# English Teachers' Challenges and Method in Building Learners' Speaking Skills During Merdeka Curriculum in Junior High School

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#### Abstract

This research is based on the problems teachers have faced, where teachers must be able to create a more effective and active learning atmosphere. In the independent curriculum, the teacher is a facilitator who helps students to achieve learning goals. In this case, a learning strategy is very necessary to support learning achievement. The urgency of this research raises existing problems at this school this problem will be followed up later That. the main aim of this research is to explain the method used in special learning for teaching English with the Merdeka curriculum in junior high schools and also the challenges as an English teacher in the Merdeka curriculum. This research will utilize descriptive qualitative research. This research will later be carried out at one of the junior high schools in Bojonegoro in the 2023-2024 academic years. In this research, the researcher will use observation, an interview instrument to collect the data. In this research, the researcher will analyze the data using three concurrent flows including data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification. the result of previous chapter, there are six challenges faced by teachers, namely method do teachers, mother tongue, motivation, lack of vocabulary, facilities, learning material. All of these challenges have been overcome well, namely by providing vocabulary since sitting in the seventh grade class, then providing student motivation during learning, using strategy group discussions to develop interaction between friends. In learning, of course, it is not always as expected, there are many obstacles faced by teachers. By providing motivation when learning, it is hoped that students will be able to be more active in studying.

Keywords: Challenges, Method, Speaking Skill

# 1. Introduction

The curriculum in education plays a very large role in determining a country's educational progress, from concept to application and practice in the field. The method used in this research uses analysis of literature review data collection from journals, internet media, and online news media. These results are also consistent with character education theory which emphasizes the importance of moral learning in developing better individuals. A curriculum that

is responsive to future developments can help learners become better prepared to face future challenges. Therefore, developing and implementing an effective curriculum is one of the keys to the success of a quality and relevant education system. Curriculum reform does not necessarily guarantee that this will happen ongoing change in everyday school practices (Lestari et al., 2023) Reform Their implementation often brings unexpected results, even if well-intentioned curricular reforms never come to fruition have been implemented effectively in practical classroom settings (Park & Sung, 2013).

In addition, English teachers have the Merdeka to interpret the curriculum and are even encouraged to contribute to it. Learners no longer being administrators but also co-creators of the curriculum (Makarim, 2019). Learners can freely interpret it curriculum and encourage flexible learning by creating and contributing to the curriculum (Hendri, 2019). This curriculum reform policy has meaning for the development of learners and teachers, and this must be carried out so that it is implemented correctly to ensure that improvements have been made (Soini, 2020). The Ministry of Education and Culture's Merdeka learning Initiative is rooted in the Merdeka Curriculum which was developed and implemented in several schools in Indonesia. Merdeka Curriculum is also called Prototype Curriculum. This curriculum is flexible. Apart from that, this curriculum also focuses on essential material, character development, and student competency. One of the characteristics of an Merdeka curriculum is that it applies more interactive and collaborative learning methods, as explained by Yani (2023) the Merdeka curriculum is also considered more flexible than the previous curriculum. It can be concluded that in the Merdeka curriculum that focuses on student learning, teachers must provide the latest effective learning methods supported by technological developments to support it. Learners are free to innovate and be creative in the classroom with more modern learning tools. Classroom learning needs to involve full cooperation between learners and teachers so that learning objectives are achieved.

Teaching English by a teacher not only includes the transmission of knowledge but also involves unique personal challenges, skills, and method. According to Emery (2012), one of the most often mentioned problems encountered by English teachers is "overcrowded classes and the effect of such condition can have on teaching and learning". Teachers' challenges in teaching English are very complex and often reflect the challenges and successes that occur in the classroom. An English teacher is faced with the task of developing a variety of language skills, with a special focus on speaking skills, which are an important component in language learning. In the Merdeka curriculum, teachers have their challenges in learning English, especially in speaking skills. In this case, the teacher must be able to create a strategy for learning English.

