

EFL STUDENTS' WRITING OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXT: A PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Menulis dalam bahasa Inggris bagi mahasiswa EFL adalah sebuah tantangan karena harus menguasai struktur kalimat dengan baik. Sehingga menulis dipandang sebagai kemampuan yang paling susah untuk dipahami. Penelitian ini dilaksanakan untuk melihat kemampuan menulis mahasiswa EFL di kota Batam. Penelitian ini menitikberatkan kepada kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis teks deskripsi dalam bahasa Inggris yang ditinjau dari struktur paragraf yang mereka tuliskan. Dengan metode kualitatif, penelitian ini memiliki instrumen berupa tugas-tugas menulis teks deskripsi. Setelah data dikumpulkan maka akan dianalisis berdasarkan rubrik penilaian. Untuk menulis sebuah paragraf yang baik, maka mahasiswa diharapkan mampu menguasai struktur paragraf. Dari penelitian ini didapatkan bahwa kemampuan rata-rata menulis mahasiswa dalam konteks EFL masih berada dalam kategori yang lemah yaitu *Low Average*. Sedangkan untuk penguasaan kemampuan dalam menulis berdasarkan struktur kalimat sudah cukup baik walaupun masih banyak kesalahan dalam tata bahasa. Didapati bahwa dalam penelitian ini sebanyak 20% mahasiswa mendapat kriteria *High Average*. Kemudian hanya 10% yang mendapat kriteria *Good*. Selanjutnya 40% mahasiswa mendapat kriteria *Low Average* dan terakhir sebanyak 30% mahasiswa masih berada dalam kriteria *Weak*.

Kata Kunci: EFL Students, Descriptive Text Writing, Paragraph Structure.

Introduction

Students in EFL (English as Foreign Language) and ESL (English as Second Language) context are different in some ways. EFL context plays role in which the students used English less-frequently in a daily conversation. While in ESL context, the use of English is more-frequent in daily conversation. Meanwhile, the use of English for both EFL and ESL contexts is not limited to the speaking skill only, but also the writing skill as well. For both EFL and ESL contexts, writing is applied differently depends on their background. As an example that students have different choices of words in a sentence, so that, both EFL and ESL contexts have put different point of view to their writing styles.

Writing is a subject that is considered as the most difficult skill for the students in both EFL and ESL contexts (Richards and Renandya, 2002). Writing as the most difficult skill if it is compared to the others such as Listening, Speaking and Reading. Not to mention that the other three skills are

easier but this is the fact faced by many students who considered writing as the most difficult one. By writing, the writers are trying to deliver the message to the reader by using their own words and their own understanding. In writing, the writers have to pay a lot attention to the grammar since grammar is the heart of writing.

Writing for students in EFL context is challenging. Challenging because it has many things to be considered. They have to adjust the language from their mother tongue language to the foreign language where they are involved in learning. It is not an easy try for students who have their mother tongue language in their background. In English context writing, students are asked to master and comprehend the elements in writing such as grammar and tenses. Often in using their mother tongue language, they made some mistakes in grammar. While in English, this is like to be more mistakes than their own language. So, this grammar thing becomes a great challenge to be mastered.

In writing, there is a transforming the idea from thought to the written language in a piece of paper. To transform the idea, students have to have background knowledge first. There is no other way that background knowledge is gained from reading. It could be reading a literature book, magazine, newspaper, and online information from the internet. Reading activity will give a very big support to the students' background knowledge, so that, by reading they will unveil the information easily.

EFL students in Batam are mostly the students and the workers at once. From this situation, to get an ideal writing from the students who are trying to divide their studying and working time, it is a difficult situation to reach that ideal condition. Students have to work in a day or night. This condition will lead them to the lack of opportunity to learn as normal students. They have to force themselves studying after working all long day. Then, when they are in the class, they have to write some paragraphs by handwriting. This situation will be going bored for the students. So that is why the lecturer has to use a variety of English teaching.

Based on the background of the research, the researchers determined the paragraph structures as the limitation of the problem in this research. The paragraph structures that are going to be analyzed and become the main tool for analyzing the paragraph consist of topic sentence, supporting point and supporting detail, and concluding sentence. Finally, the researcher is going to find out the structure of descriptive writing paragraph of EFL students in Batam.

