

A terminar, na dimensão pragmática, ao enquadrá-lo numa situação de uso mais específica, pretende-se exemplificar não só a sua força argumentativa, enquanto fórmula sábia, por natureza, mas tida como popular, provavelmente por estar mais vinculado à vertente falada da língua, mas pô-lo também em paralelo com outras formas de conhecimento. Assim, uma mesma situação denotada pode constituir-se como referente de dois tipos de textos: uma expressão formulaica proverbial, sem autor reconhecido, “Para bom entendedor meia palavra basta”, através da qual se privilegia a sua função instrucional, e um texto científico de GRICE, autor de conceitos, como “Princípio de Cooperação”, “Máximas Conversacionais”, “Implicatura”, que procuram descrever o que é conversar, pondo em evidência a racionalidade humana.

Por fim, atendendo ao processo de proverbilização a que teria estado sujeito este provérbio, ou seja, resultante da citação repetida de enunciados retirados de textos clássicos e bíblicos, o que lhe confere o traço de “sábia profecia”, seria possível propor a aplicação do conceito de ato persecutório intertextual situado como sendo de tipo generalizado, ou seja, uma das suas propriedades intrínsecas. A sabedoria associada ao provérbio advém, nesta hipótese em aberto, do processo de citação de referentes textuais longíquos, permitindo assim a sua formatação linguística e cultural e o seu reconhecimento.

Notas

1. Teorias cujas análises linguísticas têm base empírica, tendo por princípio uma orientação bi-direcional, em que a estrutura de um sistema linguístico emerge dos usos em linguísticos reais e concretos, De acordo com estas teorias “language should be viewed not as a set of specific grammar rules, but as a statistical accumulation of linguistic experiences” (Bod 2006).
2. Para uma melhor compreensão sobre estas duas posições teóricas distintas sobre a representação semântica dos provérbios, os trabalhos publicados de Kleiber e Anscombre e Mejrí, citados em Referências.
Tal como ocorre com o fenómeno da “Liaison” em francês, argumento avançado por Bybee para a possibilidade de os falantes memorizarem e reconhecerem uma sequência de mais do que uma palavra (multiwords) como uma unidade.
3. <https://ciberdividas.iscte-iul.pt/consultorio/perguntas/o-significado-de-mais-alguns-proverbios/24514>

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PROVERBS AS COMPLEX FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS. TO THE WISE, HALF A WORD IS ENOUGH AS AN INTERTEXTUAL PERLOCUTIONARY SITUATED ACT

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Abstract

This article reflects on a particular type of “formulaic expressions” – the proverbs. In a first approach, its descriptive complexity is emphasized, in structural and semantic-pragmatic terms. The perspective adopted seeks to articulate three dimensions of the pragmatic act of the proverbial type - prosodic, figuratively and social / cultural, and all should be shared as *common ground* knowledge by the participants of the verbal interaction. In a second moment of this presentation, the concept of “situated perlocutive intertextual act” will be taken into account, using the proverb *To the wise, half a word is enough* as an example, in order to establish a possible interpretative construction of this proverbial formulation, characterized by the activation of the allusive meaning

connected to other texts, situated in the domain of inferential pragmatics, particularly Grice's Cooperative Principle. Taking this hypothesis into account, this proverb would work as a metonymic index of human communication, illustrating at the same time the link between the proverbial saying and science discourse.

Key-words: proverbs as complex formulaic expressions; multidimensional description; intertextual perlocutionary act; allusive meaning; Grice.

Introduction

Proverbs have been included, regarding their structural properties, in a wider range of linguistic materials called formulaic expressions. These kind of expressions have been attracting a large number of researchers from several fields of research. The main issues addressed point towards is the complexity as a component of a linguistic systems component, regarding its structure, categorization, acquisition and conditions of use (HONECK, 1997: 13-43). The approach advocated here is that the analysis of a proverbial expression should take into account its complexity, built by the inclusion of several interfaces or perspectives, in a multidimensional way. In a first part of this article, some of the general properties of this type of formulaic expressions will be addressed, followed by the second part, which consists of a deeper analysis of the proverb *To the wise, half a word is enough*, with a bigger focus on the pragmatic aspects.