EFL learners cannot demonstrate their ability to speak English in public because learners are shy and afraid to speak English. Learners think that their accuracy is on speaking English is not good and worries people who listen to their conversation will laugh. Speaking has its level of difficulty for learners, such as the problems that are often faced a lack of vocabulary and grammar, for example. Most learners fail to become fluent speakers because of their limitations poor vocabulary and grammar mastery. All problems will become obstacles for anyone to develop English language skills, especially students' speaking skills. Speaking barriers in English language learners as foreign language learners consist of internal obstacles and external obstacles (Nuraini, 2016:10). Both internal and external obstacles will affect learners' speaking abilities because if learners exist anyone creates obstacles in the learning process, especially mastery of English speaking skills, the learner will find it difficult to use the target language.

The model educational program now goes by the name Merdeka Curriculum, which was duly dispatched by the Minister of Education and Technology. The Human Resource 'Kurikulum Merdeka' from Design to Implementation in the School: What Worked and What Not in Indonesian Education educational program to be used in each school's unique training units might still be chosen at this time. 2013 choices about educational programs include emergency and Merdeka curriculum. The Merdeka learning curriculum represents the development and implementation of a crisis educational program launched to address the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Understanding Merdeka Learning is a process that is used to allow learners to select the things that interest them (Supriyono, 2022).

In the Merdeka curriculum, English language teaching focuses on English language skills which include listening, speaking, reading, and writing, at a higher level. According to Sarode (2018), Teaching method refer to methods used to help learners learn the contents of the desired course and can develop goals that can be achieved in the future. The teaching strategy identifies the various learning methods available to enable them to develop appropriate method for dealing with identified target groups. Teaching English is not easy. Teaching and learning strategy can be referred to as the method chosen by the teacher to deliver learning material in a manner-specific learning environment so that learning objectives can be achieved effectively and efficiently. About the teaching and learning process, the use of the term strategy is intended as the teacher's efforts to create an environmental system that allows the teaching process to occur. Method can make learning "easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (Oxford, 1990). Teachers are required to have the ability to manage all of these components needed so that the teaching materials provided can be well received by learners. With varying skill levels in each class, teachers must use effective method that enable learners to learn the material.

According to Brown, (2015) states that speaking is a useful expertise that can be straight forwardly and experimentally noticed. Be that as it may, the precision and viability of the test taker's listening abilities generally cloud these perceptions, compromising the legitimacy and unwavering quality of the oral creation test. Considering the expert's explanation that speaking is an ability that ought to be ruled unequivocally, another clarification is that the assessment of the speaking limit ought to be done really and effectively. That is the very thing that the clarification is expecting that in ruling abilities to talk there is a shortfall of various limits, and it can impact giving different information. As per what was conveyed by Rao, (2019) said that speaking skills are the primary capacities for getting an obscure tongue or second language learning. Speaking is viewed as the main expertise in mastering a new or second language, out of the four fundamental language abilities. This suggests that speaking fluently is more important than mastering English if you're not prepared. Since encapsulation is in ruling an obscure language, anyone after learning it can practice, and the assumptions and objectives in speaking can be understood.

# 2. Method

This research uses qualitative methods. Qualitative research is a descriptive research method that prioritizes analysis. Qualitative research emphasizes process and meaning. This research will later be carried out at one of the junior high schools in Bojonegoro in the 2023-2024 academic years. In this research, the researcher will use observation, an interview instrument to collect the data. In this research, the researcher will analyze the data using three concurrent flows including data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusion/verification.

This research is based on the problems teachers have faced. where teachers must be able to create a more effective and active learning atmosphere. In the independent curriculum, the teacher is a facilitator who helps students to achieve learning goals. In this case, a learning strategy is very necessary to support learning achievement. The urgency of this research raises existing problems at this school this problem will be followed up later That. the main aim of this research is to explain the method used in special learning for teaching English with the Merdeka curriculum in junior high schools and also the challenges as an English teacher in the Merdekat curriculum.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

Based on the results of observations and interviews with subjects research, the researcher explains the findings of his research. Data is also taken from documentation. Below the researcher explains the research findings which are divided into two findings:

#### **3.1** The Teachers Challenges

## 3.1.1 Methods do Teacher

Teacher 1 says "Personally, maybe for some topics or material in class 8, I can go through a discussion group so that later in the discussion group I can also practice group cohesion and I can also see who is active and passive in the group.."

