

**Bilingualism and the Multilingual Turn:
Language-as-Resource**

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In the mid-1980s, a young scholar named Richard Ruiz, a Stanford PhD, and assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, published an article in *NABE, The Journal for the National Association for Bilingual Education*. The article, a theoretical piece, was titled “Orientations in Language Planning.” It was the first to frame language planning in terms of language-as-problem, language-as-right, and language-as-resource in ways that for decades to follow, served as intellectual grist for bilingual educators, bilingual advocates, and language planners.

When speakers of different languages share a space (e.g., Canada) or a task (international marketing), they must agree upon which language will be used in a given context. According to Diallo and Lidicoat (2014, p. 111) “language planning is a process of future-oriented decision-making to change some aspect of language practice in order to address a perceived linguistic problem.” Such deliberations influence language maintenance, the status of languages, and the social spaces in which languages are accepted or disparaged.

As Ruiz pointed out in the beginning his article, most language planners around the world conceived of their work from the orientation of language-as-problem. Accordingly, in settings where there were multiple languages, the problem was constructed as how to unify a nation’s peoples through language policies and practices toward a common language or in some cases, how to enable certain types of minority languages to develop while simultaneously sustaining the political and economic position of the dominant language. Multilingual South African, post-apartheid, is a prime example.

Language-as-Resource-Beginnings

The decades following the 1960s up to the 1980s, when Ruiz published his piece on orientations, members of Chicano, African American, and Native American groups, especially educators, began to question the language-as-problem orientation for how it problematized minority languages within a common language-national unity framework (Dillard, 1975; Wald, 1984). For them, language was not the problem; rather, what was problematic was that

bilingualism and biliteracy were not recognized as community resources. Essentially, these educators turned the discourse on language planning from language-as-problem to language-as-resource, and Ruiz captured this discourse shift in his Orientations article in of 1984.

From a language-as-problem perspective, bilingual education was constructed as a solution to the problem of having children, particularly Mexican immigrant and indigenous children who entered school speaking a language other than English. It was reasoned that bilingual education would rid them of their problem (Crawford, 1992). From a language-as-resource perspective, bilingual education, designed around maintenance principles (Baker, 2006), was a critical tool for developing high levels of biliteracy in English and a minority language (Hernández-Chávez, 1978). Moreover, maintenance bilingual education provided a context for minority youth to build their identities as emergent bilingual language users with strong ties to their ethnic groups and at the same time to become well-educated biliterate citizens of the United States (García & Baetens Beardsmore, 2009). Bilingual education would promote identity formation as well as new educational opportunities for language minority students.¹

During the 1980s and into the 1990s, under the rule of the conservative Reagan-Bush administrations, the *one nation-one language* ideology gained national momentum among nationalist politicians concerned with education and economic development. Their argument was that fully educating children and youth in languages other than English was problematic because it promoted divisiveness and fragmentation, where allegiances to ethnic and language groups rather than to Americanism were the likely outcome (Crawford, 1992; Ramsey, 2012). The thinking was “better to educate children in one language and assimilate them into to one national identity.” This argument wholly contradicted the language-as-resource orientation espoused by bilingual educators, who saw language, particularly, bilingualism, as a tool for learning and developing strong ethnic identity and cultural pride (Ramsey, 2012).

Seen against the efforts of those who viewed bilingual education as an obstacle to achieving a common language-unification, Ruiz’s addition of language-as-resource as an alternative to language-as-problem² was timely and innovative. Much of the national rhetoric in the 1970s and early 1980s pointed out that the U.S. was clearly inept as a nation with regard to its multilingual capacity (Fishman & Peyton, 2001). Foreign language education, which spiked following the Russian (USSR) launch of the spy satellite Sputnik had fallen out of favor. By this time most of the bilingual programs were little more than a fast transition into English after less than two years of schooling in a language other than English. Senator Paul Simon (1980) was the most vocal politician to argue that as a nation, the United States needed to invest in the nation’s foreign language skills, i.e., language-as-resource, particularly for diplomacy and global business affair. Interestingly, foreign language study in the 1980s experienced somewhat of a

¹ Here I use language minority students rather than emergent bilingual students, with the understanding that each term has different meanings. In the late 1980s, the popular term in the literature was language minority student.