Theoretical Approaches

FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS

Formulaic expressions are fundamental for human communication. Generally speaking, they can be seen frequently in the use of natural language, as observed in the spoken and written analysis of *corpora*. WRAY (2002: 9) defines a formulaic expression as a "sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar", specifying, in later work, that it regards it as a unity "processed like a morpheme" (WRAY, 2008: 12). This constitutes an important part of the linguistic systems, because it fulfills a substantial part of the native speaker's speech. Indeed, according to the discursive situation, the use of these types of stereotyped expressions can vary between 25 and 58 percent, as referred by HALLIN & SIDTIS (2015: 2). This includes statements related to social routines, that in turn are related to several interaction contexts, within which, for example, the speech formulas (What is it? /

O que foi?) and courtesy (If you please / *Se faz favor*), discourse markers (Therefore, / *Sendo assim*,), idiomatic expressions (To attract attention / *Dar nas vistas*), placements (Outmaneuver X / *Passar a perna a X*), proverbs / sayings (Haste is the enemy of perfection/Quickly and well done, isn't made by anyone / *A pressa é inimiga da perfeição/Depressa e bem, não faz ninguém*) and other idiosyncratic language sequences, subject to different levels of restrictions. Some of these categories have been the target of studies of phraseology (COWIE, 1998; GRANGER & MEUNIER, 2008). Others, such as proverbs or sayings, are the object of study of another field, Paremiology (MIEDER, 2004). These expressions obey to certain formal aspects, characterized by (i) being constituted by more than one lexical item, (ii) but structured as a unit of intent (LIN, 2010), (iii) while having a conventional meaning, frequently of the non-literal type and not resulting from the sum of the meanings of the parts by which it is comprised of, (iv) and still being submitted to the specific use conditions. The formal point of view should also be taken into consideration the fact that stereotyped prosodic patterns are obeyed, a propriety that contributes equally to its memorization (SIDTIS & RALLON, 2004). This distinguishes them from other possibilities of the use of language at the speaker's disposal less strict and more productive. These, such as the complex words, constructed by suffixation, allow a combination of various linguistic units, with diversity of meanings. On the other hand, the familiarity and frequency of formulaic expressions are variable. The most frequent ones are normally known by the use of the community, being transmitted through time, and stored in the memory of its speakers. Therefore, they can be recognized by the use of a keyword, such as the proverb "To the wise... / *Para bom entendedor...*", and be completed by the other participant in the discursive situation ("...half a word is enough! / *...meia palavra basta!*").

The definition of the formulaic expressions, its classification criteria, its degree of lexical holistic units, its frequency, its inclusion in a *continuum*, and the relationship with the social and cultural contexts, are questions that, besides being the most debated over time (WRAY, 2012), still remain open.

The formulaic sequences, characterized for having more than one constituent, are, by definition "stored and recognized as a whole" (WRAY, 2008:77), fact that leads to the questioning of the contours of its internal structure, its patterns and borders. This property, of non-compositionality, leads to an integration in the lexicon of these types of sequences, conditioning its analysis. Thus, this can no longer be seen through the syntactic component of linguistic systems.

The perspective adopted in this work is that all the formulaic expressions (greetings,

colocations, idioms, proverbs / sayings) have in common the fact that they are not constructed *online* by initiative of the speaker, but, memorized by the speakers of a linguistic and cultural community. Its great diversity of types, and variability of its internal structure, from a prosody point of view, to syntax, semantics and pragmatics layers, increases its descriptive complexity (WRAY & PERKINS, 2000). The proverbial expressions fit in this structural description: they are linguistic units, not too long and formally constituted by more than one word or *multiword* sequences. In the semantic and pragmatic dimensions, they can take the shape of assertions with a generally non-literal and implicit meaning (GIBBS, 2001), and understood by a broader sense of wisdom, generally associated with a moral and traditional perspectives of human conduct (MIEDER, 1993; 2004).

FORMULAIC EXPRESSIONS OF THE PROVERBIAL TYPE: COMPLEX AND HOLISTIC LEXICAL ITEMS

The descriptive stereotypes associated to the proverbial statements consist in the fact that these are associated to some proprieties, in particular, of being bearers of unquestionable wisdom, "prescription lexical sense" (TAMBA, 2000: 118) reflected in the introductory expository formula "as the saying goes ..." (TAMBA, 2000: 113). Thus, functioning as an argumentative resource (TAMBA, 2001), an authoritative argument afforded to it by the value of experience and tradition.