Teacher 2 says "I usually provide learning methods that change every week, such as group discussions, demonstration methods, this is because English learning is carried out especially in the afternoon, students will automatically be sleepy if we don't use the right method"

From the results of the interview above, it is concluded that teachers have their own way of delivering learning material, such as providing new and unique learning methods so that students remain interested in learning activities. The methods that are often used are discussion groups, demonstration method, providing ice bikers before class time and many more ways to overcome students in learning

#### 3.1.2 Mother Tongue

Teacher 1 says "Mother tongue does not have a bad impact on students,

> it's just how to ensure that students are not afraid to speak, not afraid to express themselves."

Teacher 2 says "Mother tongue in English is called Native Language, which is the first language that a child masters or acquires wherever the child is born. Many parents make various efforts to ensure their children are fluent in English".

From the results of the interviews above, Mother tongue does not have a bad impact on students, it's just how to ensure that students are not afraid to speak, not afraid to express themselves. Because most of them are afraid of being laughed at because of their bad pronunciation Mother tongue itself is defined as the first language used by people in daily communication.

#### 3.1.3 Motivation

Teacher 1 says "In my opinion, motivation is important, we give them strength, we try to strengthen them, its ok,"

Teacher 2 says "Teachers who are able to provide the right motivation can create a more effective and enjoyable learning environment for students. Usually I give praise like "Good job" etc"

From the results of the interviews above, Motivation greatly influences learning. Students who are motivated to learn will be even more enthusiastic in improving their learning. Many students have not mastered English since childhood, therefore this motivation encourages students to continue learning English. From elementary school to middle school is a transition period. Students need to adapt to the existing environment. Motivation is one of the most important things in the learning process. Without motivation, learning goals are difficult to achieve. When students have had it in the learning process, they will understand the material, especially English, better.

## 3.1.4 Lack of Vocabulary

Teacher 1 says "Vocabulary can perhaps be said to be the foundation for speaking English, so I agree that it is a challenge for teachers."
Teacher 2 says "Yes, I agree, sis, that students who lack vocabulary can be a challenge for a teacher in teaching English. Limited vocabulary can hinder

understanding texts,"

From the results of the interviews above, The challenge faced by teachers is the limited vocabulary possessed by students. Therefore, the provision of vocabulary has been implemented since the seventh grade class. The next challenge is to raise students' enthusiasm for learning. This problem is overcome by providing ice breakers before learning begins and also providing learning motivation for students. The lack of self-confidence among students is also a challenge for students. The use of group discussion method helps students interact frequently with peers and also build good communication between friends

## 3.1.5 Facilities

Teacher 1 says "Facilities are learning infrastructure, sis, they can include supporting classroom buildings, study rooms, fields, etc."

Teacher 2 says "Facilities are also an important point in supporting learning. In my opinion, the facilities currently needed."

From the results of the interviews above, Having adequate school facilities will definitely further improve the learning process. However, not all schools have good school facilities. Other schools that are constrained by school facilities can also use learning methods that make minimal use of school facilities. To be a teacher you have to be creative in order to create fun learning and also achieve learning goals well. In SMP plus Al Fatimah Bojonegoro already has good school facilities

## 3.1.6 Learning Materials

Teacher 1 says "we don't only use textbooks but also add additional material, whether from videos or other book references" Teacher 2 says "With the occasional shortage of teaching materials.

We can access non-monotonous learning via the internet so that students don't feel bored with learning."

From the results of the interviews above, The development of teaching materials is also needed in every lesson. Student learning resources are not only in books. Keeping up with the technological era will be even better if learning is also able to make good use of technology. Therefore, teachers do not only rely on their textbooks. Maybe you can provide a little visual material on the internet to increase students' interest in learning.

#### 3.2 The Teachers Method Implemented

This research was conducted at SMP Plus Al-Fatimah Bojonegoro in the 2023-2024 academic year. The subject of this research who will be observed by the researcher is an English teacher in grades 8 and 7. This researcher will later ask about some of the teacher's challenges in

teaching English using the Merdeka curriculum and directly observe the teacher's method in classroom learning. The researcher conducted interviews with 2 English teachers, in eight grade teacher and on seventh grade. The first observation was carried out on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 in eight grade. Then the second observation was carried out on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 in seventh grade. Then the researcher conducted interviews. The first interview was conducted on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 and the second interview was conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024 seventh grade.

