INVESTIGATION INTO PITFALLS ENCOUNTERED WHILE TRANSLATING “LINKEDIN” ARTICLES

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Abstract. Translatology is based on the study of the theory and practice of translating, especially in an academic context, which calls for research into the practice of translation and insights on how to teach it emphasising the importance of adapting the translation theory and accommodating it to the needs of the classroom. The research aims to identify the pitfalls encountered by students in the field of translation while translating LinkedIn articles written by various world-known professionals into Lithuanian. A pitfall is understood here as a likely mistake or a translation problem; that is, any word, phrase or structure that causes a certain degree of doubt about its proper correspondence in the target language.

Methodology. The mistakes made by students while translating 8 LinkedIn articles have been classified depending on their type: inaccurate wording, superfluous information, missing information, word order, punctuation, spelling, irregular lexical units and structures, and mistranslations. Several examples of each mistake have been selected and analysed. Analysis of each sample concludes with a discussion of alternative translation versions and suggestions for improvement of the translation based on translation strategies.

Findings. The research revealed that the most significant pitfall is inaccurate wording; superfluous information comes next followed by punctuation mistakes. However, the most dangerous are mistranslations and irregular lexical units and structures left in translations, which prove that the translator failed to understand the information provided or lacks linguistic competence. The findings of the research suggest that translation practice classes should be transformed into a translation-learning instrument for students to acquire translation and target language competence and the skills needed to produce acceptable target language texts.

Keywords: translation pitfalls, inaccurate wording, superfluous information, mistranslation.

Introduction

Translatology is based on the study of the theory and practice of translating, especially in an academic context [https://www.yourdictionary.com/translatology], which calls for research into the practice of translation and insights on how to teach it emphasising the importance of adapting the translation theory and accommodating it to the needs of the classroom. Therefore, it is worthwhile to investigate the translations made by students who study in the field of translation in terms of logic and linguistic accuracy.

According to Robinson (2012), the reliability of a translation is related to the traditional “accuracy” or “equivalence”. Still, there are many different types of textual reliability. The non-translating user expects the translation to be reliable for some specific purposes, most frequently, to provide certain information. Some clients do not care about the linguistic quality of the text provided just because they are not careful enough with the language that they use themselves. Nevertheless, a reliable translator should produce linguistically accurate translations.

The article aims to discuss the pitfalls encountered by second-year students in the field of translation while translating LinkedIn articles written by various world-known professionals into Lithuanian and provide recommendations on how to teach students to avoid them. The subject of the research is the students’ translations. The objectives include a review of the insights of translation theorists and translators-practitioners regarding the errors that occur in translations; the study and correction of the translations made by students in the field of translation; classifications of the mistakes made and justification of the improved variant; recommendations how to avoid the pitfalls while translating. The method of descriptive comparative linguistic analysis has been applied to reach the aim.

Theoretical background

The word pitfall has several definitions. It might be understood as a hidden or not easily recognised danger or difficulty (Merriam-Webster) or any trap or danger for the unwary (Dictionary.com). Cambridge Dictionary defines it as a likely mistake or problem in a situation and even notes two usages: in Business English it denotes a problem, used especially about issues that may happen in the future, and in American English, it means an unexpected danger or difficulty. The definition makes it evident that while analysing the text to be translated and rendering its meaning, students encounter something that is not easily recognised, dangerous and even looks like a trap.

The investigation is related to the practical application of the linguistic competencies of translators and their knowledge of translation
strategies that are applied in the process of translation. Therefore, the insights of some practitioners working in the field of translation will be reviewed.

Domínguez (2015) maintains that translators usually have to deal with six different translation problems in their work, which include lexical-semantic; grammar; syntax; rhetoric; pragmatic and cultural issues.