This formula inserts the quoted proverb in a pragmatic act, in which we can see a path being drawn from a general truth to its application to the communication of a particular social and cultural community.

- **"Proverbialization": Fusion effect or linguistic object that resulted from the process of chunking**

To be recognized as having a proverbial status, a formula is subjected to a process of "proverbialization" (SHAPIRA, 2000: 84). In order to do so, the sequence must obey some formal and cultural requisites briefly referred above. Many proverbial formulas came from quotes that were removed from works of ancient authors, having been spread in the language by translations, as we can see in (1), taken from SHAPITA (2000: 82):

- (1) a. *A fortuna sorri aos audazes (Audaces fortuna juvat : Enéida, X, 284, de Virgílio)*
- b. *Olho por olho, dente por dente. (Ex., XXI, 24 ; Lev., XXIV, 20)*
- c. *A César o que é de César (e a Deus o que é de Deus). (Matt. XXII, 21)*

The candidates of proverbialization are submitted to a process in which occurs at the end of it

the proverbial status, which is its fixation in the speakers' lexical belonging to a given linguistic and cultural community. This storage is accompanied by the effects of casting and fusion, called *chunking*, or, in other words, the process of grouping lexical items in one unit. This process, according to Usage Based Models of language, which are focused on the effects of the frequency in the linguistic forms variations (BARLOW & KEMMER, 2000; BYBEE, 2006), drive to its memorization in the lexicon and to its processing as having a singular concept. The processes of memorization and recognition of this type of linguistic material imply that its comprehension and production are realized without access or analysis of its constituents. In other words: a formulaic sequence is represented and processed regardless of the proprieties of its constituency (lexical, semantic, syntactic, etc.), as a whole. Therefore "that holistic storage and processing implies that a formulaic sequence is processed as one single, morpheme-like unit; that is, without access to, or analysis into, its constituent parts" (SIYANOVA-CHANTURIA, 2015: 6). Seized over time (WRAY, 2002, 2012), the frequency of its use may contribute to its memorization and processing, that is, to include activities not only of production, but also of recognition of this unit of "more than one word" (*multi-word*) as a *chunk* (BYBEE, 2010: 33). The *chunk* would be, according to NEWELL (1990: 7), quoted in BYBEE (2010: 36):

A unit of memory organization, formed by bringing together a set of already formed chunks in memory and welding them together into a larger unit. Chunking implies the ability to build up such structures recursively, thus leading to a hierarchical organization of memory. Chunking appears to be a ubiquitous feature of human memory.

Using the general organization of the memory in cognitive systems, the repetition of linguistic material would lead, according to the hypothesis of this author, to a reduction of its component units, and consequently, "(...) the more a sequence of morphemes or words is used together, the stronger the sequence will become as a unit and the less associated it will be to its component parts" (BYBEE, 2010: 48). The frequency in which the linguistic material is used will provoke alterations to its internal structure. This occurs not only in its phonetic form (just like the tendency for the elision of [t] and [d] in the American English varieties, when followed by a consonant and in the ending of a word, as seen in *hand* when used in *hand me this*), but also in its elliptical morphosyntactic structure, as, for example, the zero determiner in "_Strong drinks, _ weak men" (NORRICK, 2009). This effect of "packaging" or *chunking effect* (BYBEE & SCHEIBMAN, 2007) and of the enlarged unit autonomy can be seen in the examples (2) taken from the French language (MEJRI, 2008) as follows:

- (2) a. Lexical unit (singular word): *roi*

b. Complex lexical unit (derived word): **royaliste**

c. Complex lexical unit (utterance): Il ne faut pas être plus **royaliste** que le roi

In BYBEE's (2010: 35) perspective, the word *roi*, in (2a) occurs in enlarged and pre-fabricated sequences of words, memorized as such or *chunks*, like in (2c), or as a derivational root in a complex word, as in (2b.). In the same way, it's possible to observe the same phenomena in the English language, with words such as *break* and its integration in the enlarged expressions, as for example, *take a break*, or *break a habit*, or also in idiomatic expressions whose meaning is conventionally non literal or figurative, such as *pull strings*, *lend a hand*, *raining cats and dogs*.

