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# An Error Analysis on Past Tense in Recount Text Written by Lower Secondary School Students

Alifvia Putri Listiani & Fika Megawati

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo; alifviaputri30@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Sidoarjo; fikamegawati@umsida.ac.id

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\*Correspondence: Alifvia Putri Listiani

Email: alifviaputri30@gmail.com

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## Abstract:

Highlighting the importance of accuracy in grammar use, this study is interested to investigate the students' error in English writing. Based on the preliminary study, the students seemed to have difficulty in conducting the sentences by using simple past. Therefore, this research explored more the errors on using simple past tense in writing recount text. The aim of this thesis was to know the types of error, to find out the dominant error, and to find out the sources of error. The research was a qualitative descriptive research. The subjects of this research were the thirty students of junior high school at eight grade. In collecting data, this research used a writing task about their unforgettable experiences which aimed to identify the errors produced by students in using the simple past in writing recount texts based on the linguistics category taxonomy and sources of error based on Ellis' theory. The results implied that there were 13 types of errors made by students. The most dominant types of errors were miss-election of V-1 in the past event with the total number of error 56 items. Based on the results of the types of error was found sources of error that there were 96 items of interference errors, 68 items of intralingual errors, and 83 items of developmental errors.

**Keywords:** Error Analysis, Writing, Simple Past Tense, Recount Text

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## INTRODUCTION

English is one of the languages that we have to master besides Indonesian. For many years, English becomes the famous one useful language in this country. It is important thing that must be learned for any circumstances such as business, science, technology, and education. Learning English have four basic skills are listening, speaking, reading and writing, Andansari, Sari, & Murwanto [1]. They are integrated in the English subject material from elementary school to university. Each of them skills have correlation one to another. Moreover, the English components the learner should know are grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc. Dealing with educational scope the immergence of English subject to help students develop their skill for the provision to go or study abroad. That's why English is included in formal education especially in Junior high school as it based on the elucidation of Article 35 of Law Number 20 of 2003 is the Competency Standards for Primary and Secondary Education Graduates are one of the most important aspects of the 2013 curriculum. Graduate competency standards are qualifications of graduates' abilities, which include students' attitudes, knowledge, and skills, that must be fulfilled or achieved from a primary or secondary educational unit, Bewa [2]. Those are encouraged to be more active and creative by participating in a variety of classroom activities that require them to be student-centered.

In curriculum emphasizes the use of English for communication oral or written in English classes. It simply means that English is used to communicate messages and important information from one person to another. This research concerns in written text which is regarding to the one of grammar element. It is simple past tense that has the own term to express the time, whereas Indonesian has not. According to Gayatri, Prabowo, & Affini [3], writing is productive skills that they have to pay attention to vocabulary, spelling and grammar. Errors may appear when students are neglecting all those stipulations. Moreover, the students face

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the difficulties in writing because of their thinking about how to construct the sentence, the use of grammar and the choices vocabulary. In this research the main focus is on the tense errors made by students. Recount is the either types of written text in English that the students learn in junior high school. It is to retell their past experience. According to the Curriculum 2013 the output of the students in writing skill are able to write recount text in a good, so that simple past tense implemented on it. Curriculum 2013 derives students can write about their past well with the help of recount text. They also need to organize the paragraph by the structures are orientation, events, and reorientation.

Error of the students made can be analyzed when they are directly writing the text, Musfia & Hafizh [4]. It is purely occurred as the students do not know the concept of using simple past tense. Error can be found when students confuse to decide the past verb in irregular or regular way such as “She **drinked** a cup of tea” it should be “She **drunk** a cup of tea”, then difficult to use the past auxiliary (*was/were*) such as “I **were** sick” but the correct answer is “I **was** sick”, and they make incorrect sentence with temporal adverb such as “Yesterday” the example like “Yesterday she **swim**”, it should be “Yesterday she **swam**”. Moreover they also do it in imperative sentence such as “**Did** we **ate** salad?” that should be “**Did** we **eat** salad?”. Error analyzing has important role correcting the mistakes. Based on the observation from the English teacher of SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo, the students’ problem in writing recount text is on the use of simple past tense itself. They confuse conducting the regular and irregular verb, and auxiliary past in a sentence while they are also organize the text in a good structure. If they can do it structurally, a lot of errors will appear and it can make misunderstanding for the readers. Hence, teacher mentions on her second semester syllabus that the expectation is students are able to use simple past tense in writing recount text correctly.