Then on Friday, 1st March 2024, researcher conducted eight grade observations are located starting at 07.00 to 08.30 with the number of students 25 students and 1 English teacher. Before starting the lesson, students greet the teacher enter class. After that the teacher asks students to read a prayer which means learning will begin soon. The next stage is for the teacher to accompany all the students absent or not, even after completing the previous session, no forgot to ask about the assignment at the previous meeting beforehand. After questions and answers have been completed about the previous subject, which was given by the teacher an overview of the material that will be studied that day. The teacher uses 2 languages, namely Indonesian and English to make it easier for students to understand. When presenting the stage the teacher gives an explanation. New material will be discussed. At the presentation stage, The teacher not only explains the material but the teacher also teaches pronunciation and translating all the sentences or words they say and they learn. To help students understand and practice speaking English.

In the practice stage, the teacher asks students to open English in the context book held by each student, then the teacher explains using the student question and answer method very enthusiastic about answering the teacher's questions but not with only a few of their male students could answer the teacher's questions. Not only that, the teacher asks students to search translations or vocabulary that they did not know before. After they understand what is contained in it, then proceed to the production stage. At the production stage, the teacher asks students to read and translate the assignments written in the textbook after reading.

The teacher asks the students to do what the teacher instructs them to do, when completing assignments the students are very active in asking the teacher and looking in the dictionary about what the students do not understand. after all students have finished doing the teacher's work ask students to practice the assignment given as well as read the dialogue they have translated previously, one by one the pairs practice it forward shyly but they can still pronounce it teachers assess students based on speaking assessments rubric. Learning finished at 08.30 before the teacher gave a motivational closing to the students and greeted them.

In this case, the researcher has prepared an observation sheet containing several method used in learning English by English teachers. Some of the method used by the teacher in the first observation in the eighth grade class were the direct method, where the teacher explained using English but also translated into Indonesian to make it easier for students to understand the material presented, then the teacher also used a cognitive strategy. Occasionally teachers also direct students in learning so that learning objectives are achieved well.

Then there is the practice and exercise strategy, in this case the teacher also provides practice in the form of working on textbooks and also taking tests if necessary to hone students' skills, especially in speaking skills. The teacher also uses a communication strategy, such as

asking how students are doing, greeting them before learning begins. This is done so that students can be closer to the teacher and they will not feel awkward or afraid when facing learning difficulties. At the end of the lesson the teacher also uses a question and answer strategy to ensure students have understood the material that has been presented. Strategic group discussions are usually used on certain material to increase the sense of cohesiveness and cooperation between students.

# **3.3** Teacher Challenges are Faced to In Building Learners' Speaking Skills during The Merdeka Curriculum

After analyzing the data using thematic analysis, based on as a result of interviews, the author found that there are three method used by English teacher in teaching English speaking skills to students in multilingual education at SMP Plus Al Fatimah Bojonegoro. It consists of establishing communication between teachers and students, building communication between students, and Integrate Islamic values in speaking activities.

The challenge faced by English teachers especially in seventh grade is providing the motivation that students need to encourage them to learn. There are some students who have minimal knowledge about English and when school has to use English, they really need motivation to learn English. That is also one of the challenges for teachers. Students' lack of vocabulary be a challenge for teachers and several other challenges in teaching English in the Merdeka curriculum. Because one of the conditions for being able to speak is also having to have a large vocabulary. There is provision of vocabulary in class 7 to develop speaking skills. And another challenge is that it is very difficult to raise students' enthusiasm for learning by providing motivation, ice breaking, so it is hoped that students will be enthusiastic about learning any lesson. The lack of facilities is also a challenge for teachers. However, at this school the learning facilities are quite good.

The challenge faced by English teachers especially in eight grade is providing the motivation is important for every lesson as it strengthens them to remain active in studying. Students' lack of vocabulary, because of this independent curriculum, students are not given the usual material. Starting from elementary school, they are given a lot of basic material. Not targeted to achieve some material. Because in this school there are also many students who still don't know about the vocabulary around them. the lack of learning facilities also pose challenges for teachers, because facilities are what support us in the learning process, facilities are also what make learning effective.