- **Segmental properties and prosodic patterns**

In addition to the repetition and the phonetic alterations that may lead to a structure of the formula of the proverbial type, other properties of the segmental type favoring the chunking process in a cognitive level are pointed out as the following ones: the prosodic contrasts or parallelisms (GIBBS, 2001), as in *tel père, tel fils* (MEJRI, 2001), the use of alliterations ("Good fame is better than good face" or "All roads lead to Rome") and rhymes ("Well fed, well bred"). All contribute to the molding of linguistic materials that will be memorized and recognized as a whole (BYBEE, 2002)¹ by the speakers of a sociolinguistic and cultural community.

- **Semantic representation**

This question has been much debated, highlighting two contrasting conceptions / hypothesis: the first, called the nominal approach (KLEIBER, 1989), treats the proverb as a common noun and as such, results in a "acte de dénomination préalable" (KLEIBER, 1984: 79). In this perspective, the proverb denotes a "generic situation". The association proverb-reference would be memorized, as a lexical item of the nominal type. The other perspective considers the proverb as a generic proposition (ANSCOMBRE, 1994), that maintains the semantic combinatory properties, with a pre-built and directly accessible mental representation, as an archived unit in the speakers memory, being put aside ².

- **The proverbial formula and the pragmatic competence**

This type of statement, from the speakers of a certain linguistic and cultural community's point of view, regarding their daily lives, carries with it, in addition to a more specific sense driven by context, "a specific means of traditional and largely objective evaluation of behavior, attitudes and human deeds" (NORRICK, 2009: 363), and carries one the traditional social norms, hence its prescriptive and instructive nature, based on evaluative assumptions of

good/evil, right/wrong. This saying constitutes a pragmatic act from MEY's perspective (2001), which asserts itself in a sociocultural vision of verbal interactions, therefore emphasizing the social and cultural factors that act in the construction of the senses of the statements. A statement such as "Tomorrow is a new day", as pointed out by NORRICK (1994), can be seen as an indirect speech act (SEARLE, 1975) that produces, in a situated pragmatic act, an assertive illocutionary act and a perlocutionary act of consolation.

The cognitive approach of the Pragmatic Act of MEY, in which the pragmatic act "relies on and actively creates the situations in which they are realized" (MEY, 2001: 219), as reformulated as in "Situation-bound utterances as pragmatic acts" (KECSKES, 2010; 2014), emphasizes the role performed by the knowledge shared by the participants of the situation in the success of the communication. According to this vision,

Communication is the result of interplay of intention and attention motivated by socio-cultural background that is privatized by the individuals. The socio-cultural background is composed of dynamic knowledge of interlocutors deriving from their prior experience encoded in the linguistic expressions they use and current experience in which those expressions create and convey meaning" (KECSKES, 2010).

In KECSKES & ZHANG (2009), this common knowledge (or common ground, cf. STALNAKER, 2002; CLARK, 2006) is characterized by three properties: (i) common sense or a basic and common sense and knowledge about the world; (ii) culture sense, a more specific knowledge, centered in cultural aspects, norms, beliefs and values shared by human societies, in general, and by the community of participating speakers of a more specific interaction; (iii) formal sense, or knowledge of the languages used in our social interactions.

Descriptive complexity and multidimensionality of proverbial sayings: *Para bom entendedor, meia palavra basta* [To the wise, half a word is enough]

The analysis of a proverbial saying, as a formulaic object of a specific type, must in this interpretation, obey a descriptive multidimensional dynamic. In this work, the chosen proverb – *Para bom entendedor, meia palavra basta* [To the wise, half a word is enough] – allows the highlighting of the previously stated perspective. In addition to the brief description of its structural properties, acknowledging the bidirectional model set by BYBEE that emphasizes the influence of the frequency and use of the language and the social interactions in the change of the linguistic systems, the analysis will privilege the pragmatic dimension, in a context of specific social interactions.