In this research refers to some previous study about an error analysis. The similarity is on the topic of research discussion, but Sa’idah [5], research focus on analyzing the error implementing surface strategy taxonomy in the use of simple past tense in writing recount text and it tells that the students produce 4 types of errors are Omission (78 students) , addition (93 students), Mis-formation (100 students) and Mis-ordering (32 students). The second one is Fitri [6], this research showed that the subject of the study is different but the way to analyze is quite similar using surface strategy taxonomy. In this research result the highest errors of using strategy taxonomy are Misinformation (60 items), Omission (18 items), Addition (7 items), and misordering (2 items). Moreover, in linguistic category taxonomy the results are morphology (substitution of simple non-past followed by 25 errors, omission of –ed followed by 15 errors, omission of ‘s followed by 4 errors, and failure to attach –s followed by 1 error), and the last one is syntax (omission of to be and article followed by 7 errors, omission of preposition followed by 5 errors, and disagreement of subject and tenses and repetition followed by 1 error). All of the result is made by amount of 92 students.

The gap of this study that makes it different from previous studies lies on the theory used to analyze the errors. This research focuses on analyzing the implementation of simple past tense at lower secondary school students that become the most significant element in writing recount text. Based on the statement above, this research is trying to identify and classify the errors made by students based on linguistics category taxonomy in order to know what types of error, find the most dominant error, and the sources of error.

## METHOD

This study is a qualitative research. Creswell [7] states that qualitative descriptive research as a method for investigating and comprehending the meaning that individuals or groups attach to a social or human issue. Emerging questions and procedures are part of the research process, as are data collected in the participant's environment, data analysis that builds inductively from specifics to broad themes, and the

researcher's interpretations of the data's meaning. Moreover, it is emphasized method which describing everything that happens in a specific situation in great detail, Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun [8]. Based on Cohen, Manion, & Morrison [9], researchers must decide sampling early on in the research process, including whether to use a sample or the entire population. In this research conducted the subject were in eight grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo. There were 55 students and divided into 2 classes A and B. The research used the data from second semester class. Based on the data above, the researcher gained the sample of both classes from A and B which consists of 30 students. Various sampling techniques are used to determine the sample for this study.

Purposive sampling is selecting specific subject which is setting the persons in order to fulfill the information, Taherdoost [10]. It was used to conduct this research, which required a class. The entire of eight grade students who had been chosen were required to write a recount text based on the topics given in order to conduct an effective and guided analysis. The researcher gave the interesting topics were a story about the worst/happy day ever and an unforgettable experience. Within 50 minutes, they were required to write a short recount text in a piece of paper with the minimum of 10 sentences. The students were instructed to write a recount text using the generic structure and language features that they had learned in previous lessons. Then, the students were directed to submit their works to the researcher. The researcher examined their writing in order to determine the types of errors and causes of errors that they had produced in the next step. The results were collected by using error classification sheet as the instrument.

This study selected the data analysis technique of the ISP Nation (1989) in Sa'idah [11] which is more appropriate with this study's analysis through this following steps: 1) Collecting the data according to the result of students' writing works. 2) Checking the students' works by analyzing the students' errors. 3) Determining the students' works by underlining the errors. That contain of: omitting of -ed in past tense form, adding -ed to past already form, equalization by adding -ed, miss-election of verb-I in past event, miss-election of verb-ing in past event, omitting of "be" as whole verb, addition of "be" as whole verb, miss-formation of "be" in past event, miss-election of verb in past event, miss-formation of modal past tense, failure of Past principle, incorrect of passive voice used, miss election of verb and verb construction and omitting of verb. 4) Determining the types of error and the sources of error produced by students of each sentences. 5) Counting the total number of errors produced by students.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Types and the Dominant Error