Theoretical Review

Writing for EFL students in the university are prepared for advanced writing such as writing their thesis to earn the university degree. Oshima & Hogue (1991) emphasize a kind of

writing for college or university, it is called an academic writing. They argue that academic writing is different from other kinds of writing in several ways. For instance, personal writing, literary writing, journalistic writing, business writing, etc. They are different since in academic writing there are many things should be considered such as the rules of paragraph writing and its structure as well.

Writing is a process of transformation of an idea where the writer put it in the paper. To transform the idea from one's mind, the background knowledge should be there in their mind first. By reading a lot, students will gain some ideas regard to their writing. No wonder that the idea of the writer is drawn based on each writer's background knowledge. Then, the background knowledge is determined by how much they read literature books.

Form four skills of English, writing is considered as the most complex skill to be learned. Teaching writing in the classroom is different from the teaching of other skills. Brown (1994) compares writing to the swimming. He argues both are the same because students need media and someone who teach them those skills. According to him, practice is the best way to achieve the best skills to be advanced in writing or swimming.

To know the paragraph structure completely, students need to know the meaning of paragraph as well. Many definitions about paragraph are explained by the experts. Some of them are Oshima & Hogue (1991) and Zemach and Rumisek (2003, 2005). Oshima & Hogue (1991) argue that paragraph is a basic unit of organization in writing in which a group of related sentences develops one main idea. In the same way, Zemach and Rumisek (2003, 2005) explain that a paragraph is a group of sentences about a single topic consist at least five sentences or as long as ten

sentences. In other words, the number of sentences is unimportant; however, the paragraph should be long enough to develop the main idea clearly. A paragraph may stand by itself. It may also be one part of a longer piece of writing such as a chapter a book or an essay.

A paragraph has three major structural parts (Zemach and Rumisek, 2003, 2005): a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence. The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. It not only names the topic of the paragraph, but it also limits the topic to one or two areas that can be discussed completely in the space of a single paragraph. The specific area is called the controlling idea. Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence. That is, they explain the topic sentence by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and quotations. The topic sentences are also divided into two categories such as supporting point and supporting details. The concluding sentence signals the end of the paragraph and leaves the reader with important points to remember.

Method

The design of this research is a descriptive research which involved the collecting of the data in order to answer the research questions concerning the current status or phenomena (Arikunto, 2010). Principally, this research explains about fact that happens now. The analysis of paragraph structure is analyzed by using qualitative analysis since descriptive research was aimed at describing things as the way they are (Gay and Airasian, 2009).

The population of this research is the students in EFL context in Batam Island. As the sample, the researcher took the third semester students of English Literature in Putera Batam University. Furthermore, this research used purposive sampling technique to define

the sample of the research because the researcher selects the sample using his experience or knowledge of the group to be sampled (Gay and Airasian, 2009). Then, based on his experience and knowledge of the group to be sampled, the researcher collect the students writing task from the writing subject to be analyzed based on the criteria of paragraph structure.

To collect the data of this research, the researchers use writing tasks as the instrument. The writing tasks are used to investigate the students' writing based on the paragraph structure. In addition, the scoring rubrics adapted from Hamp-Lyon (1992) with some categories or scores in each indicator.

After that, the scores are obtained into a table which aim at figuring out the mean of the obtained score which had been grouped before. The mean is used to see the average score gained by the students of each tests. To get the percentage of students' ability in writing based on the paragraph structure, the formula used as follow:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

P : the index of percentage

f : frequency of total population

N : amount of respondent

Discussion

The researcher had conducted the research by gathering all the research data through collecting the EFL students' writing tasks in descriptive. The researcher then analyzed the data one by one in order to get the good analysis of the essays written by the EFL students. The analysis of the essays related to the paragraph structure of the essays.

After presenting and analyzing the data, the researcher then classified the data into part of the paragraph structure and gave some explanation to the paragraphs. The researcher analyzed the

data of the research based on the theory of good paragraph structure.