GENERAL CATEGORICAL PROPERTIES

There are various variants of the proverbial uses of the proverb *Para bom entendedor, meia palavra basta* under studying in Portuguese and still exist equivalents in other Romanic languages (in French, *A bom entendeur, salut!*, and still, a version dated from the XVI century “à bon entendeur, ne faut que une parole”; in Italian, “a buon intenditor poche parole”, and also in Spanish “al buen entendedor pocas palabras”). These various Romance versions can result from the Latin version “*latim dictum sapienti sat est*” (For the wise, half a word is enough), published in Plautus (Persa, 729) and in Terence (Phormio, 541).

From the frequency point of view, we can say that this factor characterizes itself, in contrast with other formulaic expressions used very frequently in daily social interactions, as being transmitted from generation to generation, “over time”, and anchoring itself in history. It is important to register, that in this case, its use is related to an extended and dilated timeframe.

The proverb in study is characterized by a binary structure, graphically represented by the comma, which constitutes, from a sound point of view, its prosodic border. This configuration establishes an interface with the elliptic structure of its syntax, of the nominal type, marked by the absence of determiners, in the considered variant.

Regarding the semantic aspect, a correlation of the evaluative type between the 'good' (*bom*) adjective, in its initial prosodic constituent, and the noun 'half a word' (*meia-palavra*), in its final prosodic constituent. This statement, being a coded unit with a rigid configuration, seen as a hole, is conventionally linked to a set of extra linguistic entities, like a noun, for example “home”. This hypothesis is defended by KLEIBER, as stated earlier. In this dimension, its meaning can be, “It’s not worth to talk too much when the listener already understood the message” or “One must be attentive to what has not been said, but we can imply”³. Table 1 gathers, in summary, some properties observed in the proverb in study.

Suprasegmental (parallelism)	Syntax (elliptical)	Semantics (“generic situation”)	Pragmatic knowledge (evaluative)	Cognition (frequency/familiarity)
✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 1 Multidimensional analysis of the Portuguese proverb, *Para bom entendedor, meia palavra basta* [To the wise, half a word is enough] (synthesis) as a *multi-word* unity.

SITUATED PRAGMATIC ACT

From a pragmatic point of view, meanings result from a specific referential pact between the speakers, established from a proverbial statement, in a context of social interaction in which they participate. In the proverbial saying, this constitutes an event or a pragmatic act, as

viewed by MEY and supported by the cognitive contribution of KECKES. The illocutionary act produced by this proverbial statement can be seen as pointing out to rationality and the understanding of human beings, making the perlocutionary act an appeal to the intelligence and knowledge of the listener, in order to understand what the speaker intends to say, without formulating it. The proposed pact, that translates itself in a half worded conversation, may be motivated by several extra linguistic circumstances, and by the knowledge of the participants of the interaction: taboos, respect for one’s privacy, or other types of embarrassments, normally bound to sociocultural norms and values. The proverb carries with it, a reference to other texts, silenced texts that, in turn, are related to situations where speech must be used with caution regarding certain subjects, enriching the listeners’ ability to understand.

• Intertextual perlocutionary act

This proverbial statement, as a situated pragmatic act, has the particularity, just like any other item of its category, of unfolding a diversity of meanings, depending on the social interaction. The construction of meaning depends on its participants, and their previously shared knowledge, or common ground. The recognition of its meaning and what it refers to, as a situated meaning at that time and place, trigger an inferential process that leads to a non-explicit conclusion.

In a more specific way, in the context of a pragmatic class and taught, where one must explain the Cooperative Principle and the concept of Conversational Implicature proposed by GRICE in “Logic and Conversation”, published in 1975, it is possible to follow the strategy which takes the proverb as an argument that aims to appeal to the intelligence of the students and draw the attention to their rational abilities to understand. The proverbial saying, is the argument of an illocutionary act that can be formulated as

such is the conventional wisdom, for example, transmitted from generation to generation, that through this particular proverb and the general knowledge, we have the ability to understand what is conveyed implicitly, also Grice developed a theory in which this ability to communicate indirectly is called Implicature.

