# Critical Discourse Studies on Language and Identity of Social Actors Represented in UK Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss' Speech of Announcing Resignation

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**Abstract.** The study aims to reveal the social actors, the discourse strategies, and the representation of the actors that UK Prime Minister, Elizabeth Truss, brought up in her resignation speech. Besides, the study also sees how she uses language to construct the identities of the social actors in the speech. The method used in the study is qualitative descriptive since the data are the language used in the speech, and they will be presented descriptively in analysis. The grand theory of this research is Theo van Leeuwen's representation of social actors (2008), and it is also supported by MAK Halliday's SFL theory (2004). The grand theory provides a set of analysis to reveal how the social actors are represented in the discourse; The set consists of two strategies, exclusion and inclusion. Exclusion means eliminating the social actors through some linguistic mechanisms while inclusion means putting the actors in the center of attention and being presented in the discourse clearly. The results show that both strategies are used by Elizabeth Truss in her speech, but the most strategy used is inclusion. In addition, as for labeling the social actor's identity in her speech, she tries to do it proportionally; however, she also tries to post herself in a superior position to her political opponents and subordinates, and post herself in an inferior position to those she respects. In conclusion, from the study conducted it can be stated that through the resignation speech, Lizz Truss still tried to maintain her authority as prime minister by trying to be respectful and admitting her weaknesses while on duty, and also by constructing a proportional identity in the speech, she also tried to spread new optimism to the public in welcoming the new leadership that will replace her. Finally, the study can bring impacts on providing valuable insights of understanding political discourse, identifying the patterns of communication, and also evaluating the prime minister's legacy.

## 1. Introduction

The study entitled "Critical Discourse Studies on Language and Identity of Social Actors Represented in UK Prime Minister Elizabeth Truss' Speech of Announcing Resignation" employs an analysis of discourse in critical perspective to analyze the political social actors represented in Elizabeth Truss resignation speech. The study aims to reveal the social actors, the discourse strategies, the function of using the strategies, and the labeling of the actors' identities brought up by Elizabeth Truss in her resignation speech.

There are three things backgrounding this study. First is the fact behind Elizabeth Truss resignation as UK prime minister. Elizabeth Truss nicknamed Lizz Truss is a British politician who served as UK Prime Minister after she won the Conservative Party Leader election on September 5, 2022 with 57.4% votes, beating her opponent Rishi Sunak. Amazingly, she is the third woman to hold the position. However, only after 45 days in duty, she announced her resignation as Leader of the Conservative Party

and as Prime Minister. This made her the UK prime minister with the shortest tenure in history. Second is the fact that the resignation had shocked the world. At that time, many world leaders and politicians reacted to the resignation; and even, almost all media in the world reported this as their headline news at that time. Third is the fact that there is an unpleasant issue behind the resignation. One of the issues is the pressure or oppression from various parties and politicians, or in this study it is termed as political social actors.

Related to the current study, the present writer has also already conducted three related studies. First, the study is entitled "A Discourse Analysis of Interpersonal Metafunction in Donald Trump's Speech Recognizing Jerusalem as Capital of Israel". Like the current study, this study uses a political speech as the data source, and it also discusses a discourse analysis. However, it is quite different from the current study since it is not focused on critical perspective [1]. Second, the study is titled "Media Attention for Jerusalem Declaration: A Comparative Discourse Analysis on International Online Newspapers". In this study, a discourse analysis is also employed to analyze the data. Although the data comes from similar thing: the political speech, this study focuses on how medias pack the news about the speech. Therefore, this study is quite different from the current study since it focuses on a comparative discourse analysis between the medias [2]. Third, the study is entitled "Exclusion Passivation Strategy of Representation of Social Actor on Aung San Suu Kyi Criticism in The Case of Rohingya Crisis on Online Media Headlines (A CDA Approach)". In this study, the present writer uses the same grand theory as the current study, Theo van Leeuwen's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis. However, this study only focuses on the exclusion strategy while the current study focuses on both exclusion and inclusion strategies [3].