Lexical-semantic problems can be resolved by consulting dictionaries, glossaries, terminology banks and experts. These problems include terminology alternatives, neologisms, semantic gaps, contextual synonyms and antonyms, semantic contiguity, and linguistic networks. Grammatical problems include questions of temporality, aspectuality, pronouns, and whether to make the subject pronoun explicit. Syntactical problems may originate in syntactic parallels, the direction of the passive voice, the focus or even rhetorical figures of speech, such as the inversion of the natural order of speech or a repetition of a segment at the beginning of a phrase. Rhetorical problems are related to the identification and recreation of comparison, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, oxymoron, paradox, etc., and diction. Pragmatic problems arise with the difference in the usage of idiomatic phrases, sayings, irony, humour, and sarcasm, as well as the formal and informal modes of address using “you”. The translator must decide whether the formal or the informal “you” is more appropriate, a decision which is not always clear. Cultural issues may arise from differences between cultural references, such as names of food, festivals, and cultural connotations, in general. The translator will use language localisation to adapt the translation to the culture targeted correctly.

An elementary example is dates. If the text is in English, it is most likely, but not absolutely certain, that 05/06/2015 will mean June 5. However, as everyone knows, the same sequence in another language refers to May 6.

Thompson (2017) argues that every translation job is different. However, she distinguishes the top five most common problems every translator would have faced at one time or another. She states that it is humour that presents far more of a challenge than others when it comes to translating. What is funny to people in one culture may even offend people of another culture, which presents a challenge for any translator. Language structure is probably the most common problem that anyone working in any translation field encounters. When the translator moves from a source language to a different target language, it can be not easy not just to translate the words. It is always important to know how and why things are worded in specific ways.

Moreover, while the majority of languages have words and phrases for most things, there are always specific words and phrases that are just either totally different or missing entirely from target languages. Such missing words that have no equivalent in the target language cause myriad problems for translators. English is one of the most complex languages that exist on the planet; words in this language can often have multiple meanings. For instance, in English, scales can either mean a part of a fish or a kitchen utensil. Cultural differences also tend to come into the mix to make things just that little bit harder for the translator to deal with, which means that anyone translating has to decide who the original speaker was and who the speaker of the target language might be.

Translation theorists also envisage the pitfalls that translators should be beware. Baker (2018) emphasises word order, as words almost always occur in the company of other lexical units. However, they are not strung together at random in any language. There are always restrictions on the way they can be combined to convey meaning. This is especially true about English, which is an analytical language, where grammatical relations between words are expressed by employing form words and strict word order. Lithuanian is a synthetic language, and the grammatical relations between words are expressed using inflexions (Navickiene 2019).

Baker (2018) also addresses the difficulties encountered by translators as a result of differences in the linguistic patterning of the source and target languages. A translator ideally aims at producing a collocation which is typical in the target language while, at the same time, preserving the meaning associated with the source collocation. However, this ideal cannot always be achieved. Therefore, another challenge is to choose between what is typical and what is accurate. Some collocations reflect the cultural setting in which they occur. Like culture-specific words, they point to concepts which are not easily accessible to the target reader.

However, the most dangerous error is a mistranslation. Baker (2018) points out several reasons for such pitfalls. First of all, a translator can easily misinterpret a collocation in the source text due to interference from the native language. This happens when a source language collocation appears to be familiar because it corresponds in form to a standard collocation in the target language. When the translation of a word or a stretch of language is criticised as being inaccurate or inappropriate in a given context, the criticism may refer to the translator’s inability to recognise a collocational pattern with a unique meaning different from the sum of the implications of its
elements. Taking account of collocational meaning rather than substituting individual words with their dictionary equivalents is therefore crucial at the first stage of translation. It should be noted that even when there appears to be a close match between collocational patterns in two languages, they may not carry the same meaning. Generally speaking, the more difficult an expression is to understand, and the less sense it makes in a given context, the more likely a translator will recognise it as an idiom.

To sum up, both translation theorists and practitioners presume that most pitfalls translators encounter are of lexical-semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic nature, the most dangerous being mistranslation due to interference from the native language or inability to recognise collocational patterns.

Methodology

To investigate the pitfalls that were practically encountered by second-year students while translating LinkedIn articles written by various world-known professionals into Lithuanian, eight translations were randomly selected, the only criteria being the variety of problematic issues. It has been noticed that the differences in the collocational patterning of the source and target languages posed various problems in translation. The errors were classified into eight types: inaccurate wording, irregular lexical units and structures, superfluous information, missing information, word order, punctuation, spelling, and mistranslation. The analysis of each example, which has the number of the source text indicated in parentheses, concludes with a discussion of alternative translation versions and suggestions for the improvement of the translation based on dictionary definitions, recommendations of the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language, and translation strategies.