Based on the result of analysis in this research, it was gained that the students of secondary school did some errors. There were 13 types of error produced by students in writing recount text. Those included in 247 cases were omitting of -ed in past tense form on 35 items, adding -ed to past already form with 5 items, miss-election of verb-I in past event followed by 56 items, miss-election of verb-ing in past event in 12 items, omitting of "be" as whole verb on 21 items, addition of "be" as whole verb with 12 items, miss-formation of "be" in past event in 27 items, miss-election of verb past event which was in 7 items, miss-formation of modal past tense with 10 items, failure of Past principle on 30 items, incorrect of passive voice used on 1 item, miss election of verb and verb construction representing 23 items and omitting of verb with 8 items.

Table 1. Error classification

No.	Types of error	Total errors
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1	Omitting of –ed in past tense form	35
2	Equalization by adding –ed	5
3	Miss-election of verb-1 in past event	56
4	Miss-election of verb-ing in past event	12
5	Omitting of “be” as whole verb	21
6	Addition of “be” as whole verb	12
7	Miss-formation of “be” in past event	27
8	Miss-election of verb in past event	7
9	Miss-formation of modal past tense	10
10	Failure of Past principle	30
11	Incorrect of passive voice used	1
12	miss election of verb and verb construction	23
13	omitting of verb	8
Total		247

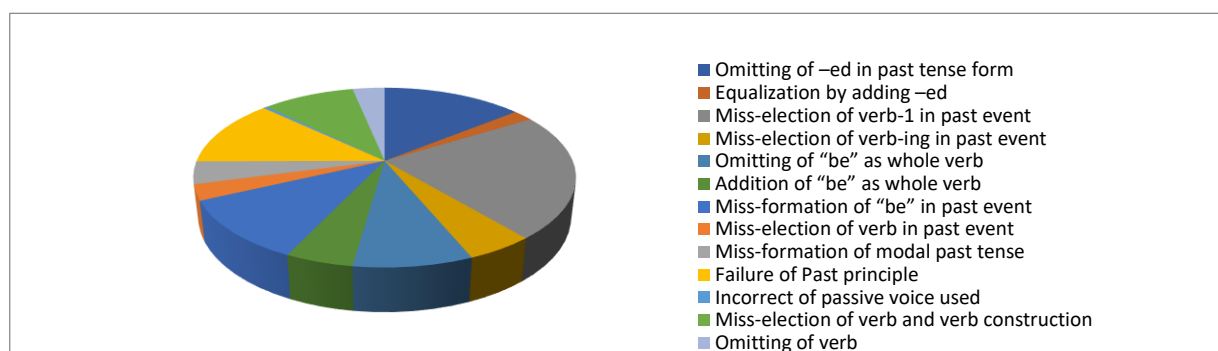


Figure 1. The Dominant Error

### Omitting of –ed in Past Form

The feature of this error was inexistence of item in a well-formed sentence. Some students produced errors because they wrote incorrect verb by omitting the affix –ed as the sign of past verb. The total number of error made by students were 35 items. Here were the following examples of students’ error in using action verb in writing recount text.

Students’ Error	Error Correction
I participate competition again	I participated competition again
He ask me to play tag	He asked me to play tag
I apologize to Azhar because his ear	I apologized to Azhar because his ear

Regarding to the examples of students’ error, the students omit the affix –ed which should present in past verb form of regular past tense and they actually know that in writing recount text they are supposed to use past verb. Although, when they were wrote, they unconsciously forgot that they had to change the present verb into past verb to express the tense.

### Equalization by Adding –ed

Equalization by adding –ed occur in irregular verb, there are different forms of each verb form, and adding –d in the verb-2 for past event is not common. The total number of equalization by adding –ed committed by students were 5. Here the following data were explained as examples of the error did by the students:

Students’ Error	Error Correction
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We buyed some snacks	We bought some snacks
I falled and my friend laughed	I fell and my friend laughed
I buyed ice cream	I bought ice cream

From these examples of error, showed that the students' generalization the past verb by adding -ed in the end of word. It can be inferred that the students did not understand well about the use of irregular and regular verb in altering past verb.