In addition, there are some pieces of previous studies from the other writers. First is a study from YinYan Wang entitled "A Critical Discourse Analysis of News Reports on Covid-19 in People's Daily and The New York Times". In this study, Wang also uses the same approach as the current study, Critical Discourse Analysis; however, Wang uses Fairclough framework while the current study uses Theo van Leeuwen's [4]. Second is a study from Ali Haif Abbas entitled "Politicizing COVID-19 vaccines in the press: A critical discourse analysis". In the study, Abbas also uses the same approach as the current study, Critical Discourse Analysis; however, he uses Teun A. van Dijk framework while the current study uses a framework from Theo van Leeuwen [5]. Third is a study entitled "Language, Media, and Ideology: Critical Discourse Analysis of Pakistani News Bulletin Headlines and Its Impact on Viewers" from Aaminah Hassan. This study also uses Critical Discourse Analysis in the analysis; but, the focuses is quite different from the current study since it focuses on not only the use of language but also revealing the ideology of the case [6]. The difference between this study and previous studies lies in the in-depth analysis of aspects of discourse analysis applied in the political speeches of a head of government. Although it does not analyze ideology as a whole, from the discourse analysis conducted it can also be seen the personal ideology of the head of government, in this case referring to UK Prime Minister, Liz Truss.

Based on the study background above, the objectives of the current study are: to reveal the social actors Liz Truss brings up in her resignation speech, to analyze the discourse strategies Liz Truss uses for expressing the representation of social actors in the speech, to formulate the functions of using those strategies, and to describe the identities Liz Truss constructs for herself and for others in the speech. In order to complete the objectives, Theo van Leeuwen's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis supported by Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics are chosen as tools to analyze the data.

## 2. Method

The method used in the current study is qualitative. According to Flick, "Qualitative research is fundamentally concerned with the development and study of texts" [7]. In-depth understanding of practical issues is explored in qualitative research. Instead of gathering numerical data points or administering interventions like in a quantitative study, a qualitative study helps build hypotheses and further explore and interpret quantitative data. It addresses the whys and hows rather than the quantity or number [8]. Specifically, in the study, qualitative method is implemented on things below:

a) To identify the research question and objectives.
b) To select a corpus of a head of government's speech. Once the research question and objectives have been defined, the next thing to do is to select a corpus of the head of government speech to analyze. This may involve selecting speeches from a particular head of government, or analyzing speeches from multiple presidents over a period of time. The corpus should be representative of the political and social context in which the speech was given.
c) To conduct a linguistic analysis. The next step is to conduct a linguistic analysis of the speech, using qualitative methods such as discourse analysis and narrative analysis. This may involve analyzing the use of particular words, phrases, and metaphors, as well as the overall structure and narrative of the speech.
d) To identify discursive strategies. Once the linguistic analysis is complete, next thing to do qualitatively is identifying discursive strategies used in the speeches. This may involve identifying the use of persuasive techniques such as framing, agenda-setting, and rhetorical appeals.
e) To analyze the social context. Finally, the qualitative method is used to analyze the social context in which the speech was given, paying attention to the political and social ideologies that are reflected in the speech. This may involve analyzing the political climate at the time the speech was given, as well as the broader historical and cultural context.

In general, to analyze the data, this study uses Critical Discourse Analysis from Theo van Leeuwen's framework, specifically: Representation of Social Actors. In addition, Systemic Functional Linguistics especially the analytical tool of transitivity is also used as part of analysis to examine the social action. Also, the theory of discursive strategies of identity construction in interaction based on Bucholtz and Hall framework is used to reveal the identity labelled to the social actors.

Thus, as this study focuses on the representation of social actors in a speech, the main consideration and attention to observe is the language used in the speech. The attempt is, the language obtained from the speech transcript is divided into clauses; then, the clauses are analyzed through Van Leeuwen's Social Actors Network to reveal the social actors, the discourse strategies, and the identities of the actors. The main consideration of this network is whether the social actor is excluded and included from the discourse. Also, for identity analysis, it focuses in the analysis of 'nomination' vs categorization'.