² For a more in depth discussion of language-as-right, see Faltis, 2014.

comeback, and many universities required foreign language for most students majoring in arts and sciences majors.

As Ruiz pointed out, however, Simon's language-as-resource argument ironically ignored the millions of U.S. born children and youth who were speakers of languages other than English and bilingual. These children were expected to leave their languages behind when they entered school. Moreover, the majority of bilingual education programs in the U.S. since the inception of Title VII, the Bilingual Education Act in 1968, were transitional. Children who spoke a minority language when they entered these programs were moved into English-only classrooms as quickly as possible, more often than not, within two years.

Language-as-Resource Snuffed Out

Ruiz's inclusion of language-as-resource as a major orientation for language planning and policy proved to be prescient, but it was much more complicated than his 1984 article imagined. Language-as-resource versus language-as-problem became the center of debate for the continuation of bilingual education in the U.S. into the end of the 20th century. In 1998, behind the support and financing of California businessman Ron Unz and his group "English for the Children," voters passed Proposition 228, which changed the way that non-English speaking children learned English in school.

English for the Children exemplified a language-as-problem orientation, which basically argued the following: "Non-English speaking children are not learning English fast or well enough (a problem). They need to learn English to succeed in school and society (to assimilate). The best way to learn (the solution) is to be immersed in English (to become English-only users)." Counter-arguments about language-as-resource; namely, that bilingual and biliterate children provide a rich language resource (for commerce and global understanding) to the nation, failed to convince a largely monolingual English-speaking voting public, who believed that English-only was the only language resource non-English speaking children needed.

The language-as-problem orientation toward bilingual education reared its head again in 2000, just two years later, in Arizona, where voters passed Proposition 203, "English for the Children-Arizona." Proposition 203 mandated the use of "Structured English Immersion" (SEI), a completely untested approach to teaching English to non-English proficient children and youth (Combs & Nicholas, 2012). Proposition 203 was soon followed by Question 2 in Massachusetts (2002), where voters approved restrictions on the use of any language other than English for instructional purposes. In each case, language-as-resource advocates argued vociferously that strong bilingualism and full biliteracy were national resources that make the nation stronger and better equipped to enter global economies (Fahy, 1999; Rosenthal, 1996). Counter-arguments relied on the usual suspects: policies and programs that promote bilingualism and biliteracy also promote fragmentation and questionable allegiances. Learning English is the one sure path to assimilation into the American (U.S.) culture (Porter, 1996).

It goes without saying, that after the attack on the Twin Towers in New York City on September 11, 2001, national allegiance and unity trumped all other political rallying points,

making it increasingly difficult to promote a language-as-resource agenda in education. Another challenge faced by language-as-resource advocates was the rise of neoliberalism.

Language-as-Resource and Neoliberalism

It is particularly important to note that, by the turn of the century, the arguments for language-as-resource shifted from a focus on ethnic connections and identities to a focus on commerce and global understanding (Petrovic, 2005). This is important because this stance toward language-as-resource was not something that Ruiz originally intended when he conceived the orientations back in 1984. Ruiz (1984) acknowledged that language-as-resource had the potential to be used in the “promotion of trans-national considerations. Military preparedness and national security are issues which receive immediate attention... Also prominent is the importance of language skills for diplomatic functions (p. 27).” At the same time, he argued that the language-as-resource orientation shows considerable positive affects for multilingualism, “on social and educational domains” (p. 27).

A number of scholars have presented serious critiques of the language-as-resource orientation in light of the emergence of neoliberal economic rationalism (Petrovic, 2005; Ricento, 2005). Neoliberal policies seek deregulation of the free market, so that the supply of goods and services are allowed to play out without interference by the government and other forces (Holborow, 2015). For language-as-resource, this could mean that language is promoted as a good and service for economic and military purposes. In other words, it is important to develop, promote and use languages other than English because of their economic value in the global market. With the neoliberal view, language is a resource, which can be capitalized among those who can afford it. Bilingualism becomes a marketable skill with great potential for monetary rewards. From a neoliberal perspective, this means that the dominant group, the one with power to market and sell language as a resource, can and will do so. This is certainly the case in many countries, where English proficiency is sold as a resource, and in the U.S. where dual language immersion programs are popping up in White, affluent communities.