Inaccurate wording

One of the pitfalls related to this group is the usage of international words.

**Why Athletes Make Great Entrepreneurs?**

Kodėl sportininkai yra puikūs verslininkai? [1]

Cambridge Dictionary defines athlete as a person who is trained or skilled in a sport and esp. one who regularly competes with others in organised events. However, in Lithuanian, atlètas is defined as 1) lengvosios arba sunkiosios atletikos sportininkas; 2) gražiai nuvaugęs tvirtas žmogus (Zodinas.lt). It obviously has a narrower meaning. Therefore, it is sportininkas that corresponds to the meaning of athlete in this context.

Kodėl sportininkai yra puikūs verslininkai?

The next sentence is also related to international words.

Not only is it more effective, it’s also a lot more rewarding... and, a lot less demoralising.

Tai ne tik daug efektyviau, tačiau ir daug naudingiau... ir kur kas mažiau demoralizuota. [5]

The verb demoralise means to make feel much less confident (Cambridge Dictionary), and in Lithuanian demoralizuoti may be substituted by sugiauti, nuversti, pakirsti, ardyti, liūdinti, slėgti (zodis.eu). In this context, it may also be translated by a contextual correspondence having the same denotational meaning.

Tai ne tik daug efektyviau, bet ir daug naudingiau... ir kur kas mažiau gadina nuotaiką.

Another pitfall is the phrase hard work. Most students provide a word-for-word translation sunkus darbas, which is more related to physical activities.

...key characteristics like hard work...

...pagrindinius bruožus kaip sunkus darbas... [4]

However, in Business English hard-working people actually put a lot of effort and care (Cambridge Dictionary), and not strength into work; therefore, a more appropriate correspondence here should be used

... tokius pagrindinius bruožus kaip įtempstas darbas.

Another instance of inaccurate wording is the verb used with skills.

**The Skills You Gain**

Igūdžiai, kuriuos gauti. [4]

In English, skills are gained, and in Lithuanian, igūdžiai yra įgyvinti. Even google.translate provides correct correspondence.

Igūdžiai, kuriuos įgyste.

To sum up this group of pitfalls, it should be noted that a translator should pay special attention to international words and check in dictionaries whether the similar-looking Lithuanian word has a corresponding meaning. Besides, it is critical to consider the meaning and usage of adjective + noun and noun + verb collocations.

Irregular lexical units and structures

In this section, irregular is understood as something that does not obey the usual rules for words in the language (Cambridge Dictionary).

**Tennis, like business, moves so quickly that ....**

Tenisas, kaip verslas, juda taip greitai.... [1]

In English, move has the meaning to progress, change, or happen in a particular way or direction (Cambridge Dictionary). However, in
Lithuanian, both tennis and business are just certain activities where everything is changing rapidly; thus, a grammatical replacement should have been used, that is, the subject should have been made an adverbial modifier of place (Pažūtis, 2014).

Tenise, kaip ir versle, viskas greitai keičiasi...

The same applies to the sentence An article from the University of Pennsylvania recently reported that..., which was translated Straipsnis iš Pensilvanijos Universiteto leidinio teigia...[3]. It is unusual in Lithuanian to personalise inanimate objects in such contexts; therefore, Pensilvanijos universiteto leidinio straipsnyje teigia... is more reasonable.

As mentioned, Lithuanian is a synthetic language, and the grammatical relations between words are expressed by means of inflexions (Navickiene 2019). There are seven noun cases as opposed to the English two. Prepositional phrases denoting place may be translated into Lithuanian by the locative case. However, in many cases, the locative should be avoided.

As I watched Alton Sterling’s teenage son break down in uncontrollable grief...

Kai stebėjau palūžusį ir nekontroliuojamajame sielvarte...[2]

Such a choice contradicts the rules of the Lithuanian language, that is, to express the state, the locative case is inapplicable (vlkk.lt). The translation might be improved by replacing the noun grief by the half-participle sielvartaujantis and changing the case.

Kai stebėjau palūžusį ir be galo sielvartaujanti...

Sometimes, the preposition su is overused in the Lithuanian language.

These individuals identify their weaknesses and close their gaps in knowledge and skills...

