiku

The first step of the multiwriting haiku project is to understand the concept of haiku. The instructor introduces the following traditional Japanese haiku written by Matsuo Basho in the seventeenth century.

古池や (fu-ru-i-ke-ya)
蛙飛び込む (ka-wa-zu-to-bi-ko-mu)
水の音 (mi-zu-no-o-to)

old pond…
a frog leaps in
water's sound   (English translation in Higginson, 1985)

The exercise starts with understanding the structural and textual features of haiku. Then, the instructor can ask students the following questions.

- How many syllables are used in English?
- What is a seasonal reference?
- Where is a cutting word used in the haiku?

It is a three-line poem with 17 syllables: five syllables in the first line (fu-ru-i-ke-ya); seven syllables in the second line (ka-wa-zu-to-bi-ko-mu); and five syllables in the third line (mi-zu-no-o-to). A seasonal reference, *kawazu* (frog in the English translation) which is associated with summer is used in the haiku. A cutting word, ya ("…" an exclamation mark in the English translation) appears at the end of the first line. Iida (2012a) explains that its function is to cut the verse after the first line and to have students reflect on the relationship between the first and the remaining two lines in the poem.

After reviewing structural features, it is important for the instructor to have students interpret the poem. Since the purpose of this activity is for the students to develop their voices and express themselves, the instructor can ask them the following questions to promote the construction of meaning in the process of interpreting the haiku:

- Look at the word "frog". What's your image of the frog? Describe the physical aspects of the frog.
- Look at the phrase "old pond". Where do you see the old pond in your life? What is the color of water? How big is the pond?
- What sound do you hear when the flog leaps in the pond?

Of particular importance is for the instructor to guide students to have their own interpretation of the poem and share it with their classmates. In this way, they can understand the concept of multiple interpretations in that each reader has his or her own responses to the poem. This approach enables students to interpret the poem in a descriptive, non-judgmental way.

Step 2: Reading haiku in English as a foreign language

The second stage is to read and understand haiku in English as a second language. The purposes of reading haiku are for students to develop a sense of voice construction and self-representation: how the writer's voice can be expressed and presented in the text. According to Hanauer (2004), poetry reading in a second language involves a textual analysis and an effort to construct

meaning. Using the following haiku, students analyze the texts and try to produce their own interpretations of the poem.

> A bright red maple
> Whispering among green leaves:
> A start of new life
> (Iida, 2010, p. 30)

The instructor can ask the same questions to review the structure of the poem. However, it is crucial to teach EFL students, especially Japanese students, how to count syllables in English, because Japanese and English have a different sound system (e.g., Japanese is a syllabary language and English is an alphabetical language). In teaching syllables, the instructor can recommend students to check each word in the dictionary. It explains how vowels and consonants are combined, how it makes sound and can be pronounced and how many syllables the word consists of.

This haiku consists of five syllables in the first line, seven syllables in the second line, and five syllables in the third line. The seasonal reference is *red maple*, which is associated with fall. The cutting "word", which is shown as a colon in the haiku, is used at the end of the second line. Doing so divides this poem into two parts: the first two lines provide information about the situation and what is happening; and the third line addresses the poet's voice.

In terms of the content of the haiku, the instructor asks students the following questions:

　　o What is your interpretation from this haiku?
　　o What emotion does this poet try to express in the poem?

This haiku describes the moment when the poet looks outside from the window in his apartment and sees a red maple leaf shaking in the wind. Iida (2010) addresses possible interpretations:

> Some readers may interpret this haiku as sorrowful when taking a maple as a subject; others may think of the poem as something exciting when taking "new life" as a subject; still others may consider it a hopeful poem if they pay attention to the phrases "bright red" or "start of new life" (p. 30).

What matters in this exercise is not just to inform students of one absolute interpretation, but to encourage them to have their own responses and discuss

why they have such interpretations. Doing so allows them to understand how the poet's voice is constructed and expressed in the text while involving close analysis of the relationship among his or her thought, words, and context. Learning to read haiku leads to the development of students' creativity, and the ability can be applied to the composition of haiku in the target language.

Step 3: Composing haiku

Various approaches for the teaching of haiku writing can be applied in the composition classroom, but one effective way is to utilize Hanauer's (2010) practical guideline for teaching L2 poetry writing through which students reflect on the significant moments in their lives and write a poem about the memory. This teaching practice is based on the concept of meaningful literacy learning which aims to humanize the language classroom by putting students at the heart of their learning process and providing opportunities to explore both internal and external worlds of the individual in literacy learning (Hanauer, 2012). In this activity, students reflect on the significant or unforgettable moments in their lives, freewrite about each memory, understand what they want to say in the description, negotiate how to construct and express their voice, and adjust it to the 5-7-5 syllable pattern. The instructor encourages students to produce a haiku poem while having them pay attention to the relationship among their emotional insight, words, and life. Doing so allows students to consider what words are appropriate (or more effective) to use in the poem in order to express their voice more accurately.

