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**PLACE OF LINGUO-DIDACTIC ONLINE PLATFORM IN THE SYSTEM OF TEACHING RUSSIAN
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: SEARCH FOR NEW TECHNOLOGIES**

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Abstract

The relevance of the issue under investigation is determined by the need to develop an innovative method for teaching the Russian language to foreigners and to introduce materials into the linguo-didactic online platform “Russian studies in the North-East of Russia and in countries of the Pacific Rim”. The method is based on the graphical and symbolic analysis of a work of fiction within the system of teaching Russian to foreigners. This system will be the most consistent with the state’s strategy to promote the Russian language abroad. This is all the more relevant considering that over 400 foreigners from the Pacific Rim, Africa, Middle East, Europe and Latin America are studying at the M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University.

Keywords

Russian as a foreign language – “Crime and Punishment” – F.M. Dostoevsky

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DR. SVETLANA MAKSIMOVNA PETROVA

Introduction

The Russian language is not just the transmitter of cultural values but is also viewed as a factor in an integral part of world civilization. The issue of studying Russian in Russia, promoting it in the neighboring countries and in the world, is a strategically important part of the international policy of the Russian Federation. The search for new forms and means of teaching and the aspiration of national and ethnocultural education systems to become integrated into the global educational environment are relevant for modern Russian studies. In view of this, teaching Russian as a foreign language today should be consistent with the new geopolitical and global sociolinguistic situation, as well as new inherently linguistic processes in the Russian language itself. The M.K. Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University (NEFU) is the most advanced higher education facility in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia). It is rightfully considered the leader of international cooperation in the field of education and scientific and technical collaboration, in particular, in the Pacific Rim. There are about 400 foreigners from 40 countries in Europe, Latin America, Asia and Africa that are currently studying in various branches of the NEFU. One of the important challenges related to the presence of foreigners at the university is teaching them Russian in accordance with their future profession and then socialization in a multicultural society that is the multinational Sakha Republic (Yakutia).

The spread of the Internet poses strategic challenges for teachers of Russian studies that entail using a modern source of information during the classes on Russian as a foreign language. The use of online resources, in this case, the linguo-didactic online platform “Russian studies in the North-East of Russia and in countries of the Pacific Rim”, is driven by the development of information technologies in the field of education. The creation of new online-based education systems stimulates the teaching of Russian to foreigners. When modern computer programs are created, the strategy of teaching Russian as a foreign language is taken into consideration¹. There are various topics available on the platform, such as, “Foreigners at the NEFU”, “National traditions and customs of the Sakha and small-numbered peoples of the region”, “National parks of Yakutia”, “Russian studies updates”, as well as materials on the Russian language (grammar exercises, tables, animated films, word games, dialogues, literary texts, with consideration for different levels of Russian knowledge, song lyrics).

The materials related to the development of coherent speech are of particular importance on the portal. Foreigners took great interest in watching video recordings by Professor S.M. Petrova who was talking about her method of graphical and symbolic analysis of a work of fiction within the system of teaching Russian to foreigners². As researchers rightly note, teaching Russian as a foreign language “must correspond to the principles of brain function” (M.F. Kosilova) because the ability to process visual images is connected to human brain anatomy (A. Berger, Yu.M. Lotman, D. Pink).

Due to the fact that the audience is mostly made up of people from the Pacific Rim (in particular, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the People’s Republic of China (PRC)), one must consider the particular ways, in which they study, perceive, understand and

¹ E. G. Azimov, *Informatsionno-kommunikatsionnye tekhnologii v prepodavanii russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo* (Ищысщцц: Izd-vo “Russkii yazyk. Kursy”, 2012).

² S. M. Petrova, “Rol innovatsionnoi tekhnologii analiza khudozhestvennogo proizvedeniya v sisteme izucheniya russkogo yazyka kak inostrannogo (na materiale respubliky Sakha (Yakutiya))”, *Sovremennyye issledovaniya sotsialnykh problem* (digital scientific journal, num 8 (2012)).