In the first following data, they were two paragraphs from Student 1:

Have you watched the famous American movie called "The Walking Dead"? It is a thrilling-zombie movie. It tells about some humans that is trying to survive in a world full of the dead-corpse. The dead-corpse hungrily bites alive human which make it scarier. They are often be called "zombie". They spread pathogen that can make us to be one of them. The movie received good feedbacks from many people. In another part of the world, there is similar thrilling movie about zombie directed in South Korea, which I am going to describe now. The title is "Train to Busan".

Train to Busan, as known "Busanhaeng" is a 2016 South-Korean thrilling movie. The movie is directed by Yeong Sung-Ho. It is also starred by a famous Hallyu star, named Gong-Yo. Seventeen actors/actress were participated in this movie and hundreds of extras were also in. The movie was released in July, 20th 2016 in South Korea for the first time.

Student 1 tried to explain about movie with the title of the essay "Train to Busan". Student 1 wrote about nine sentences in the first paragraph and five sentences in the second paragraph. Student 1 tried to show her best in writing the essay. She intended to explain about something that is describing a new thriller movie.

In the first paragraph, she tried to attract the reader's attention by writing an interesting hook such this sentence *Have you watched the famous American movie called "The Walking Dead"?*. She wrote the hook by asking a question that arouse the curiosity of the reader. Then in the second sentence to the next, she wrote the connecting information

where this connecting information gave a clear connection of the hook to the thesis statement and also confirmed the reader about the main idea would be delivered. The connecting information started from sentence *It is a thrilling-zombie movie... to ...The movie received good feedbacks from many people.* At last, in the opening paragraph there is thesis statement and the researcher found a thesis statement in Student 1 paragraph. The thesis statement could be one or two sentences long. As it was found in the Student's 1 paragraph, there were two sentences of thesis statement, they were *In another part of the world, there is similar thrilling movie about zombie directed in South Korea, which I am going to describe now. The title is "Train to Busan".*

After that in the second paragraph, the writer started the paragraph by writing a topic sentence *Train to Busan, as known "Busanhaeng" is a 2016 South-Korean thrilling movie.* This was the main idea of the second paragraph, so that the whole paragraph would describe about the movie *Train to Busan.* Then, the supporting point was there from the sentence *The movie is directed by Yeong Sung-Ho* where it supported the main idea of the topic sentence above. Next, the writer explained the supporting detail by giving some explanation about the main idea that was the movie. It could be seen from the sentences *It is also starred by a famous Hallyu star, named Gong-Yo. Seventeen actors/actress were participated in this movie and hundreds of extras were also in.* Finally, to conclude the main idea of this paragraph, the writer ended the paragraph by summing up the idea as could be seen from the sentence *The movie was released in July, 20th 2016 in South Korea for the first time.* Overall, Student 1 had attempted a very good writing of her paragraphs based on the paragraph structure.

Then, the second student who participated in this research was the Student 2. This student tried his best in writing by writing also some paragraphs in his essay. The essay of the Student 2 would be listed as follow:

Indonesia, has a more than nine thousand million island. More than two hundred thousand million society. With many beautiful places. It's more than country, city, or places. It's little paradise in the part of the world. But no one know what is Indonesia? Where is Indonesia?

From Sabang to Merauke, lined island concatenated into one, that is Indonesia. Unwittingly Indonesia is a row of ten countries with a million sites worldwide. Such as temples, beaches resorts, mountains, lakes, and many other. But you realize that the country where you was born this place hidden paradise?

As it was found from the paragraphs of Student's 2 essay, it was clear that Student 2 tried better in writing even he made some grammatically mistake in his essay. In this sample, Student 2 wrote seven sentences in paragraph one. For a paragraph, it was quite short and probably needed some information to be explained. In the second paragraph, he wrote only four sentences as he probably figured out that the least requirement of writing a paragraph was four sentences.

From the paragraphs above Student 2 worked hard to explain about Indonesia with the title of the essay "Wonderful Indonesia". In the first paragraph of an opening one, he tried to attract the reader's attention by writing an interesting hook but the hook was not interesting enough to get the reader's attention. Why? As it could be seen from the sentence *Indonesia, has a more than nine thousand million island*, he wrote the hook by stating his statement and showing the numbers but the hook was

too general and everybody had already known about it. So that the hook became not too interesting anymore. He failed to raise the curiosity of the reader. Then in the second sentence to the next, he wrote the connecting information where this connecting information gave a clear connection of the hook to the thesis statement and also confirmed the reader about the main idea would be delivered. The connecting information started from sentence *More than two hundred thousand million society... to ...It's little paradise in the part of the world*. At last, in the opening paragraph there is thesis statement and the researcher found a thesis statement in Student 2 paragraph. The thesis statement could be one or two sentences long. As it was found in the Student's 2 paragraph, there were two sentences of thesis statement and the statement were asking questions. These were not usual at all where in thesis statement the writer should state his idea of the essay that would be discussed in the next paragraphs. The thesis statement were *But no one know what is Indonesia? Where is Indonesia?*.