According to the results of the interview that has been presented, there are six challenges faced by teachers, namely the first is the method do teacher. In choosing a method there are things that must be considered and noticed. Among them are the goals to be achieved in learning, students' abilities and background, teacher's abilities and background and the state of the ongoing learning process. Method is defined as a method used by a teacher to achieve learning objectives and can be interpreted as a method present material to students to achieve learning objectives. The method functions as a way to achieve learning objectives. The position of the method is as a component of learning. There are many methods that can be used by a teacher. There is no single best method for achieving various learning objectives. A teacher should be skilled in selecting and using various learning methods. The next interview was about

the efficiency of the learning methods used when teaching

The second is mother tongue. Mother tongue does not have a bad impact on students, only how to ensure students are not afraid to speak, not afraid to express themselves. Because most of them are afraid of being laughed at because of their bad pronunciation. Mother tongue in English is called Native Language, which is the first language that a child masters or acquires wherever the child is born. that way the teacher can cope and the students are not too dependent on their mother tongue. This is implemented so that students get used to speaking politely and kindly. Students should be able to speak the language well and also be polite. The third is Motivation is a key factor in explaining the success or failure of a difficult activity. We know that success is in a task caused by the fact that a person is motivated. It is easy in second language learning to assume that a learner will be like that success with the right motivation. This claim is supported by various studies and experiments in human learning. But they never offer a detailed understanding of what motivation is and what the subcomponents of motivation. All Students, teachers, material developers and researcher agree that motivation is an important part in mastering the second material or foreign language. Learner motivation can fluctuate depending on the language learning context. Motivation has an important role in developing language skills. Teachers can play an important role in motivating learners to learn a second/foreign language. Motivation is an important factor in learning a foreign language which is influenced by different variables. Motivation is sometimes overlooked by some EFL teachers in their insistence students to learn more. We as EFL teachers must teach our students to increase motivation. Teachers must help their students to find motivation in areas they did not expect and also to examine their own motivation process so they can take advantage of it.

The fourth is the lack of vocabulary in students, raising students' enthusiasm for learning and also the lack of self-confidence possessed by students. All of these challenges have been overcome well, namely by providing vocabulary since sitting in the seventh grade class, then providing student motivation during learning, using strategy group discussions to develop interaction between friends. The fifth is the availability of school facilities, teachers and students can take advantage of it, so that the teaching and learning process will be more effective and efficient. Finally, the quality of education in schools will be better in accordance with the demands of society and business/industry world. An educational institution is said to be successful or effective in carrying out its activities if the educational institution can achieve its goals. The concept of effectiveness is actually a broad concept, covering several factors inside and outside educational institutions. The last is the existence of learning resource materials is very important in supporting a smooth teaching and learning process. However, in current learning activities, teachers only use the material listed in student worksheet books and textbooks. Meanwhile, the contents of student textbooks and worksheet books contain more narratives about events and a lack of photos or drawings, which causes students to get bored and lazy to read. The development of teaching materials is also needed in the learning process. The more teaching materials used, the more knowledge will be absorbed by students. The last question about how to overcome the limitations of the materials used in learning.

# 3.4 Teacher Method Implemented to Build Learners' Speaking Skills during The Merdeka Curriculum

From the research findings, the teaching method used by teachers in teaching speaking

skills is very diverse. So many the strategy can uses in English learning is the direct method, cognitive method, drills and exercises, using communication method, questions and answers, group discussions contextual methods that often combine learning with daily activities and practical methods. Teacher method in speaking skills are very important to overcome students' difficulties in speaking. The aim of teaching speaking is to equip students with the ability to express targets language to address basic interactive skills (Brown & Yule, 2000). In order to be effective in teaching speaking skills, teachers can use many method to choose from. Teaching method are defined as various methods or methods applied by teachers in the teaching and learning process. In an effort to make the teaching and learning process successful, Especially, in teaching speaking skills, teachers must consider several factors. According to Flannigan & Greenwood (2007) there are four factors, namely: (1) the students they teach, (2) the nature of the words they decide to teach, (3) their instructional goals in teaching each word, and (4) the method they employ to teach those words. In this case, SMP plus Al Fatimah Bojonegoro teacher for the 2023-2024 academic year considers these factors, one of which is by considering the method he applies in teaching speaking skill.