Place of *linguo-didactic online platform in the system of teaching Russian as a foreign language: search for new... pág. 86* comprehend the learning material³. When it comes to practice, some researchers correctly believe that the most promising way of teaching Russian to foreigners is the way from “methods to ethnomethods”⁴.

In the age of information technologies, semiotics (the study of signs) should become part of teaching Russian as a foreign language. Semiological ideas were already established in the classical antiquity: from the understanding that “words are signs of thought” (Aristotle) to admitting that “a symbol is an unfolded sign” (A.F. Losev), signification was considered “a prerequisite for any human reasoning” (G.W. Leibniz). Yu.M. Lotman’s school in Tartu played a significant part in the development of semiotics as it formulated the philosophy of the sign and the symbol. As modern researchers rightfully note, “Semiotic studies <...> bring us closer to understanding not only single peoples’ cultures but also their aesthetic universals and the psychological constants of humanity”⁵. It is important to turn to semiotics not only in a theoretical context but also to solve a range of practical tasks. Semiotics is important for understanding the cognitive and communication evolution of culture. Considering the multifunctional nature of semiotics, some scientists tend to view it as “the method for handling signs” thus giving a new direction to the “study of signs” (M.K. Mamardashvili, A.M. Pyatigorskii).

This issue received its first practical solution during the recent events such as the XIV Congress of IATRLL (International Association of Teachers of the Russian Language and Literature) “Russian Word in a Multilingual World”, 29 April – 4 May 2019, Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan), the II International Forum “Russian Studies in Russia and China: Innovative Practices”, 17-21 June 2019, Yakutsk (Russia)⁶, the II International Scientific-Practical Conference “World Without Borders: Russian as a Foreign Language in an International Educational Environment”, 19-21 December 2019, Pskov (Russia), etc.

Materials And Methods

Methods

The practice of teaching Russian has shown that traditional methods are not efficient enough. Our experience of working with foreigners brought us to the conclusion of looking for different, more efficient forms of teaching. For many years, we have been using our innovative methods that are based on working with a literary text. Access to Russian literature makes it possible to speed up the process of teaching Russian to foreigners. The essence of our method is the graphical and symbolic analysis of a work of fiction with the use of semiotics, mnemonics and ergonomics.

Working with text becomes part of the system of teaching Russian to foreigners. By dealing with adapted text, the student obtains the skills of reading and retelling. The student develops visual memory and analytical thinking. In three months, a foreigner can fluently read and communicate in Russian.

³ Yu. M. Lotman, *Vnutri myslyashchikh mirov* (SPb.: Azbuka, Azbuka-Attikus, 2014).

⁴ T. M. Balykhina y Zh. Y. Jiang, *Ot metodiki k etnometodike. Obuchenie kitaitsev russkomu yazyku: problemy i puti ikh preodoleniya: Monografiya* (Moscow: RUDN, 2012).

⁵ N. B. Mechkovskaya, *Semiotika: Yazyk. Priroda. Kul'tura* (Moscow: Akademiya, 2008).

⁶ *Rusistika v Rossii i Kitae: innovatsionnye praktiki*. Collection of materials of II International forum, 17-21 Jun. 2019, Yakutsk, Russia, (2019).

Experimental facility

The experimental facility for the study was the Federal State Autonomous Educational Institution of Higher Education "M.K. Ammosov NEFU".

Stages

The investigation of the issue was divided into three stages.

The first stage included theoretical analysis of methodological approaches in special literature in the fields of philosophy, psychology, linguistics and pedagogy. The scientific apparatus of the study was defined and the plan of the experimental study was established.

At the second stage, the system of classes was developed where one utilized the innovative method of teaching Russian to foreigners on the materials of the novel "Crime and punishment" by F.M. Dostoevsky⁷. The efficiency of this method was tested during the experimental study, the forms and means of teaching were adjusted and the conclusions were specified during the experiment.

At the third stage, the experimental work was finished, theoretical and practical conclusions were specified and the obtained results were generalized and systematized.