After that in the second paragraph, the writer started the paragraph by writing a topic sentence *From Sabang to Merauke, lined island concatenated into one, that is Indonesia*. This was the main idea of the second paragraph, so that the whole paragraph would describe about *Indonesia*. Then, the supporting point was there from the sentence *Unwittingly Indonesia is a row of ten countries with a million sites worldwide* where it supported the main idea of the topic sentence above. Next, the writer explained the supporting detail by giving an explanation about the main idea that was *Indonesia*. It could be seen from the sentence *Such as temples, beaches resorts, mountains, lakes, and many other*. Finally, to conclude the main idea of this paragraph, the writer ended the paragraph by summing up the idea as could be seen from the sentence *But you*

realize that the country where you was born this place hidden paradise?. Again, he conclude the main idea by asking question where the conclusion could not be asking question to the reader. Overall, Student 2 had attempted a good writing of the paragraphs based on the paragraph structure eventhough he made some grammatical errors and mistakes in his paragraphs.

Next data was the writing from student 3 who wrote about blood. She tried to describe about blood and its wonderful information from it. The data of her writing would be shown below:

Can anybody give blood? That is an easy question, but difficult to do. Do you know why? Because some people on the earth is afraid to give. Every body has blood in their own body. Without blood, we cant life. The main problem is they don't know about blood.

Haema is a latin name of blood. Its has two kind of blood. Its dark red and light red. Its dark red if they flow in our arthery. Arthery is a latin name of heart, so if the blood flow in arthery. Its flow from heart and then, the light red color. Its colour is red light because they flow to our whole body. The dark red colour is bringing oxygen so, their colour darker than vena blood.

From those paragraph above, the researcher saw that the writer or Student 3 tried her best in describing the blood as her subject for her essay. For the first paragraph, there were seven sentences with some questions that she wrote. Then, in the second paragraph there were eight sentences. It could be better that in the second paragraph she explained more about the main idea.

In the first paragraph of an opening paragraph, she tried to attract the reader's attention by writing an interesting hook by asking the question *Can anybody give blood?.* It was simple question but it was quite an interesting

hook because the reader would notice what would be happened to the rest who could not donate their blood. So that the reader wanted to know the next possible effect to someone who could not donate their blood. Then in the second sentence to the next, she wrote the connecting information where this connecting information gave a clear connection of the hook to the thesis statement and also confirmed the reader about the main idea would be delivered. The connecting information started from sentence *That is an easy question, but difficult to do... to ... Without blood, we cant life.* At last, in the opening paragraph there is thesis statement and the researcher found a thesis statement in Student 3 paragraph. The thesis statement could be one or two sentences long. As it was found in the Student's 3 paragraph, there was one sentence of thesis statement. The thesis statement was *The main problem is they don't know about blood.*

After that in the second paragraph, the writer started the paragraph by writing a topic sentence *Haema is a latin name of blood.* This was the main idea of the second paragraph, so that the whole paragraph would describe about *blood*. Then, the supporting point was there from the sentence *Its has two kind of blood* where it supported the main idea of the topic sentence above. Next, the writer explained the supporting detail by giving some explanation about the main idea that was *blood*. It could be seen from the sentences *Its dark red and light red. Its dark red if they flow in our arthery. Arthery is a latin name of heart, so if the blood flow in arthery. Its flow from heart and then, the light red color. Its colour is red light because they flow to our whole body. The dark red colour is bringing oxygen so, their colour darker than vena blood.* Finally, to conclude the main idea of this paragraph, the writer should ended the paragraph by summing up the idea as stated in the topic sentence but unfortunately she did not conclude her

paragraph by giving restatement to strengthen her paragraph. Overall, Student 3 had tried to write better based on the paragraph structure eventhough she made some grammatical errors and mistakes in her paragraphs.