This act echoes concepts of pragmatic theories, like “pragmatic implicature”, “indirect speech act”. Meanwhile, given the referred context referred above, the proverbial formula appeals to an inferential deductive operation that leads to the identification of the related referents “Implicature”, “Cooperative Principle” and “Grice”. This property of alluding to other texts, unfolded by pragmatic acts was studied by SHIE (2014), that configures it as being an intertextual perlocutionary act. A perlocutionary act because it “promotes the connections and interactions between two spans of text, with the later textual span (or

'alluding text') reflecting or referring indirectly to the prior textual span (or 'source text') in such a way that the meaning of the later text can be perceived or inferred based on the prior one.", and still, as the author says, quoting AUSTIN (1962: 101), because it produces a "certain consequential effects upon the feelings, thoughts, or actions of the audience".

In the previously mentioned situation, the proverb refers to Grice's texts, allowing moreover to establish a relationship, by placing in parallel, two types of knowledge: The *common sense* knowledge, and the scientific knowledge, each one with their own characteristics and submitted to specific principles. The *common sense* knowledge carries out with it the value of wisdom grounded in tradition. It integrates itself in the sociocultural community as a perspective formula, becoming the voice of what has to be done in the name of common sense, sharing with the scientific knowledge, the same necessity of being spread out.

Final remarks

Using the proverb *To the wise, half a word is enough* as an argument in the context of a pragmatic lesson, allowed a more updated reflection regarding its properties, in an attempt to better describe it. Other words and other texts were necessary in order to understand its most relevant features. This study becomes, incidentally, an intertextual pragmatic act, a situated pragmatic act.

The referred proverb, that was chosen due to a memory of its use in a concrete situation in a class room, during a lesson of Pragmatics, had the effect of revealing several possibilities of intertextual connections, with other texts and from different scientific areas, highlighting the complexity of its description. This description must contemplate, at least three interconnected dimensions: the structural dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the pragmatic dimension.

The structural dimension allows us to highlight the linguistic material of which a proverb is made - resulting of a process of "proverbialization" - and their most patronized form of obeying formal sound, syntactic, and semantic patterns, which favor its memorization and recognition as a whole and not as the operation of a sum of various parts.

From its processing point of view, in the cognitive dimension, the proverb may be seen as a formulaic expression, or a formula. The process of moulding - or *chunking* - to which it is subjected is carried out over time, in a strict relation with its more or less frequent use in social interactions of a particular cultural and linguistic community.

To conclude, in the pragmatic dimension, analyzing it in a more specific situation, we intended to exemplify not only its argumentative force, as a wise formula, by nature, and

popular, probably due to its link to the spoken variety of the language, but also, observing it in parallel with other forms of knowledge, showing that the same denoted situation, can be referred to by at least two types of texts: a proverbial formulaic expression, with an unknown author, "To the wise, half a word is enough", through which the instructional function is privileged, and a scientific text of Grice, the author of the concepts such as "Cooperative Principle", "Conversational Maxims", "Implicature", both highlighting human rationality.

Endnotes

1. Theories whose linguistic analysis have an empirical base, by having a bi-directional principle, in which the structure of a linguistic system emerges from the real and concrete linguistic uses. In accordance to their theories "language should be viewed not as a set of specific grammar rules, but as a statistical accumulation of linguistic experiences (Bod 2006).
2. For a better understanding regarding these two distinct theoretical positions on the representation of semantics of proverbs, read the works published by Kleiber and Anscombe and Mejri, quoted in the References.
As with the phenomenon of "Liaison" in French, the argument put forward by Bybee for the possibility of speakers to memorize and recognize a sequence of more than one word (multiwords) as a unit.
3. <https://ciberduvidas.iscte-iul.pt/consultorio/perguntas/o-significado-de-mais-alguns-proverbios/24514>

Curriculum Vitae

Dr. **Aline Bazenga** is Assistant Professor at the University of Madeira (Portugal) and a researcher at the CLUL (Centre of Linguistics of the University of Lisbon), as a member of the Dialectology and Diachrony research team. She holds a PhD in French Linguistics (2004) and her research interests include Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics, focusing on syntactic variation in Spoken European Portuguese in Madeira island. Since 2011 she is working as the coordinator of the field of Linguistics in the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Madeira project (CLEPUL/APCA, led by José Eduardo Franco). She is member of the Associação Internacional de Paremiologia / International Association of Paremiology (AIP-IAP).

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