In presenting the data previously explained by the researcher, it is known that the English teacher's strategy in teaching, especially in seventh grade, is that the teacher uses quite varied method, such as direct methods, cognitive method, drills and exercises, using communication method, questions and answers, group discussions. This is similar to previous research by (Sukmojati et al., 2023) in his research entitled "Method and Challenges in Teaching Speaking by English Tutors: A Study in Madani Super Camp English Classes" who uses strategy Discussion and Classroom Interaction, questions and answers and group discussions when learning in class. The conclusions of this study emphasize the need for stimulation student involvement in learning, as well as using a storytelling approach, involving students in practice activities, including educational games, and encouraging descriptive skills through attribute. This comprehensive approach proved essential in the improvement students' speaking abilities and building a more appropriate learning atmosphere. It can be concluded that the previous research is very related, both using the same learning method such as discussion group strategy and classroom Interaction.

The method used in learning, especially in class eight, is that the teacher uses for children it is easier and more active and we can use interactive or communication learning methods such as contextual method. Then in other classes, because his speaking skills are not good, he usually uses demonstrations, or group discussions to further strengthen the material presented. So that it can be well received by students. Then use a question and answer strategy at the end of the lesson. Some previous studies have been conducted by (Miranda, 2023) in his research entitled "Pre-Service Teachers' Method In Improving Students' Speaking Skills" the aim of the research was to determine what factors influenced students' success or failure in learning English through speaking method. As a result, there are a number of challenges and variables that affect whether or not students are successful in using speaking method to learn and teach English. Many exercises will stimulate students to speak English and make students accustomed to speaking English. Improving your speaking skills is actually not difficult. It requires persistence in studying and doing it regularly. However, there are several things you can do to improve your speaking skills, for example thinking in English.

The teacher also provides several tricks to attract students' interest so that they don't feel bored when learning English using this method. To avoid misunderstanding the information provided, teachers use several methods as well; they are gestures, pictures, and charts. It is possible that students lack confidence in speaking or sometimes make mistakes, here the teacher will correct them directly so that the student realizes and corrects them. Implementation is the application of regulatory values in several activities. This applies when implementing the Merdeka Curriculum in teaching. In the learning process, the activities carried out must reflect the values of the Merdeka Curriculum. The application of the Merdeka Curriculum delivered by teachers reflects the values of the Merdeka Curriculum. The teaching and learning process. The Merdeka Curriculum also encourages teachers to implement a student-oriented teaching and learning process, where the role of students is more dominant in the teaching and learning process. The same thing is also done by teachers who position themselves as facilitators in learning activities. The teacher creates and provides material at the beginning, implements it and then carries out assessments and projects again in the next teaching and learning process.

However, a detailed examination that focuses specifically on the learning steps in the English language component of the curriculum, particularly in lower secondary schools, remains underexplored. This research gap is significant, as curriculum implementation includes multiple elements that need to be thoroughly investigated. Therefore, the main aim of this research is to explain the method used in learning specifically for teaching English with the Merdeka curriculum in junior high schools. In doing so, this book seeks to contribute a new perspective to existing Independent Curriculum research, enriching our understanding of its application in the context of English language education.

## 4. Conclusion

Based on the result of previous chapter, there are six challenges faced by teachers, namely method do teachers, mother tongue, motivation, lack of vocabulary, facilities, learning material. All of these challenges have been overcome well, namely by providing vocabulary since sitting in the seventh grade class, then providing student motivation during learning, using strategy group discussions to develop interaction between friends. In learning, of course, it is not always as expected, there are many obstacles faced by teachers. By providing motivation when learning, it is hoped that students will be able to be more active in studying.

There are several supporting factors for the learning process to take place with good school facilities and teaching materials. Facilities and infrastructure are also supporting factors in the progress of the educational process, such as facilities outside the classroom or inside the classroom must be adequate to support the learning process. Facilities in the classroom such as chairs, desks, blackboards, bookshelves and so on must be in good condition in order to make the learning process run smoothly, safely and comfortably. Teaching materials have a main role in teaching and learning activities. To help teaching and learning activities, educators need teaching materials that can help both educators and students, materials that contain all the information, materials that are prepared in detail, and show complete competence.

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