It is clear that Ruiz was aware of this other side to language-as-resource (Ruiz, 2010)³. He was fully aware that language is a tool, and as a tool it can be used for various purposes, one of which to improve one’s marketability by being bilingual. Ruiz points out that the neoliberal argument for language-as-resource works much better with English throughout the world than it does with non-English languages in the U.S. It hardly holds true for indigenous languages (Ruiz, 2004), and one could argue that it has not fared very well with Spanish, especially when Spanish is considered a heritage language or it is linked to bilingual education (not the case, so much, with dual language education – See Valdés, 1997).

Language-as-Resource and the Multilingual Turn

Complicating matters related to language-as-resource is the rapidly shifting fields of applied linguistics and second language acquisition, with new debates about the meaning of

³ Ruiz responded to three major critiques of his first attempt at language-as-resources in his 2010 chapter. He welcomed the critiques as ways to strengthen his understanding of language-as-resource.

language, and especially the very nature of bilingualism. The social turn in applied linguistics (Block, 2003) and the multilingual turn where in educational linguistics (May, 2013) present a new set of questions about the superdiversity of language (Blommaert, 2013; Silverstein, 2015), questions that may fundamentally change how bilingual education language advocates and planners think about language-as-resources. Blommaert and Rampton, (2011) characterize this “super-diversity” as “a tremendous increase in the categories of migrants, not only in terms of nationality, ethnicity, language, and religion, but also in terms of motives, patterns and itineraries of migration, processes of insertion into the labour and housing markets of the host societies” (p. 1). In the following section of this essay, we turn our attention to the various meanings of language, and contrasting established ways of thinking about language and bilingualism with newer understandings of bilingualism and biliteracy as presented through a multilingual theoretical lens. In the final section, we return to a discussion around language-as-resource that considers what the current social and multilingual stance as the new norm might mean for the language-as-resource orientation in today’s “superdiverse” language world.

Questioning the Meaning of Language

Makoni and Pennycook (2007) assert that language, as we understand it today, is a social invention that is tied to European colonization. What is referred to as languages, English, French, Dutch, etc. are named inventions that were used by colonizers to map out territories that were taken over. In this manner, any invented mode of communication is only considered a distinct language when those who speak it contrast it with other languages. Makoni and Pennycook argue that all languages are in contact with other languages and that over time, all language users borrow from and incorporate lexical as well as grammatical features from contact languages.

Colonizers named their language and used that “language” to stake out land and ownership over land, by naming the places and peoples, and their languages. For example, the Spanish colonizers invented the peoples of modern day Mexico as “Aztecas” and “Maya.” The colonizers gave names to the indigenous peoples they conquered and enslaved, coming up with names like “Huicholes,” “Mixtecs,” and “Zapotecs,” and determining what their language was, what to call it, and where it was spoken (Thomas & Swanton, 1911). The languages were considered to be discrete, countable objects, and also, they could be contrasted with European languages, which were likewise cast as individual, separable objects.

What is important to note here is that prior to the 2000s, and the social/multilingual turns, language was inevitably considered to be monoglossic; that is, to have one discrete linguistic and meaning system. According to Makoni and Pennycook (2007), this way of conceptualizing language stems from a view of language study based on European ideas of autonomy, systematicity, and rule-boundedness in language. These ideas became cemented early on in the fields of language study and linguistics. Language portrayed as discrete and autonomous, is by nature also monoglossic and individualized. Accordingly, from a monoglossic, individualized perspective, the act of becoming bilingual (additive bilingualism) is necessarily a matter of

adding a second language to separate monoglossic language. Likewise, bilinguals who lose one of their languages, essentially lose parts or all of a discrete object.

Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue further that much of what language educators and students of bilingualism have been taught about language is based on these European monoglossic inventions, which excluded from any consideration the reality that people (colonizers and colonized) spoke and used different languages and had multilingual communicative repertoires. In reality, they argue, language is essentially multiglossic, such that any language found to be monoglossic would be an anomaly.