Regarding the objectives of the study, the network that must be focused on in order to accomplish the first, the second, and the third objectives is depicted in Figure 1 Sociosemantic Network.
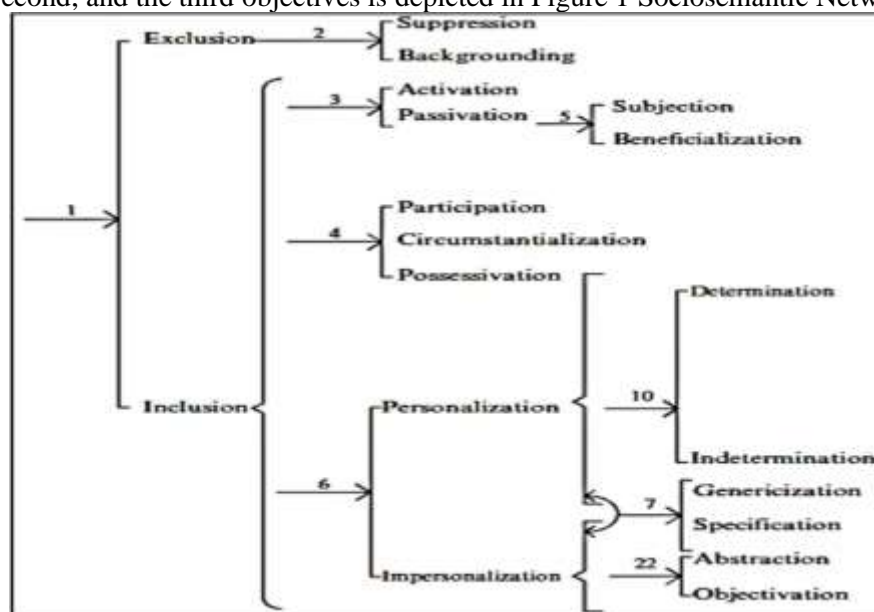


**Figure 1.** Sociosemantic Network [9]

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The two primary divisions or strategies inside the sociosemantic network of social actors are exclusion and inclusion. By using specific linguistic mechanisms, actors are excluded in the process of exclusion. Backgrounding and suppression are its two main sections. The primary distinction between backgrounding and suppression is whether they leave a trace within a representation [9].

Presenting social actors in a representation is the process of inclusion. Here, it has to do with how the social actor is portrayed in a text or news story. There are two major subcategories within inclusion: personalization and impersonalization. Van Leeuwen defines personalisation as the portrayal of social actors as human beings, as opposed to impersonalization, which is the portrayal of social actors through different means (not human beings). The subcategories are then divided into genericization–specification, indetermination – determination, and abstraction – objectivation [9].

In addition, to complete the fourth objective, there are two things to do. First is determining the social action and role allocation (activation and passivation); this process uses transitivity analysis to analyze the type of social action process through the verbs contained in each clause. Figure 2 Transitivity Process shows the system network of the analysis.
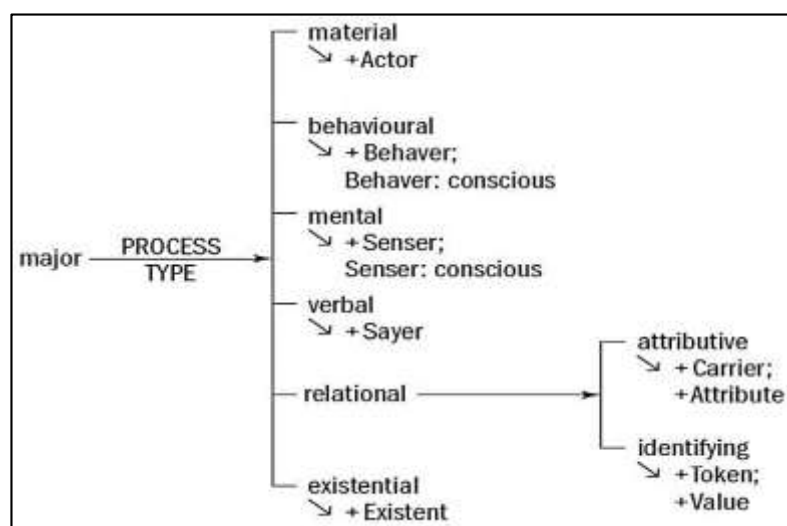