After that, the data of students essay was taken as well from the other student, namely Student 4. This data was also two paragraphs long and each paragraph was derived from some sentences. The data from Student 4 was listed below:

Do you know amazing band from Indonesia called Noah? It's impossible the people don't know about them. This essay will describe about them. Noah established in Bandung since 2013 or around 2014. Noah consist of Ariel, Uki, Lukman, Reza, and David put out his first album "seperti seharusnya". They immediately give a new color in the world of country music Indonesia.

In 2014 they released their second album entitled "second chance" with their hit song "Separuh aku". In the middle of the year they make the tour two continents five countries. Towards the end of Noah entered into nomination in Malaysia and they were successfully nominated new comer bands and the best band.

As the data above, the researcher could see that the writier or Student 4 wrote about his favorite music band in Indonesia, that is *Noah*. He tried to convince what he believed is the most valuable thing as he insisted that the most famous music band is *Noah*. In his first paragraph, he wrote only six paragraph as an opening sentences. After that, he wrote only three sentences as a body paragraph.

In the first paragraph, he tried to attract the reader's attention by writing an interesting hook by asking the question *Do you know amazing band from Indonesia called Noah?*. It was simple question but it was quite an

interesting hook because the reader would notice that everyone should know them, but probably there were who did not. Then in the second sentence to the next, he wrote the connecting information where this connecting information gave a clear connection of the hook to the thesis statement and also confirmed the reader about the main idea would be delivered. The connecting information started from sentence *It's impossible the people don't know about them...* to *... Noah consist of Ariel, Uki, Lukman, Reza, and David put out his first album "seperti seharusnya"*. At last, in the opening paragraph there is thesis statement and the researcher found a thesis statement in Student 4 paragraph. The thesis statement could be one or two sentences long. As it was found in the Student's 4 paragraph, there was one sentence of thesis statement. The thesis statement was *They immediately give a new color in the world of country music Indonesia.*

After that in the second paragraph, the writer started the paragraph by writing a topic sentence *In 2014 they released their second album entitled "second chance" with their hit song "Separuh aku"*. This was the main idea of the second paragraph, so that the whole paragraph would describe about *Noah*. Then, the supporting point was there from the sentence *In the middle of the year they make the tour two continents five countries* where it supported the main idea of the topic sentence above. Next, the writer explained the supporting detail by giving an explanation about the main idea that was *Noah*. It could be seen from the sentence *Towards the end of Noah entered into nomination in Malaysia and they were successfully nominated new comer bands and the best band.* Finally, to conclude the main idea of this paragraph, the writer should ended the paragraph by summing up the idea as stated in the topic sentence but

unfortunately he did not conclude his paragraph by giving restatement to strengthen his paragraph. Overall, Student 4 had tried to write better based on the paragraph structure eventhough he made some grammatical errors and mistakes in his paragraphs.

For the fifth data, the researcher took the data from the Student 5 who wrote an essay about *Lake Toba*. The writer or Student 5 of this essay tried to describe a big and famous lake in her home town *Lake Toba*. The data was served in this following example:

Danau Toba or Lake Toba will be one of the most popular destination in this world. As Jokowi promises in august 18th 2016 when he celebrated the independence day of Indonesia in lake toba with people in samosir. He said that lake Toba will be develop in a short time, by from many changing that he has planed with the government in Samosir this place will be a place that amazed of eyes who saw it.

Lake Toba is the largest volcanic lake in Indonesia, even in the southeast Asia. Which make it more special is taken from samosir island, an island that settle in the middle of the lake. Even in the small area but this island is rich from their culture especially Batak: and tourism place and as fisherman in surround. This place has been getting better after the protection from Indonesia's second government: that is Megawati Soekarno Putri, that ever spreaded many kinds of fish in lake Toba.

From those paragraphs above, the researcher analyzed that the writer of this essay wrote only three paragraphs for her opening paragraph. Then, in the second paragraph there were only four paragraphs. If Student 5 added some explanation to each paragraph with some long sentences in it, the paragraph probably became better.