Results

Structure and contents of the model

In this article, for the first time, we will demonstrate our work on teaching Russian to foreigners using graphical and symbolic analysis of F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and punishment". This was preceded by a lot of preparatory work with foreigners aimed at the perception and understanding of such a complex work (a conversation about the writer's era, historical and literary comments on the novel, acquaintance with the writer's personality, various forms of vocabulary and phraseological work, watching a film based on this novel (starring G. Taratorkin), presentation of training material (work with adapted text and graphics), etc.; foreigners read the adapted text, italicize unfamiliar words, check their reading, correct stresses, fluently retell using graphics).

A teacher instructing foreigners on the Russian language compiles an adapted text of a work of fiction. The content of a chapter is conveyed through a brief but analytical retelling (usually 10-12 sentences). This is the most difficult stage of work as one needs to convey the content of the text, keep key and reference words and demonstrate the artistic features of the work. Students receive homework that consists of different parts. The first is the adapted text. The following tasks are attached to it: 1. Read and retell the text; 2. Work on vocabulary (find unfamiliar words in the dictionary); 3. Compose a text using the given words (the text itself is presented as an aid); 4. Be able to ask questions and answer them. Students see a graphic of the chapter, the essence of which needs to be revealed as it reflects the idea of this part of the work.

⁷ F. M. Dostoevsky, *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1987).

It is not easy to come up with such a sign since the teacher must have a good knowledge of the studied era, its history and philosophy, understand the events that happened at that time, know the writer's biography, the history of the studied work and, of course, carefully read and deeply understand the analyzed text. All this together helps the teacher to create graphics that should be easy to remember, which should help one easily reproduce the sequence of events depicted by the writer. Looking at the graphics, a foreigner recalls not only the text but also the features of Russian grammar, reproducing the correct Russian text.

Not only the modern means of visual expression are essential for understanding the idea of the work under analysis, but also **new** approaches to phraseological and dictionary work (reference words). Besides the reference and keywords that are typical for the method, the search for a "significant" word is important for understanding the idea of a work of fiction. A significant word reflects the idea of the text. If students find this word during the analytical discussion, it will signal that they have understood the work under consideration.

Text

Part I. Idea. On a hot July evening, a young man left his *closet*. It was Rodion Raskolnikov, a former law student. He believed the *old pawnbroker* Alyona Ivanovna to be to blame for all his misfortunes. He was ready to *murder* her but was held back by *fear* and *indecision*. However, three circumstances pushed him to commit the crime. *First* – he eavesdropped on the **conversation** of a student and an officer about an evil old pawnbroker who must be murdered. *Second* – his **meeting in the tavern with** a retired official **Marmeladov** who told him about the *tragedy* in his family and his daughter Sonya. *Third* – **a letter from home**. From the letter, Raskolnikov discovered that his sister Dunya was getting married to Luzhin whom she did not love. Rodion realized that his family was ready to help him, but he could not accept this *sacrifice*. After that Raskolnikov makes up his mind to murder Alyona Ivanovna and her sister Lizaveta. However, he did not find much money there.



Figure 1
Three meetings

Reference words: closet, law student, old pawnbroker, conversation, Lizaveta, tavern, daughter Sonya, letter, sister Dunya, family, court councilor Luzhin, officer, valuables.

Keywords: fear, indecision, evil, conversation, murder, meeting, crime, sacrifice.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 1). Raskolnikov's symbolic embodiment is the jagged line that reflects his inner world: his intellectuality, fear, hatred for the surrounding world and particularly for the old pawnbroker, for the landlady, for his inability to change anything, his indecision.

The three peaks signify the three events that drove Raskolnikov to murder: 1. the *conversation* between an officer and a student that he eavesdropped on in the tavern; 2. *the meeting* between Raskolnikov and Marmeladov; 3. *the letter* from home. It was the letter that became the last straw that overfilled Raskolnikov's soul and brought him to commit a crime – the murder of the old pawnbroker.

Part II. After the Deed. Raskolnikov meets Luzhin. The young man realizes that Luzhin is marrying his sister for his *career*. They have an argument. After the argument, Rodion leaves and wanders around in the street. There he sees Marmeladov die after being run over by a carriage. Raskolnikov comes to the Marmeladov residence and gives his daughter Sonya the last of his money. Raskolnikov's friend Razumikhin tells him that Rodion is a suspect in the old woman's murder. The *investigator* Porfiry Petrovich invites Raskolnikov to the police station. When Raskolnikov returns home, he sees his mother and his sister.