Languaging, Translanguaging and Superdiversity as the New Norm

Latching on to this radical, new vision of multiglossic language, García and Wei (2014) present a view of language as dynamic and essentially diverse. They argue that the nature of language needs to be re-imaged as action, as “languaging,” doing things with language, rather than presenting language as a static, discrete object. For them, languaging is how users shape their experiences, and languaging shapes as well as is shaped by users’ experiences. Languaging is an on-going creative process, emerging continuously as a result of interaction with others throughout one’s lifetime. In today’s world, interaction with others is increasingly diverse and multi-faceted, which means that languaging is “superdiverse.”

A preference for “languaging” over “language” reflects the rejection of traditional distinctions such as those asserted by the 19th century Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure in his “langue” and “parole” (Sofia, 2012) and later in the 20th century with Noam Chomsky’s “competence” and “performance,” based on Universal Grammar theory (Chomsky, Allen, & Van Buren, 1971). These approaches to language are what Harris (1981) refers to as segregational linguistics because they privilege in-the-head linguistic knowledge over every day, local understandings and uses of language. Harris (1990) argues that segregational linguistics “does not need to postulate the existence of languages as part of its theoretical apparatus” (p. 45).

García and Wei (2014) look to two other European language scholars for their theoretical orientations. They embrace the work of Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) on heteroglossia, which they argue is “inextricably bound to the context in which it exists and is incapable of neutrality because it emerges from the actions of speakers with certain perspectives and ideological positionings” (García and Wei, 2014, p. 7). For Bakhtin, who studied language variation in novels, heteroglossia refers to the uses of another’s speech in another’s language, something that occurs in all language contact settings (Bakhtin, 1981). García and Wei also draw from the ideas of Russian linguist Valentin Voloshinov (1895-1936), who also posited that language lives in concrete local settings, not in the abstract linguistic systems of forms.

This shift in the discourse toward languaging mirrors the social and multicultural turns happening elsewhere in the sociolinguistic and post-structuralist scholarship. Languaging is an activity; it is doing things with and to language in ways that challenge the view that language is a structure, independent of human interaction with others. Languaging serves as one of the key principles for understanding bilingualism as a dynamic process, in which the language practices of bilinguals are fluent, flexible, and diverse. These fluent, flexible, and diverse bilingual

practices are what García and Wei (2014) refer to as translanguaging, which they define as “the enaction of language practices that use different features that had previously moved independently constrained by different histories, but that now are experienced against each other in speakers’ interaction as one *new whole* (p. 21, italics in original).

Bilingualism through a translanguaging lens rejects any reference to language as separate, monoglossic objects. Accordingly, from the translanguaging perspective, there is no additive bilingualism, because additive bilingualism was invented based on a monoglossic orientation towards language. Likewise, a translanguaging perspective seeks to debunk the ways that bilingualism has been portrayed as code-switching, particularly, when code-switching has been designated as flip flopping (Faltis, 1993) and other such language maladies. García and Wei specifically question popular understandings of code-switching because these typically posit languages as separate codes, and code-switcher as people who move back and forth between the codes, which are thought of as separate languages (See Chappell & Faltis, 2007).

It is clear, however, that the scholarship on code-switching points to a different understanding of the language practices of bilingual speakers. Bilingual speakers who live and thrive in bilingual communities use their bilingual abilities fluently to communicate with other bilinguals, going back and forth between languages flexibly (Zentella, 1997). This research has shown unequivocally that the language practices of bilingual speakers are learned in social contexts as a result of interaction with others who are also bilingual. In other words, being bilingual does not necessarily mean that you code-switch in ways that would be considered “insider language practices.” Learning to code-switch or as García and Wei prefer it, to translanguage comes from sustained interaction with others who use translanguaging practices involving the language of communication.

In addition to translanguaging and code-switching, a number of terms have emerged recently to describe and analyze language practices of bilingual language users. Among the many are: flexible bilingualism (Creese, Blackledge, A., Barac, T., Bhatt, A., Hamid, S. & Li, W., 2011); code-meshing (Canagarajah, 2011); polylingual languaging (Jørgensen, 2008; Jørgensen, Karrebæk, Madsen, & Møller, 2011); transidiomatic practice (Jacquemet, 2005), and translingual practices (Canagarajah, 2013). While each one differs from the others, the point of commonality is that they all view language as social practice and bilingualism as languaging in the sense outlined above. Moreover, all of these new terms describe languaging practices from a language-as-resource orientation in ways that were not invented until decades after Ruiz published the Orientations paper in 1984.