In the first paragraph of an opening paragraph, she tried to attract the reader's attention by writing an interesting hook such *Danau Toba or Lake Toba will be one of the most popular destination in this world*. This was an interesting hook because she claimed that Lake Tobe would be a popular destination in the future. The reader would ask why? How? And other questions so that the reader would read the essay completely. Then in the second sentence to the next, he wrote the connecting information where this connecting information gave a clear connection of the hook to the thesis statement and also confirmed the reader about the main idea would be delivered. The connecting information started from sentence *As Jokowi promises in august 18th 2016 when he celebrated the independence day of Indonesia in lake toba with people in samosir...* to *... He said that lake Toba will be develop in a short time, by from many changing that he has planed with the government in Samosir this place will be a place that amazed of eyes who saw it*. At last, in the opening paragraph there is thesis statement and the researcher did not find a thesis statement in Student 5 paragraph. The thesis statement could be one or two sentences long. Unfortunately, it was not found in the Student's 5 paragraph, so that the opening paragraph felt like jumping idea to the content paragraph or the body of the essay.

After that in the second paragraph, the writer started the paragraph by writing a topic sentence *Lake Toba is the largest volcanic lake in Indonesia, even in the southeast Asia*. This was the main idea of the second paragraph, so that the whole paragraph would describe about Lake Toba. Then, the supporting point was there from the sentence *Which make it more special is taken from samosir island, an island that settle in the middle of the lake* where it supported the main

idea of the topic sentence above. Next, the writer explained the supporting detail by giving an explanation about the main idea that was Lake Toba. They could be seen from the sentences *Even in the small area but this island is rich from their culture especially Batak: and tourism place and as fisherman in surround. This place has been getting better after the protection from Indonesia's second government: that is Megawati Soekarno Putri, that ever spreaded many kinds of fish in lake Toba.* Finally, to conclude the main idea of this paragraph, the writer should ended the paragraph by summing up the idea as stated in the topic sentence but unfortunately he did not conclude his paragraph by giving restatement to strengthen his paragraph. Overall, Student 5 had tried to write better based on the paragraph structure eventhough he made some grammatical errors and mistakes in his paragraphs.

For the student's perentation of writing a good paragraphs through the paragraph structure, the table below indicated the students overall ability based on their task performance, as follows:

Table 4.1 The Students' average score

| Name | Score | Criteria | Percentage |
|------------|-------|--------------|------------|
| Student 1 | 5 | Good | 20 |
| Student 2 | 2 | Weak | 30 |
| Student 3 | 2 | Weak | 30 |
| Student 4 | 3 | Low Average | 40 |
| Student 5 | 3 | Low Average | 40 |
| Student 6 | 3 | Low Average | 40 |
| Student 7 | 3 | Low Average | 40 |
| Student 8 | 2 | Weak | 30 |
| Student 9 | 5 | Good | 20 |
| Student 10 | 4 | High Average | 10 |
| Average | 3.2 | Low Average | |

Based on the table above, it could be describe that two students who got the highest score (5) those were Student 9 and Student 1 with the percentage from total sample was 20%. After that only

one student who got score 4 that was Student 10 with the percentage 10%. Then, four students were in the score 3 such as Student 4, Student 5, Student 6, and Student 7 with the percentage of 40%. At last, three students got the lowest score such Student 2, Student 3, and Student 8 with the percentage of 30% from the total sample.

Conclusion

After conducting the research then the researcher found the answer of the research question that had been stated in the previous introduction of this research. This research has conclusion in general. Students in EFL context especially in Batam had known how to write a descriptive essay. It could be seen from the analysis of the paragraph structure from the sample. From this research it was found that 20% sample had Good criteria with the score 5. After that, one student got score 4 with High Average criteria. Then, four students got score 3 with Low Average criteria. Finally, the rest three of them got the lowest score that was 2 with Weak criteria. Overall, the average of descriptive writing of EFL students' in Batam was Low Average.

Then, the researcher did some deep analysis of the students' paragraph. From sample students, seven students had a good pattern in writing a paragraph based on the theory of paragraph structure. Where the students could be able to present the interesting hook, added some connecting information, and stated the thesis statement. The students were also able to write the topic of the paragraph, then followed by the supporting point and supporting detail, and finally the concluding sentence.

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