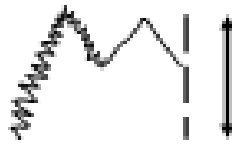


Figure 2
After the Deed

Reference words: home, street, carriage, money, investigator Porfiry Petrovich, conversation, mother, sister.

Keywords: argument, career, intention, beauty, power, witness, death, suspicion.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 2). The figure shows not only Raskolnikov (*jagged* line) but also reveals Luzhin's true nature (dashed line indicating the insincerity, deceitfulness of this character). Another *straight line with arrows pointing up and down* symbolizes the investigator Porfiry Petrovich, the clever, ingenious, experienced professional who saw the murderer in Raskolnikov at once and who was destined not only to make him confess his crimes but also to encourage his moral and spiritual salvation.

Part III. Meetings and a Dream. Rodion asks his sister Dunya not to get married to Luzhin. Together with Razumikhin, Raskolnikov comes to the *investigator* Porfiry Petrovich. The experienced investigator Porfiry Petrovich at once infers from Raskolnikov's *behavior* (*agitation, fear, paleness* of his face) that he was the one who murdered the old woman. However, he needs a *confession from the murderer* so he is playing his *game*. They have an interesting *conversation*. Raskolnikov tells him about his *theory*. He says that there are two types of people: geniuses (extraordinary people like Napoleon) and non-geniuses (ordinary people). Raskolnikov asks himself, "Who is he? A trembling creature or Napoleon?" Raskolnikov has a dream about the old woman's murder. His mother, Dunya, and Sonya to comfort him. Svidrigailov, Dunya's former employer, appears.

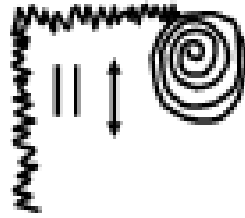


Figure 3
Raskolnikov's Dream

Reference words: stranger, investigator, murderer, conversation, genius.

Keywords: behavior, fear, paleness, confession, game, theory, dream.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 3). The jagged line is for Raskolnikov, the spiral is his dream, two short lines are Raskolnikov's mother and sister, the straight line with arrows pointing up and down is for the investigator.

Part IV. The Raskolnikovs. Raskolnikov's sister Dunya was a governess in the Svidrigailovs' house. Svidrigailov's wife found out that her husband was courting Dunya and threw her out of the house. Soon thereafter Svidrigailov's wife died tragically. Svidrigailov says he wants to help Raskolnikov because he does not like Luzhin. Raskolnikov comes to Sonya and asks her to go away with him. Rodion realizes that Sonya is very pure and full of light. He tells her that the most important things in life are freedom and power, and the latter is the most important. Svidrigailov eavesdrops on this conversation.



Figure 4
The Raskolnikovs and Svidrigailov

Reference words: landowner, Svidrigailov, letter, investigator, criminal.

Keywords: sin, illness, God, soul, freedom, power, terror, murder.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 4). Two similar lines are Raskolnikov's mother and sister, the short line is Sonya, the jagged line is for Raskolnikov, the long curved line is Svidrigailov eavesdropping on the Raskolnikov's conversation, the straight line with arrows pointing up and down is the investigator Porfiry Petrovich observing Raskolnikov's behavior.

Part V. Raskolnikov and Sonya. Luzhin decides to *get revenge* from Raskolnikov for interfering with his wedding with Dunya. He *stealthily* put a 100-rouble note into Sonya's pocket and then accused her of *stealing*. Raskolnikov comes to Sonya and **confesses** to the murder of the old pawnbroker, "Was it the old crone I killed? I killed myself, not the old crone!" What should he do? Sonya says, "Accept *suffering* and *redeem* yourself by it, that's what you must do".



Figure 5
Raskolnikov and Sonya

Reference words: wedding, pocket, 100-rouble note.

Keywords: stealing, suffering, redemption.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 5). The dashed line is Luzhin trying to accuse Sonya (short line) of stealing, Raskolnikov (jagged line) decides to tell the investigator about his crime (bent arrow line), the straight arrow line is for Raskolnikov's realization that the investigator will punish him for the murder of the pawnbroker.