**Figure 2.** Transitivity Process: Types and Participants [10]

Figure 2 shows six major processes in Transitivity analysis, namely: material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational, and existential. Every process has specific types of participants. Second is completing Identity analysis (positionality and relationality).; this process uses an analysis of determining identity through positionality in the form of 'nomination' vs categorization' and relationality analysis. Figure 3 shows the identity network as part of the analysis.
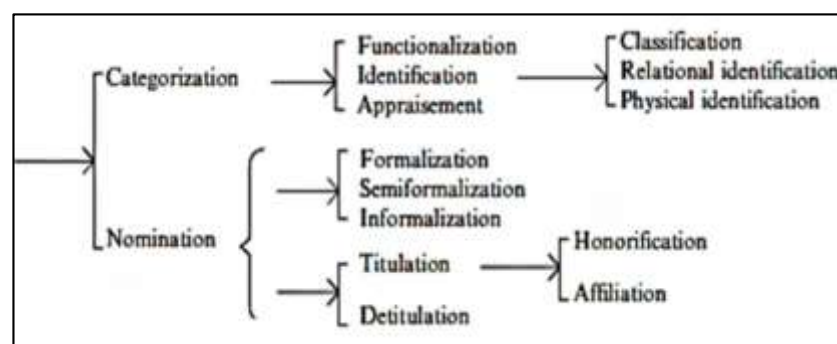


**Figure 3.** Identity Network [9], [11]

Bucholtz and Hall introduce two discursive strategies: first, the positionality strategy that refers to the ways a person positions himself or herself and others as well as is positioned by others in interaction, namely, what identities he or she constructs for himself or herself and for others. Second, relationality strategy, emphasizing that the construction of identity acquires meaning in relation to the identities of other people. In addition, it is also used Van Leeuwen's socio-semantic social actor analysis that involves the development of an inventory (e.g. 'nomination' vs categorization') of the ways social actors may be represented in a text. Identities are also indexed by means of what social actors are represented as doing, that is, what actions are (and are not) allocated to them.

## 3. Results and Discussion

The study analyzes language and identity in representation of social actors from a speech by Elizabeth Truss when she announced her resignation as UK Prime Minister. The data comes from the speech transcript as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Transcript of Truss' Resignation Speech

| Sentence | Speech Content |
|---|---|
| 1. | I came into office at a time of great economic and international instability. |
| 2. | Families and businesses were worried about how to pay their bills. |
| 3. | Putin's illegal war in Ukraine threatens the security of our whole continent. |
| 4. | And our country had been held back for too long by low economic growth. |
| 5. | I was elected by the Conservative party with a mandate to change this. |
| 6. | We delivered on energy bills and on cutting national insurance. |
| 7. | And we set out a vision for a low-tax, high-growth economy /that would take advantage of the freedoms of Brexit. |
| 8. | I recognise, though, given the situation, I cannot deliver the mandate on which I was elected by the Conservative party. |
| 9. | I have therefore spoken to His Majesty the King to notify him that I am resigning as leader of the Conservative party. |
| 10. | This morning I met the chair of the 1922 Committee, Sir Graham Brady. |
| 11. | We have agreed there will be a leadership election to be completed in the next week. |
| 12. | This will ensure we remain on a path to deliver our fiscal plans and maintain our country's economic stability and national security. |
| 13. | I will remain as prime minister until a successor has been chosen. |
| 14. | Thank you. |

From Table 1, the data show that there are 14 sentences and 24 clauses in Lizz Truss's speech. Furthermore, the Analysis referring to objectives 1 and 2 about the social actors and the discourse strategies are implemented in Table 2 Analysis of Social Actors Representation.

**Table 2** Analysis of Social Actors Representation

| Social Actors | | Position in Text | Discourse Strategies | Sociosemantic Categories | Linguistics Realization |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **In Text** | **Referent** | | | | |
| international **instability** | the instability Causer | Sentence 1 | Exclusion | Supression | Nominalization |
| **We** have agreed | Liz Truss & Sir Graham Brady | Sentence 11 | Exclusion | Backgrounding | Clause Relation |