Spanglish-as-resource

The final term that was around when Ruiz published orientations, but it not mentioned in any of the orientations is Spanglish. Salvador Tió, journalist and former President of the Academia Puertorriqueña de la Lengua Española (Puerto Rican Academy of Spanish Language), coined the term Spanglish in the 1950s to cast aspersions on the prevalent use of Anglicisms by Puerto Rican bilinguals returning from the U.S., as well as among the younger population who were being schooled in English (Tió, 1954). In Mexico, there was also concern among the well-

educated elite that the *brazeros* and *rancheros*, who in the 1950s and 1960s traveled North to work in the fields and ranches and then returned home, were bringing with them too much English influence in their Spanish (Farr, 1994). Beginning in the 1960s, the Spanish used by bilinguals who incorporated English expressions and switched rapidly between Spanish and English was referred to as *español pocho*, *casteyanqui*, *argot sajón*, and *español bastardo* (Arias & Faltis, 2013). All of these designations are meant to portray Spanglish as something impure, illegitimate, and uncouth. Octavio Paz, the renowned Mexican philosopher and writer, is reputed to have made this observation about Spanish mixed with English: “Ni es bueno ni malo, sino abominable” [It (Spanglish) is neither good nor bad, but rather abominable] (in Stavans, 2003, p. 4). Normally, abominable is associated with heinous acts of cruelty toward children and other defenseless individuals; for Paz and others of his supercilious ilk, speakers who blended Spanish with English deserved to be held in contempt.

Stripped of any hateful allusions, Spanglish can be defined as language practice used among bilingual speakers to communicate with other bilingual users. Linguistically speaking, people who use Spanglish range from speakers who communicate almost exclusively in Spanish with other Spanish speakers to speakers who alternate between English and Spanish to converse with other bilinguals. Speakers with the latter abilities engage in translanguaging between Spanish and English within and between utterances (Zentella, 1997) as a reflection of their social and language contact experiences living in the U.S. (Morales, 2002). In both cases, Spanglish is rule-governed like any variety of language, and there are different kinds of Spanglish depending on the age, gender, language proficiency, and nation of origin (Morales, 2002). Bilinguals who acquire and use Spanglish are capable of expressing complex ideas, of making use of social and historical contexts to construct meaning, and of creating identities to express their cross-cultural experiences (MacSwan, 2000). Spanglish as translanguaging, and languaging, and as dynamic bilingualism, are all part of the new multilingual turn in understanding the superdiversity of language practices in the 21st century.

Back Around to Language-as-Resource

A question to consider, then, is: How does dynamic bilingualism—i.e., fluent and flexible bilingual language practices such as Spanglish and translanguaging—figure into the language-as-resource orientation that Richard Ruiz envisioned more than three decades ago? Ruiz encouraged readers and his students to approach bilingualism and strong forms bilingual education as resources because they “will only contribute to a greater social cohesion and cooperation” (Ruiz, 1984, p. 28). He argued that strong forms of bilingual education, where children and youth develop biliteracy, are national and local resources. They are national because they can be used in commerce and global interaction, and local because contribute to ethnic and language identities. Figure 1 from Baker (2011) presents a view of how various approaches to bilingual education might promote bilingualism and biliteracy.

Figure 1. Strong forms of bilingual education programs, following Baker, 2011

Type of Program	Typical Type of Child	Language of the Classroom	Societal and Educational Aim	Aim in Language Outcome
Immersion	Language Majority	Bilinguals with initial emphasis on L2	Pluralism and Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism and Biliteracy
Maintenance Heritage Language	Language Minority	Bilingual with emphasis on L1	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism and Biliteracy
Two way Dual Language	Mixed Language Minority and Majority	Minority and Majority	Maintenance, Pluralism and Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism and Biliteracy
Mainstream Bilingual	Language Majority	Two Majority Languages Pluralism	Maintenance, Biliteracy, and Enrichment. Additive	Bilingualism