Part VI. Raskolnikov's Confession. Raskolnikov meets with **Porfiry Petrovich**. The latter says that he *suspects* Raskolnikov of murdering the old pawnbroker. If Raskolnikov confesses, the term of his *punishment* will be shortened. Raskolnikov tells **Svidrigailov** about the investigator and asks for help. Svidrigailov says that he is *ashamed* about his life and that he has made a lot of mistakes. He commits *suicide*. Raskolnikov goes to his mother and sister and **confesses** to the murder of the old woman but does not think it is a crime. He goes to the investigator himself and confesses to the crime. He is aware that he will face *punishment*.

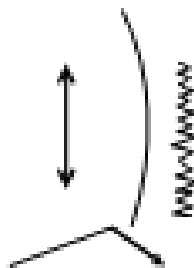


Figure 6
Raskolnikov and Porfiry Petrovich

Reference words: investigator, mother, sister.

Keywords: punishment, suicide, crime.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 6). The investigator (straight line with arrows pointing up and down) suspects Raskolnikov of murdering the old woman. Raskolnikov asks Svidrigailov (curved line) for advice but the latter cannot help him. Then Raskolnikov goes to the investigator and tells him about his crime (jagged line). The investigator says that Raskolnikov will face punishment.

Epilogue. At Hard Labor. Raskolnikov was convicted and sent to **Siberia** for 8 years. He has been here for 9 months already. **Sonya** followed Raskolnikov. His mother fell ill and soon died. She never found out what happened to her son. Raskolnikov is happy as he feels *resurrected* for a new life. Dunya got married to Razumikhin.

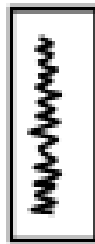


Figure 7
Raskolnikov at Hard Labor

Reference words: hard labor, Siberia, married, son.

Keywords: illness, death, resurrection.

Comments to the graphics (Fig. 7). The rectangle signifies a confined space (hard labor), there is a jagged line in the middle that is for Raskolnikov, outside there is a short line for Sonya who followed Raskolnikov.

Establishing stage

The search for effective forms of teaching Russian to foreigners is based on Russian studies of scientists from different generations, ranging from representatives of the first generation (S.A. Khavronina, V.G. Kostomarov, L.P. Klobukova) A.N. Shchukin⁸, V.G. Shaklein⁹, I.P. Lysakova¹⁰ to modern specialists in the field of Russian as a foreign language such as I.S. Guseva¹¹, N.M. Rumyantseva (E.A. Azimov, T.G. Bochina, etc.). Recent Russian studies are leaning towards the fact that ethnomethods play an important part in teaching Russian to foreigners (T.M. Balykhina). Given the specifics of a foreign

⁸ A. N. Shchukin, *Sovremennye intensivnye metody i tekhnologii obucheniya inostrannym yazykam: Uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow: Filomatis, 2010).

⁹ V. M. Shaklein, *Etnoyazykovoe videnie mira kak sostavlyayushchaya etnokulturnoi situatsii* (Moscow: Vestnik MGU, 19, *Lingvistika i mezhkulturnaya kommunikatsiya*, 2000).

¹⁰ I. P. Lysakova, *Metodika obuchenie russkomu yazyku kak inostrannomu: uchebnoe posobie dlya vuzov* (Moscow: Russkii yazyk. Kursy, 2016).

¹¹ I.S. Guseva, N.M. Rumyantseva, *Intensivnyi kurs russkogo yazyka (RUDN)* (Moscow: Drofa, 2013).

audience, this factor should play the dominant role, which is confirmed by the teaching practice.

However, when teaching foreigners at the M.K. Ammosov NEFU, great attention is paid to working with literary texts. By getting acquainted with works of Russian literature, foreigners not only enrich their vocabulary and improve coherent Russian speech but also expand their knowledge of the history, traditions and customs of the studied period in the development of Russia.