### Miss-election of Verb-1 in Past Event

This error occurred by incorrect election of verb form structurally. Most of students produce this type of error by using verb-1 in their writing text that it supposed to be past verb (verb-2) in irregular form. There were 56 items of errors. The examples of error as follows:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I fall from bicycle	I fell from bicycle
I never give up	I never gave up
We spend time with my best friend	We spent time with my best friend

Based on the examples of students' error, they substituted irregular past verb into present verb which they only knew the use of verb-1, and it made them got used to implement it in writing.

### Miss-election of Verb-ing in Past Event

In this type of error, it was characterized by using the wrong structure of past verb into present participle in their writing. It could be found in the students' writing about 12 items. These following were examples of the error:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I training every night at my club	I trained every night at my club
I adventure with my friend looking for fish	I adventure with my friend looked for fish
I played at time zone and reading a book in Gramedia	I played at time zone and read a book in Gramedia

The example above pointed out that the students applied incorrect form of verb in past event. Moreover, the students added -ing in the end of the verb that it was not supposed to be added in the rule of past verb.

### Omitting of "be" as Whole Verb

This type of error appeared, when there was one word absence in a past sentence that it was required. The total number of error from omitting of "be" as whole verb were 21 items. The following examples can be seen below were:

Students' Error	Error Correction
My parents proud of me	My parents was proud of me
We so happy	We were so happy
I thirsty	I was thirsty

From these examples of error, it can be seen that the students confused to distinguish active sentence and nominal sentence in writing recount text by implementing past tense.

### Addition of “be” as Whole Verb

Addition of “be” as whole verb errors were characterized by putting element of word (to be) in past sentences. There were 12 units of errors. The examples of error as follows:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I am followed football club	I followed football club
We're played uno together	We played uno together
I'm met my parents	I met my parents

Related to the examples of students' error, indeed that the students generalized in making sentence always using “to be” as the sign verb of past event. Although they did not know which one was the correct “to be” or the real verb in that sentence.

### Miss-formation “be” in Past Event

This error appeared by incorrect altering from “to be present” to “to be past”. It could be found in the students' writing about 27 units. The examples of the error below:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I'm so scary	I was so scared
It's so awkward	It was so awkward
There are any jump-scare	There were any jump-scare

The example above pointed out that the students already knew how to apply to be in a nominal sentence, but they using several to be present in their writing which was not suitable with recount text that used to be past.

### Miss-election of Verb in Past Event

The feature of this error was incorrect selecting verb which was not properly used for the context. It was also characterized by implementing past verb in a wrong structure or morpheme. The total number of error made by students were 7. Here the following examples of students' error were:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I went to cleaning my phone	I wanted to clean my phone
He is not comeback yet until now	He didn't comeback yet until now
I'm so scary	I was so scared

Based on the examples of students' error, indeed that the students had lack of knowledge to pick the collocation of word which was indicated activity related to past event. It made the students produced incorrect writing.

### Miss-formation of Modal Past Tense

This error appeared by incorrect altering from “modal present” to “modal past”. It could be found in the students' writing about 10 items. Here were the following examples:

Students' Error	Error Correction
Azhar ear can't hear	Azhar's ear couldn't hear
I will tell you my story	I would tell you my story
I will developed my skill on football	I would develop my skill on football

The example above pointed out that in the production of certain sentence the students didn't know how to change modal present became modal past which was matched with the verb.

### Failure of Past Principle

This type of error appeared, when there was word which was typo in writing past verb form or was in flipped letters. The total number of error from omitting of "be" as whole verb were 30 items. The following examples can be seen below were:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I wont this competition with third place	I won this competition with third place
We are tried	We were tired
I planed went to walk around with my bestfriend	I planned to walk around with my bestfriend

From these examples of error, it can be seen that the students confused to write the correct verb phonetically as they wrote it just by listening the pronunciation of verb. This error might also named typo.