Step 4: Peer reading

Once students finish writing a haiku, they work on a peer reading activity. The purpose of this activity is for the students to understand how the haiku is interpreted by their classmates and recognize how successfully they can convey their voice to the readers in the poem.

In this activity, students are assigned to make pairs, read the partner's poem and give feedback from the aspect of structure and content. The following questions help to provide constructive feedback to their classmates:
- o How many syllables are used in each line?
- o If the haiku does not follow the 5-7-5 syllable pattern, how can you modify it?
- o What is a seasonal reference?

      o What is your interpretation of the haiku?

      o What does the poet want to tell you in the poem?

During this activity, the instructor reminds students of giving descriptive and non-judgmental comments, because the purpose of this peer reading is not to evaluate the haiku, but rather to share how their expressed voice is conveyed to others. It may be more meaningful for students to discuss each poem with the feedback given in pairs. Receiving both oral and written feedback helps each writer to understand what to revise and how to revise the haiku. In so doing, they can better understand what modification they need to make before they actually work on the revision. In this activity, there will be various responses to the poem, which further enables students to build a greater sense of writer-reader interaction (Iida, 2010).

Step 5: Choosing media

A series of reading and writing haiku activities involve the construction of meaning, the expression of voices, and the articulation of self. A challenging task in composing haiku is for students to fit into the 5-7-5 syllable pattern and express their voice in the limited structure (Iida, 2012b). Inserting media into the text can compensate for the difficulty in expressing voices caused by its structure and help them to better articulate themselves. While the instructor leaves students freedom to negotiate what technology to use and how to produce their work, it is important to remind them that media must be incorporated into the poem as part of crafting their voice. Thus overall, the construction of meaning, linguistic and reflective choices, and the freedom to choose preferable technologies and media in multiwriting haiku can promote students to craft voice, articulate self, and ultimately develop the sense of authorship in L2 writing.

MULTIWRITING HAIKU AND JAPANESE EFL WRITERS

Following the above pedagogy, three Japanese EFL writers[3] created and published their work. They were assigned to reflect on their significant life

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[3] English proficiency level of those Japanese EFL writers was below 399 points on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) paper-based test. In addition, students had very little or no experience of writing papers in English in secondary school education.

memory and write a haiku poem in response to that experience in the Japanese EFL university classroom. The first haiku was written by a first-year college engineering student. He was a student who took a remedial English course in the 2012 fall semester. This haiku addresses the poet's first love describing his first impression to a girl with whom he was falling in love. He reflected on and captured her characteristics including "Black long hair, white skin, brown eyes, good scent, and cute smile" in the poem. In so doing, he attempted to express the relationship to the lady. In addition to the poem, he incorporates the drawing of her face and a flower into this work. For him, the flower seems to be associated with her good scent. It seems that the use of pink letters in the poem represents his state of mind and his heart was filled with her cute and smiling face.


Another first-year college engineering student who took a remedial English course in the 2013 fall semester produced the following haiku. This haiku describes a moment in which he visited one of the famous temples, *Kinkaku-ji* (literally, Temple of the Golden Pavilion) in Kyoto during his junior high school trip. It represents his emotional responses to the scene he saw there: the temple and the reflecting pond. What really surprised me is that this work was based on an artwork made of *origami*-papers cut into designs. While no sea-

sonal reference is used in the haiku, the red maples in the creative work allow us to understand that he visited the temple in fall. He also tried to capture the details of the view and recreate his unforgettable moment. For example, it seems that the poet used two different red papers to represent the maples: light-red papers for actual maples and faint-red ones for the maples reflected on the pond. Although the haiku itself does not address a lot about the view, the art work helps both the poet to express and readers to understand how impressive the view was and why he felt "Don't forget the view".

The next haiku was produced by another first-year engineering student. He was neither talkative nor social at all. However, in conferencing with the course instructor, he shared his problems or emotional difficulties he had encountered in his daily life. He grew up in a family with parents who were quarreling every