Formative stage

F.M. Dostoevsky's "Crime and Punishment" was chosen as instruction material. The choice was not random. This novel illustrates the life of Russia in the second half of the 19th century. After learning about the works by A.S. Pushkin ("Eugene Onegin") and N.V. Gogol ("Dead Souls") that represent Russian literature of the first half of the 19th century, foreigners read F.M. Dostoevsky's novel "Crime and Punishment", which becomes a new discovery of Russia for them. The students learn about the key vocabulary of that time and get immersed in the issues that preoccupied the Russian literature at the time of F.M. Dostoevsky, L.N. Tolstoy, I.S. Turgenev, N.A. Nekrasov and others.

During the analysis of the novel, foreigners encounter vocabulary that reflects the national character of Russian literature.

Control stage

The study showed that foreigners not only understood Dostoevsky's novel but also showed great interest in reading fiction. They had many questions about this work, which indicates the dynamics of students' analytical thinking and their desire to learn more about history, culture, traditions and customs of the 19th-century Russia.

Discussion

Practical resolution of the problem under investigation is impossible without the use of the most recent educational technologies, including the efficient method of teaching Russian to foreigners with the help of materials from fiction based on the graphical and symbolic analysis. Scholars rightfully believe that "a person has another worldview – proper sign-based – where the world is represented <...> in literary texts" (G.A. Glotova). As practice has shown, literature is the most effective form of introducing foreigners to the Russian language. Literature has particular advantages for exploring national perceptions and transforming the world. Due to the inclusion of Russian classical literature into the system of teaching Russian to foreigners, they not only improve their coherent speech and expand their vocabulary but also obtain a better understanding of the history of Russia, its traditions and customs.

The utilization of this method has proved its effectiveness in connection with the appeal to history, philosophy, culture and literature. Due to the ability to adapt a large volume of text, the teacher creates a small passage (10-12 sentences), introducing key and reference words into the text, creating an opportunity for students to search for unfamiliar words. Foreigners read this text, remembering not only the content but also the grammatical construction typical for the Russian language. Such work helps foreigners to develop coherent speech, visual memory and analytical thinking. The main goal of the

work is to find a significant word that reflects the idea of the text. During an analytical talk when various types of visual aids are used (slides, reproductions, illustrations, etc.), foreigners tend to find this word, which indicates their interest in the educational process and desire to better understand the features of Russian literature. The efficiency of this technique is evident in the fact that after three months of training, foreigners speak Russian well. They not only speak Russian but also begin to think differently and become interested in the Russian language, as well as Russian culture, history, traditions and customs. Our technology of graphical and symbolic analysis of a work of fiction is utilized in the practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language at the NEFU Department of Russian as a Foreign Language. It is based on the traditions of semiotics, mnemonics and ergonomics¹².

Conclusions

Therefore, the conducted experiment shows that the use of material from fiction in the process of teaching Russian to foreigners enriches their understanding of the features of the studied language. Upon using our innovative technique, we have come to the conclusion that the graphical and symbolic analysis of a work of fiction in the context of teaching Russian to foreigners has proved its efficiency. It is evident in the fact that foreigners start fluently communicating in Russian after three months of intensive training (20 hours per week). Utilizing Russian literature during the classes of Russian as a foreign language is important not only for future linguists. It can also be interesting for medical specialists. After all, some writers were medical professionals (A.P. Chekhov, V.I. Dal, M.A. Bulgakov and others) and the topic of illness and death runs through the entire course of Russian literature. Student clubs play an important part in this context as future doctors discover the educational role that literature plays in a person's spiritual development. This has been proven by the practice of teaching Russian to foreigners who come to study at NEFU and choose a medical profession. This technique has proved its efficiency in various audiences. We conducted a workshop not only in Russia but also in such countries as Mongolia, Tunisia, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the PRC.

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¹² M. N. Petrova, *Napisanie esse – effektivnyi metod tvorcheskogo razvitiya lichnosti budushchego vracha*. Part of collection: *Mezhdunarodnyi nauchno-obrazovatelnyi Forum [International scientific and educational forum] "Education, forward!" "Obrazovanie v techenie vsei zhizni: nepreryvnoe obrazovanie v usloviyakh globalizatsii"*. Materials of the forum, (2015): 459-464.

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