### Incorrect Passive Voice Used

In this type of error, it was characterized miss-formation of the structure of past tense. It could be found in the students' writing about 1 item. Here was the following example:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I was gifted by dad new soccer shoes	I was given a gift by dad new soccer shoes

That example, pointed out that the students applied the wrong structure form by flipping it.

### Miss-election of Verb and Verb Construction

The feature of this error was incorrect selecting verb which was not proper and incorrect structure form. It was also characterized miss-election past sentence formation. The total number of error made by students were 23 items. Here the following examples of students' error were:

Students' Error	Error Correction
I to play football	I wanted to play football
We continued played at time zone	We continued to play at time zone
I'm looking forward to it	I looked forward to it.

Based on the examples of students' error, it can be concluded that the students difficult to pick the suitable word form and they didn't know how to structure that sentence become grammatically correct.

### Omitting of Verb

This type of error occurred through the absence of word in a past sentence which was required. The total number of error from omitting of verb were 8 items. The following examples can be seen below were:

Students' Error	Error Correction
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I went to nearest restaurant for lunch with my dad	I went to the nearest restaurant for had lunch with my dad
My friend headatched	My friend got headache
She operation	She had operation

From these examples of error, it can be seen that the students assumed the noun as the real verb in those past sentences, although they actually omit the verb itself.

### Sources of Error

This researcher was identified the data according to Ellis’ theory about sources of error through the description above. It was explained to present the case that caused the students produced errors. Moreover, from some categories of sources, it indicates that the students’ errors occurred belong to interference error, intralingual error, and developmental error. It would be explained below.

Table 2. Sources of Error’s Result

No.	Types of error	Total errors
1	Interference Error	96
2	Intralingual Error	68
3	Developmental Error	83
	Total	247

### Interference Error

Interference or interlingual error was the common factor that related to mother tongue language as Bahasa Indonesia was their first language. It is congruent with Wardani, Nursalim, & Samsur [12], claimed that interference or mother tongue errors occurred by the lack of ability in meaning, structure, rule or way with the target language. Interlingual error was the most influential source of error of their writing especially in recount text. The total number of the result revealed that there were 96 items of errors that produced by students. In this stage, students learning English as foreign language was difficult. They had to transfer their language into native language. The interlingual transfer of their first language involved in their language learning process. Here were the examples of error produced by students:

Students’ Error	Error Correction	Comment
I win but I got second place	I won but I got second place	The students was implicated interference error of their mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia) because there was no rule in Bahasa Indonesia to alter the verb related to the groups of verb were irregular and regular verb form.
I selfie in Kusuma Agro	I took selfie in Kusuma Agro	The students assumed that “selfie” was kind of the real verb that it could stand by itself which was reflected the activity, however the students must used “took” as the real verb that could represent the activity. It reflected the students was still affected by mother tongue language to produce sentence that translated word by word to the target language.
He under my friend go to hospital	He took my friend to go to hospital	The students directly transferred what were in their ideas to implement in their writing that the mother tongue language as the guidelines. Moreover, it meant the students did not know the exactly meaning of “dibawa” in English because of the limita-



tion vocabulary.

The result above based on the students' writing task, that they were referred to grammar of Bahasa in producing English sentence. The students also used their dictionary to find the English word for arranging the sentence word by word, and it reflected the students still influenced by their mother tongue language. Therefore, the factor of interference not only that. It also caused by the students itself are in beginner level which they can not decided it as easily as they can, Yusuf, Mustafa, & Iqbal [13].