One thing to note about these approaches to bilingual education, which by and large are represented in the 1984 orientation of language-as-resource; it, is not at all clear that translanguaging practices or any of the other bilingual languaging practices where students would use fluent and flexible bilingual practices would be widely welcomed or understood within classroom spaces. Presented in this way, these forms of bilingual education are based on discrete, monoglossic approach to bilingualism (Faltis & Hudelson, 1998). That is, each program type is likely to be organized around principles of diglossia (Fishman, 1967) – the compartmentalization of discrete languages for distinct instructional purposes. Accordingly, Spanish is spoken by one teacher, English by another; or Spanish is spoken on certain days, English on other days; or Spanish is spoken in the morning, English in the afternoon. In each case, the teacher and students are expected to use one language at a time and to avoid mixing the languages. If there are translanguaging practices, these are often used only by the teachers, for functions such as oral translation of key words and difficult text (García & Wei, 2014) and for bits of ludic talk. Translanguaging and Spanglish practices by children and youth are discouraged for learning at best, and punished and ridiculed at worst.

However, there are signs that translanguaging and Spanglish practices are being used in some dual language and bilingual classrooms. Palmer and Martínez (2013) for example, argue strongly for teacher agency in using translanguaging practices with emergent bilingual children. García, Makar, Starcevic, and Terry (2011) present good evidence of young children who are translanguaging while learning in kindergarten. Sayer (2013) provides some of the richest and best examples to date of code-switching and translanguaging practices in a second grade transitional bilingual classroom in one school in San Antonio, Texas. García and Wei (2014)

present a series of translanguaging practices that students and teachers alike can use for classroom learning. These are promising examples of what is and what could occur in strong bilingual programs in which biliteracy is the goal. My own work from the 1990s showed that bilingual middle school teachers who used a concurrent translation approach to instruction were able to learn new ways of translanguaging code-switching that enables students to engage in bilingual languaging practices that were fluent and flexible (Faltis, 1996). Bilingual language practices are a resource for bilingual schooling.

Concluding Thoughts

Although Ruiz did not specifically address the rapidly shifting changes in how language is being understood and described in sociolinguistic and post structural literatures, I strongly suspect that he would highly favor the multilingual turn and embrace these new ways of understanding language as a social practice. I also believe he would welcome the idea of flexible and fluent bilinguals as a political counter-narrative to the language-as-separate discourse preferred by elite bilinguals. Let me end with a long quote from Richard Ruiz that convinces me he would support ideas such as code-switching, translanguaging, flexible bilingualism, and code-meshing-as-resource.

It is no accident that the 1990s saw significant expansion of developmental bilingual education programs in the United States. One can note a similar development in post-apartheid South Africa, where the reconciliation movement advanced the need for inclusion of Black African communities and their languages in public policy and programs. A major contributor to the new South Africa was the Language Plan Task Force... whose report asserted from the outset that “language is a resource, not a problem.” Perhaps now is a propitious time for those of us who see a need to take back LAR from those who have used it narrowly to the detriment of minority communities to caucus on how the concept should be refashioned for good (Ruiz, 2010, p. 168).

Although ~~the~~ bilingual education took a serious hit by English-only advocates in the early 2000s, the orientation of language-as-resource among bilingual teachers and communities has not disappeared.⁴ In California, for example, there is a movement to repeal Proposition 227, and to encourage schools to develop strong bilingual and dual language programs. Once again, the argument is that becoming bilingual is a resource. We must take care not to allow neoliberalism to hijack the argument.

Using language-as-resource in ways that capitalize on language diversity (Petrovic, 2005) is not what Ruiz valued. He not only questioned policies and practices that did not reflect community language uses and that marketed language. He championed the view that language-as-resource must reflect the kinds of language practices used in bilingual communities for learning in schools.

⁴ On November 20, 2006, Richard Ruiz and I presented our views on bilingualism to the Arizona ELL Task Force. Ruiz argued strongly that children learn best in the language they know best, a language-as-resource perspective.

In his 1984 article, Ruiz suggested that “perhaps the best approach to [championing bilingualism] would be to encourage the complication of a strong literature with an emphasis on language-as-resource” (p. 28). Let us start now to build a language-as-resource literature of practices and achievements to showcase classroom bilingual pedagogy tied to new understandings of languaging practices of bilingual users. If bilingual education returns to California and other places, we need to be well-prepared to build bilingual programs that better reflect the language practices of the bilingual communities they serve than the transition bilingual programs of the past.

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