| | | | Exclusion | Supression | Nominalization |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| a leadership **election** | elector | Sentence 11 | Exclusion | Supression | Nominalization |
| I | Liz Truss | Sentences 1,5,8,9,10,13 | Inclusion | Personalization: Specification | 1st person singular Pronoun |
| **Families** and **businesses** | Families and business in UK | Sentence 2 | Inclusion | Personalization: Genericization | Plural Noun without article |
| **Putin**'s illegal war | Vladimir Putin | Sentence 2 | Inclusion | Personalization: Individualization | Person name (as the leader) |
| **We/ our** | All people in UK | Sentence 3/ 3,4,12 | Inclusion | Personalization: Genericization | 1st person plural Pronoun |
| the Conservative **party** | the Conservative party | Sentence 5 | Inclusion | Personalization: Assimilation | noun denoting a group of people |
| We | Liz Truss and her ministers | Sentence 6,7 | Inclusion | Personalization: Specification | 1st person plural Pronoun |
| **His Majesty** the King | King Charles III | Sentence 9 | Inclusion | Determination: honorification | The addition of title |
| the **chair** of the 1922 **Committee** | Sir Graham Brady | Sentence 10 | Inclusion | Determination: functionalization | Noun associated with an activity |
| a Successor | | Sentence 13 | Inclusion | Determination: functionalization | Noun associated with an activity |
| you | The speech audience | Sentence 14 | Inclusion | Personalization: Indetermination | Generalized exo-phoric reference |

Table 2 shows that there are thirteen social actors involved in the speech. The social actors: the instability Causer, Liz Truss & Sir Graham Brady, and elector are found in exclusion strategies. Exclusion means to exclude the actors by using specific linguistic mechanisms. In the speech, the instability Causer and elector are excluded through nominalization mechanism. Nominalization refers to the process of turning verbs or actions into nouns or objects. Besides, Liz Truss & Sir Graham Brady are excluded by clause relation mechanism. In here, the mechanism is linguistically realized by the use of pronoun 'we' in the speech [3].

In addition, there are social actors found in inclusion strategies. Inclusion means presenting social actors in a representation/discourse. From table 2, Lizz Truss and also Lizz Truss & her ministers are included through personalization mechanism. Personalization refers to the use of language that emphasizes the individual or personal characteristics of a person or group. In here, the actors are categorized specification personalization; it means the actors are represented as specific or identifiable individuals [9].

In Table 2, it is also shown that there are social actors included through genericization personalization. The actors are: families and business in UK and all people in UK. Genericization personalization is identified by the use of plural Noun without article [5]. Besides, there are social actors included by the other types of personalization mechanism, namely: Vladimir Putin through individualization, the Conservative party thorough assimilation, and the speech audience through indetermination. Individualization personalization is identified when social actors are referred to as

individuals, and assimilation personalization is identified when social actors refer as a group, but indetermination personalization is identified as unspecified, "anonymous" individuals or groups [9].

Furthermore, there are social actors are included by determination mechanism. Determination happens when an identity is, one way or another, specified. In here, Sir Graham Brady and a successor are categorized as functionalization categorization which means the social actors are referred to in terms of an activity or of something they do [4].

Overall, from table 2, the inclusion strategies are dominated by personalization as the semantic categories. It can be assumed that Lizz Truss uses mostly Inclusion strategy in her speech. As stated by van Leeuwen, Inclusion could signify a higher, more powerful social standing [9]. In here, Lizz Truss wants to show the public that she is the most fully responsible for her resignation. Even though there are parties that he makes scapegoats like Vladimir Putin and other actors who make the current problems that she is charged with solving. Moreover, the use of pronoun "I" which refers to herself in the form of personalization specification further strengthens the assumption that she wants to show that she is the most fully responsible for the resignation. On the other hand, personalization that refers to other social actors shows her openness in conveying problems and as a form of respect for the actors.

In analysis of social action, Transitivity analysis is implemented. The results of the analysis can be seen in Table 3 Analysis of Social Action.

**Table 3** Analysis of Social Action

| Transitivity Process | Total | Role Allocations | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Material | 19 Clauses | Activation | 21 Clauses |
| Mental | 2 Clauses | Passivation | 3 Clauses |
| Verbal | 2 Clauses | | |
| Existential | 1 Clause | | |

Table 3 shows that in social action analysis by using transitivity, it is found that 19 Clauses of Material Process, 2 clauses of mental process, 2 clauses of verbal process, and 1 clause of existential process. Material process refers to actions and events that are performed by a physical entity or a material object, and mental process refers to cognitive or mental activities, such as thinking, perceiving, feeling, or sensing. Besides, verbal process refers to communication or language use, and existential process refers to the existence or presence of something or someone that is realized through the structure "there is/are" or "there exists" [10].