### Intralingual Error

Intralingual error occurred because miss-transferred of the L<sub>2</sub> (target language) which was obtained the same language form. Sometimes, they tried to combine with other rules which could appear overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application rules, and false concept hypothesized. Those parts of sources error in intralingual, were found 68 items. In contrast with research results Aziz, Firtiani, Amalina [14], stated that intralingual error was the main factor because foreign-language learners try to deduce rules from data in the target language to which they have been exposed in term of still learning. They begin to form hypotheses at this point, which may or may not correspond to their mother tongue or neither of their native languages. Intralingual error mostly happened because the students did not capable to produced well sentence for the target language as they had lack of understanding about the target language rules. The following examples of intralingual error as follows:

Students' Error	Error Correction	Comment
Her mother buyed some foods	Her mother bought some foods	The students was generalized all the verbs by adding -ed in the end of word. it was the common error in learning English especially past tense which had the own rules of verb. There were regular (adding -ed) and irregular verb (change the word). The students still faced difficulty to distinguish both of them because in their Bahasa (mother tongue language) there was no rule about verb form.
How I know him	How did I know him?	The students omitted the past auxiliary "did" as the mark past event because they had difficulty in transitioning the sentence form became interrogative.
I so very happy	I was so happy or I was very happy	The students didn't understand well the differentiation with the target language, so the students put two words that represented something too much by using "so" and "very" in one sentence. They actually used one of them in a sentence in order to avoided the double meaning also.

Those examples inferred that the students confused to make up good sentence in their writing as they did not master yet the grammatical rules. Moreover they knew that in Bahasa was different with English.

### Developmental Error

Developmental error was found 83 items in students' writing. It happened because the students wanted to create hypothesis about the target language. Differently from Millah [15], the research's result under the

title “An Error Analysis On The Use Of Simple Past Tense In Students’ Recount Text Writing (A Study At The Tenth Grade Of Ma Nu Banat Kudus)” claimed that developmental error has the same features with intralingual error. It showed that there was the different point of view to determine the sources of error. Sometimes, students produced some error as they equalized the target language with their mother tongue language as it caused of their limited knowledge. The following examples of developmental error found in this research were:

Students’ Error	Error Correction	Comment
I am cry and depressed in my room for a while	I cried and depressed in my room for a while	Addition of auxiliary pointed out that the students try to hypothesis the sentence became well-structured by adding “am” before verb. However, the students should omitted “am” because it was not “ <i>ditangisi</i> ” but “ <i>menangis</i> ”. Actually they could change cry → cried.
He slep my ears	He slapped my ears	The students applied the wrong written form of the word “slap”. The student change the vowel of “a” vowel became “e” vowel. Moreover he/she also did not change the verb form into past event as it did by the limited experience.
I to play football	I wanted to play football	The students omitted the verb as the mark past event. They also generalize their idea into written form because they translated it directly from their first language.

From the examples above, it can be seen that the students tried to deliver the message from the sentence through their limited experience of the target language. Moreover, this source leads them to produce error.

### CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data through explanation and description in the previous chapters, there were thirteen types of error produced by students in lower level in using simple past tense in recount text which was using linguistics category taxonomy as the parameter. They were omitting of –ed in past tense form (35 items), equalization by adding –ed (5 items), miss-election of verb-I in past event (56 items), miss-election of verb-ing in past event (12 items), omitting of “be” as whole verb (21 items), addition of “be” as whole verb (12 items), miss-formation of “be” in past event (27 items), miss-election of verb in past event (7 items), miss-formation of modal past tense (10 items), failure of Past principle (30 items), incorrect of passive voice used (1 item), miss election of verb and verb construction (23 items) and omitting of verb (8 items). By the total number of error, it revealed that the most dominant error appeared in students writing was miss-election of verb-1 in past event with the total number of error was 56 items. The causes of error done by students in using simple past tense in writing recount text were interference error by 96 items, intralingual error with 68 items, and developmental error in 83 items.

In line with the results of this study, the researcher suggested to the teachers should give them an interactive and funny related to simple past tense that can make them easier to understand the pattern of the material. Moreover, they should choose the appropriate method for writing activity in order to prevent them getting difficulties in writing sentence or paragraph by giving the written correction in their work, so that it will help them to learn and understand it by themselves. The students also learn about irregular and regular verb,

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learn how to make and organize sentence in writing, and learn how to write the correct spelling of each words. Moreover, for the other researchers this study can be used as the reference to conduct the other research on the same field in a complex aspect of error analysis especially in linguistics category taxonomy both syntax and morpheme scope.

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