Šie asmenys mustato savo silpnynes ir užpildo šias spragas su žiniomis ir įgūdžiais, (...).[5]

The verb užpildo requires the instrumental case without a preposition.

Šie asmenys mustato savo silpnynes ir užpildo šias spragas žiniomis ir įgūdžiais, (...).

The participle sekantis, sekanti should not be used in the meaning next, following, nearest (vlkk.lt).

The next time you find yourself stuck in your career...

Kai sekanti kartą pasijusite nejudantys iš vietos savo karjeros atžvilgiu...[5]

This is a relatively common mistake in spoken Lithuanian and is often transferred into written texts.

Kai kišą kartą pasijusite nejudantys iš vietos savo karjeros atžvilgiu, (...).

To sum up irregular lexical units and structures, it should be noted that translators should have linguistic competence in the usage of the correct target language and apply translation shifts, replacements in particular.

Superfluous information

Another pitfall encountered by students is a tautology, which is described as the use of two words or phrases that express the same meaning, in a way that is unnecessary and usually unintentional (Cambridge Dictionary). Frequently, careless translators use too many pronouns.

...will also potentially create a reliable source of income. ~ potencialiai gali jums suteikti patikimą pajamų šaltinį. [3] I’ve Tried Everything ~ Aš išbandžiau viską.[5]. The pronouns should be simply omitted.

The same happens with the English words manner, way, which are unnecessary in Lithuanian as their meaning is usually transferred into an adjective or adverb.

What’s the right way to get that message across?


Tautology was also observed in the translations of ... signs point to continued growth throughout the coming years. ...

... prognozuojama, jog tai toliau tęsia ateityje.[3]

All the three words are related to the future; thus, one word is enough.

... prognozuojama, jog tai tęsia.

The same is true in the next example.

...job seekers, like the one above, are just spinning their wheels.

... tokie darbo ieškantys asmenys, kaip kad šis, minėtas anksčiau, tik švaisto savo laiką. [5]

... tokie darbo ieškantys asmenys, kaip minėtas anksčiau, tik suka laimės ratą.

To sum up the pitfalls related to the tautology, it should be noted that translators should carefully revise the text translated and check for superfluous words that do not provide relevant information.

Missing information

The opposite of tautology is the encounter with culture-specific items that need additional information provided in the translation due to the patterns established in the target language. Such pitfalls include date-writing.

August 17, 2016 was translated Rugpjūčio 17, 2016 [1], whereas the established format is 2016 m. rugpjūčio 17 d.
Even when the format is partially observed, as in July 13, 2016 translated by 2016 liepos 13 [3], the translation is incorrect, as it has to include m for the year, and d for the day in Lithuanian.

2016 m. liepos 13 d.

Articles in Lithuanian are not used, but nevertheless their meaning can and sometimes even should be rendered in the translation (Navickiene 2019).

... a record for men and women equalled only by Messi last year.

... pernai, rezultatą tarp vyrių ir moterų pasiekė tik pats Messi. [8]

Such a translation definitely needs a supplementary lexical unit.

...pernai, tokį rezultatą tarp vyrių ir moterų pasiekė tik pats Messi.

Sometimes, additional words are added to make the phrase more specific.

Really? the CEO had to ask HR?

Tikrai? Generalinis direktorius turėjo klausti žmogiškųjų išteklių?[6]

The sentence lacks the specific person whom the CEO had to address.

Tikrai? Generalinis direktorius turėjo klausti žmogiškųjų išteklių vadovės?

To sum up the cases of missing information, it should be noted that the translator has to develop a feeling of sensing what might prevent the target reader from understanding the text translated.

**Word order**

Texts should be translated into Lithuanian following the logic that the new and most relevant information is to be transferred to the end of the clause. This is closely related to functional sentence perspective, which is defined as the organisation of a sentence in terms of the role of its elements in distinguishing between old and new information, especially the division of a sentence into theme and rHEME (Dictionary.com information, especially the division of a sentence in terms of the role of its elements in distinguishing between old and new information, especially the division of a sentence into theme and rHEME (Dictionary.com information, especially the division of a sentence in terms of the role of its elements in distinguishing between old and new information, especially the division of a sentence into theme and rHEME (Dictionary.com information, especially the division of a sentence in terms of the role of its elements in distinguishing between old and new information, especially the division of a sentence into theme and rheme). This is closely related to functional sentence perspective, which is defined as the organisation of a sentence in terms of the role of its elements in distinguishing between old and new information, especially the division of a sentence into theme and rheme.