day and they did not really care about him. In this haiku, he tries to express his emotional concerns by exploring the relationship between his family and him. This haiku describes a moment in which he had dinner with his family. It seems that they enjoy their family time to have "hot dinner" and "laugh" at watching a TV program, but the poet does not share the same feeling. On the contrary to the temperature of the house, his heart becomes too cold. This temperature difference depicts the relationship between the poet and his family. This haiku represents the poet's emotional difficulty in spending time with their family.
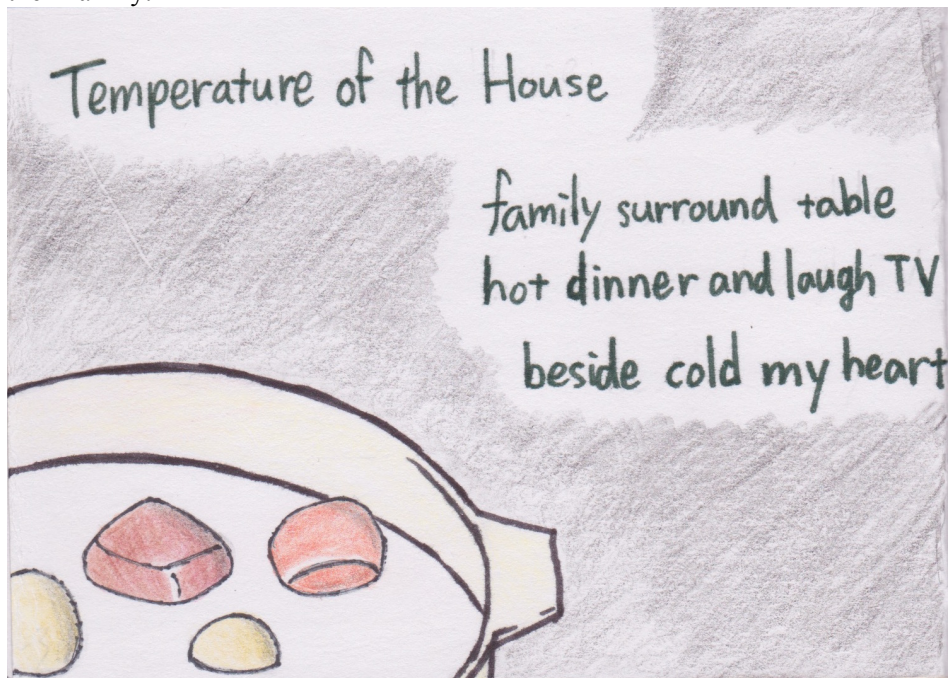
In addition to the haiku, he wrote a little note to explain the situation surrounding him:

> I have one brother, and   I'm Adult Children. Adult Children (AC) is a person who grew up in a dysfunctional family. [It is] not a disease name. They are still well into adulthood, [but] are having a "pain to live". This is my haiku as the AC.

His drawing also reflects his emotional difficulty. He used dark colors and very few light colors in his work. He painted in black on a white paper and wrote the title and haiku in dark green. His choice of colors in the work helps to articulate his voice.

Honestly speaking, as a teacher-researcher of L2 literacy education, I did not know how to respond to him. I was neither a therapist nor psychologist. As an English teacher, however, I always encouraged him to express himself in the target language and share his stories with me if he was willing to do so. Poetry writing was often used as a tool for healing or therapy (Chavis, 2011; Pennebaker, 2004) so that I really hoped this multiwriting haiku project helped him to release and reduce his negative feelings. This might not be the principal solution for his mental problem, but I still believe that this task provided him with an opportunity to reflect on, understand and express himself.

In this way, each haiku produced by Japanese EFL writers describes a moment which is significant and meaningful to them. The "significant" moment defined by them is a happy and exciting memory for one writer, and it is heartbreaking or painful for the other. Although each haiku may include such problems as an incorrect use of grammar or a failure of syllable adjustment, it clearly represents the writer's emotional responses to the significant moment. As shown in the above haikus, voice in the poem is expressed as a result of each writer's "reflective, linguistic negotiation of personal thoughts, feelings, and experiences" (Hanauer, 2010, p. 60). In this sense, this multiwriting haiku was a literacy practice for my students to reflect on their personally meaningful experience and to articulate voice in the moment.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Multiwriting haiku may be an unusual task to EFL students. I have discovered that some of my students are confused and have difficulty in composing haiku in English at the beginning of this project, but they feel comfortable and take positive attitudes toward the writing about themselves once they understand what poetry writing is like. From my experience with my lower-level or remedial students, I can argue that this literacy practice is a feasible task for any level of L2 learners. Regardless of the quality of each haiku, L2 writers have stories to tell, and have the ability to express themselves in the target language (Iida, 2012a, 2016a, 2016b). I believe that the multiwriting haiku is an effective literacy practice to L2 writers in terms of being able to develop a

sense of voice in L2 writing and enhance their L2 linguistic awareness in the learning process. In this article, I focus on haiku as a principal genre for multi-writing pedagogy, but English teachers in other Asian countries can also use poetry − unstructured, free-style poems – in their contexts. The use of poetry would provide EFL learners with more rhetorical, linguistic, and structural choices in the process of expressing voice in L2 writing.

In conclusion, this article has explored the potential of multiwriting haiku pedagogy as a way to develop and express voice in the EFL classroom. Practical guidelines for multiwriting haiku pedagogy described in this article are applicable to any contexts and it can allow L2 writers to become more engaged. I believe that the teaching of haiku writing can enable L2 learners to explore and better understand themselves and make their language learning more personal, humanistic and meaningful than traditional L2 pedagogy.

> Voicing in haiku:
> Key to think, see, discover
> The meaning of life

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