In Lizz Truss resignation speech, it is found that she used mostly material process in the discourse. In the analysis of social action, it is quite crucial to identify what attitude she wants to show to the public. The use of material processes in the analysis of social action also shows active attitude which Lizz Truss tries to disclose to the public openly by highlighting herself a lot as a participant as the main agent category [11].

In addition, in role allocation analysis, it is found that 21 clauses of activation and 3 clauses of passivation. Activation involves the use of language to highlight a particular person, group, or issue while passivation involves the use of language to obscure or background a particular person, group, or issue. In the speech, Lizz Truss mosty uses activation. As stated by van Leeuwen, activation represents social actors as the active, dynamic forces in an activity (thus signaling power). Thus, in this context, it clearly shows that Lizz Truss still wants to show that she was still prime minister when the speech was delivered [9].

In analysis of social actors' identity, positionality and relationality analysis are implemented. The results of the analysis can be seen in Table 4.

**Table 4** Analysis of Social Actors' Identity

| Social Actors | | Positionality | | Relationality (Speaker's relation towards social actors) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **In Text** | **Referent** | **Nomination** | **Categorization** | |
| international **instability** | the instability causer | | Functionalization | Inferior |
| **We** have agreed | Liz Truss & Sir Graham Brady | Nomination | | Equal |
| a leadership **election** | elector | | Functionalization | Inferior |
| I | Liz Truss | Nomination | | - |
| **Families** and **businesses** | Families and business in UK | | Functionalization | Superior |
| **Putin**'s illegal war | Vladimir Putin | Informal | | Superior |
| **We/our** | All people in UK | Nomination | | Equal |
| the Conservative **party** | the Conservative party | | Identification: Classification | Inferior |
| We | Liz Truss and her ministers | Nomination | | Superior |
| **His Majesty** the King | King Charles III | Honorification | Appraisement | Inferior |
| the **chair** of the 1922 **Committee** | Sir Graham Brady | | Functionalization | Inferior |
| you | The speech audience | Nomination | | Superior |

Table 4 shows the analysis of identity in terms of positionality and relationality strategies. Positionality refers to the ways a person positions himself or herself and others as well as is positioned by others in interaction while relationality refers to emphasizing that the construction of identity acquires meaning in relation to the identities of other people [11].

Positionality strategies involve nomination and categorization. Nomination is identified when social actors are presented in terms of their unique identity; categorization is identified when they are represented in terms of their common identities and functions. In here, Liz Truss & Sir Graham Brady, Liz Truss, Vladimir Putin, all people in UK, Liz Truss and her ministers, King Charles III, and The speech audience are classified as nomination since they are all nominated through presenting them in the speech in terms of their unique identity. The instability causer, elector, families and business in UK, the Conservative party, Sir Graham Brady are classified as categorization since they are represented in terms of their common identities and functions in the speech [11].

Relationality strategies focuses on speaker's relation towards the social actors. In here, the analysis focuses on how Lizz Truss positions herself towards the actors in her speech; it can be superior, inferior, and even equal. From Table 4, it shows that Lizz Truss tries to position herself proportionally, namely post herself in a superior position to her political opponents and subordinates, and post herself in an inferior position to those she respects, and also post an equal position to the public with the aim of gain sympathy and foster a sense of optimism towards existing problems [3].

Overall, from identity analysis shown in Table 4, It can be assumed that as for labeling the social actor's identity in her speech, Liz Truss tries to do it proportionally. However, there is still a negative identity constructed, especially for Vladimir Putin. This is quite understandable due to worse relations between UK and Russian governments [11].

## 4. Conclusion

From the completed study, it can be concluded that in her resignation speech, Lizz Truss still tried to maintain her authority as prime minister by trying to be respectful and admitting her weaknesses while on duty. She tried to spread new enthusiasm to the public by describing the UK's current conditions. By constructing a proportional identity in her speech, she also tried to spread new optimism to the public in welcoming the new leadership that will replace her.

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