And that may even be true but getting here was no easy task.

Visa tai galbūt ir yra tiesa, tačiau nebuvo lengva to pasiekti.[8]

Visa tai galbūt ir yra tiesa, tačiau tai pasiekti nebuvo lengva.

But were I not stubborn, my career would not even have started...

Tačiau mano karjera net nebūtų prisidėjusi, jei nebučiau užsipyrust. [8]

Tačiau, jei nebučiau užsipyrust, mano karjera net nebūtų prisidėjusi.

In English, the new information is usually indicated by the indefinite article, which means that the information marked by this article should be placed at the end of the clause. The pitfall related to such cases is that the plural has no indicator of indefinitiveness, and the translator does not notice it.

... new platforms, products, and other technological innovations are emerging at a seemingly endless rate.

... naujos platformos, produktai ir kitos technologijų inovacijos atsiranda nesibaigiančiu tempu. [3]

... nesibaigiančiu tempu atsiranda naujos platformos, produktai ir kitos technologijos.

Word order mistakes are frequent in cases when nouns are used with postmodifiers, which in Lithuanian have to precede the noun as in

If you found the advice above to make sense ... Jei patarimai minėti aukščiau jums atrodo prasmingi... [5]

Normally participles are used before the noun in Lithuanian phrases.

Jei minėti patarimai jums atrodo prasmingi, (...).

As mentioned, word order mistakes are made while translating dates August 17, 2016 ~ Rugpjūčio 17, 2016 [1], the correct format being 2016 m. rugpjūčio 17 d.

To sum up, it should be noted that translators should be taught to distinguish between the theme and the rHEME and base their solutions on the functional sentence perspective.

**Punctuation**

It has to be emphasised that the use of comma differs significantly in English and Lithuanian. Even though there are cases when the use of a comma is not obligatory, it is always compulsory in Lithuanian to separate independent and subordinate clauses while in English, the rules differ. Seeing no comma in the English sentence, some translators do not use it in the translation.

Everywhere I looked there were, and are, questions.

Kur tik pažvelgėiu visur yra ir buvo klausimai. [2]

Kur tik pažvelgėiu, visur yra ir buvo klausimai.

In the example provided, the subordinate clause in the English sentence should have been separated by a comma, which might have misled the translator. In the next example, no commas are needed in English, but in Lithuanian two commas should have been used.

There are times in life when answers aren’t what we need.

Gyvenime yra momentų kai atsakymai nėra tai ko mums reikia. [2]
Gyvenime yra momentų, kai atsakymai néra tai, ko mums reikia

Another pitfall is the inverted commas used for titles and names.

In CEO at Ricam Consultoria, Host of Manhattan Connection at Globonews, no inverted commas are needed. However, in Lithuanian, they were not used "generalinis direktorius, Globonews laidos autorių [7] even though they are necessary "generalinis direktorius, „Globonews“ laidos autorių.

The types of quotation marks also differ. In Lithuanian, the first inverted commas are „xx“, and in English, they are “...”.

Founder at Virgin Group was translated „Virgin“ companijos įkūrėjas.[1] instead of the correct „Virgin“ kompanijos įkūrėjas.

To sum up, the incorrect punctuation, it could be argued that it is not a pitfall. Inexperienced translators should know at least the most general rules and apply them carefully.

Spelling

Two main types of spelling mistakes have been noticed. The first is related to the capital letters in English titles.

“What You Want, Baby, I Got” is the Key to a Great Resume was translated by „Ko Nori, Mažuti, Aš Tai Turiu“ yra Raktas į Puiką Suvestinę [6] (instead of „Ko nori, mažuti, aš tai turiu“ yra raktas į puikų gyvenimo aprašymą ), and Lynda Spiegel, Resume & LinkedIn Profile Writer was translated by Linda Spiegel, Suvestinių ir LinkedIn Profilio Rašytoja[6] (instead of ... Gyvenimo aprašymų ir „LinkedIn“ profilių kūrėja).

Another type belongs to the absolute carelessness of the translator.


As I watched the protests on TV and the widening racial divide in our country... was translated by Kai per televiziją žiūrėjau protestus apie didejančią rasinę atskirtį [2] (instead of Kai per televiziją žiūrėjau protestus apie didėjančią rasinę atskirtį).

To sum up, such mistakes reveal carelessness of translators.

Mistranslation

In case the source and target languages are different, there will be instances when the source text will contain collocations which express ideas previously unexpressed in the target language. Even when there appears to be a close match between collocational patterns in two languages, they may not carry the same meaning.

One is the spotlight effect was translated by Viena iš jų yra prožektorių efektas. [7] That is what google.translate suggested, and the translator just copy-pasted without being wise enough to check the meaning of spotlight. The same google.it provided another meaning of this word, that is, dėmesio centras. The correct version should have been Viena iš jų yra dėmesio centro efektas.

In the sentence At the same time, you must push yourself to do your best and embrace the competitive spirit without letting it interfere with training or "get inside your head," making you complacent, “get inside the head” was translated by įsiskverbti į galvą [4], whereas in English, to get something into one’s head means to start to believe something (Cambridge Dictionary). The context suggests that the best correspondence, in this case, might be Tuo pačiu metu turite daryti viską, kas įmanoma, ir užgdyti konkurencingą dvąsią, neleisdami jai trukdyti treniruotėms ar „užvaldyti mintis“, kad netaptumėte permelyg patenkinti, which might be further improved by neužmigtumėte ant laury.

The sentence I don’t accept payment for resumes that have little chance of getting job seekers’ attention from hiring managers was translated by Aš neprimu mokesčio už suvestines, kurios turi nedidelę tikimybę gauti darbo ieškančių asmenų dėmesį iš vadovų [6], that is, completely mistranslated. Man nereikia mokesčio už gyvenimo aprašymą, kuris turi nedidelę tikimybę atkreipti įdarbintojų dėmesį į darbo ieškantį asmenį.

The same happened with One key lesson I’ve learned, which applies far beyond the court, is to treat each point separately, which was translated atskirk taškus vieną nuo kito [1], but actually means Viena iš svarbiausių pamokų, kurią išmokau bei kuri galiąja netgi už aiškstelės ribų – vertink kiekvieną tašką atskirai.

To sum up, mistranslation distorts the meaning of the source text, that is why it is the most dangerous.

Conclusions

Both translation theorists and practitioners presume that the pitfalls translators encounter are of lexical-semantic, grammatical, and pragmatic nature. However, the most dangerous is mistranslation due to interference from the native language or inability to recognise collocational patterns.
Words can often have multiple meanings; however, lexical-semantic problems can be resolved by consulting dictionaries, glossaries, terminology banks and experts.

It is always important to know how and why things are worded in specific ways. Moreover, words are not strung together at random in any language. There are always restrictions on the way they can be combined to convey meaning.

The investigation revealed that the most significant pitfall encountered by students in the process of translation was inaccurate wording; superfluous information came next followed by punctuation mistakes. The least number of errors was related to mistranslation. However, such mistakes distort the content of the message.

The results of the research suggest that while training translators, students should be taught to distinguish between the theme and the rheme and base their solutions on the functional sentence perspective. The focus should be laid on developing students’ professional competencies such as linguistic awareness, knowledge of translation strategies; skills of searching for information in dictionaries and using translation shifts, as well as accuracy and responsibility for the translation provided.

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TYRIMAS APIE SPĄSTUS, Į KURIUS PAKLIŪTA VERČIANT „LINKEDIN” STRAIPSNIUS

Santrauka
Vertimo mokslininkai pasižengia vertimo praktikos tyrimų ir rekomendacijų kaip rengti vertėjus akcentuojant vertimo teorijos ir jos pritaikymo verčiant sąveiką. Tyrimo tikslas – nustatyti, su kokiomis problemomis susidūrė studentai, versdamai į lietuvių kalbą „Linkedin” straipsnius. Problemos arba „spąstai” šiame tyроме suprantami kaip tikėtina klaidos, tai yra sintaksinės struktūros, žodžiai ar jų junginiai, kurie sukelia abejonę dėl jų tinkamumo vertimo kalboje.


Reikšminiai žodžiai: vertimo spąstai, netiksli formuluotė, nereikalinga informacija, neteisingas vertimas.

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