

Teaching Pronunciation A Reference For Teachers Of English To Speakers Of Other Languages

Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages **Teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages** serves as an essential cornerstone in the journey of language acquisition. For educators guiding learners through the complexities of English, pronunciation is often both a challenge and a rewarding breakthrough. Mastering pronunciation extends beyond mere sound production; it influences comprehension, communication confidence, and ultimately, the learner's ability to engage meaningfully in real-world conversations. This article unpacks the nuances of teaching pronunciation, offering practical insights and effective strategies for teachers dedicated to helping English language learners (ELLs) sound clear and natural.

Understanding the Importance of Pronunciation in ESL Teaching

Pronunciation often takes a backseat to vocabulary and grammar in many language classrooms, yet it plays a pivotal role in communication. When learners struggle with pronunciation, misunderstandings arise, and learners may feel hesitant to speak. For teachers, focusing on pronunciation means equipping students with the tools to be understood and to understand others. This enhances learners' confidence and encourages more active participation. Moreover, pronunciation instruction supports the development of listening skills. When students are familiar with the sounds of English, they can better decode spoken language, even in fast or connected speech. Therefore, teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages should emphasize both production and perception of sounds.

Key Elements of Pronunciation to Address

When planning instruction, teachers need to consider several interconnected components:

1. **Phonemes:** The individual sounds of English, including vowels and consonants.
2. **Word stress:** The emphasis placed on certain syllables within words.
3. **Sentence stress and intonation:** The rhythm, pitch, and

melody of spoken English that convey meaning and emotion.

4. **Connected speech:** The way sounds link together in natural speech, such as contractions and elisions.

Addressing these elements helps learners develop a well-rounded pronunciation skill set that aligns with real-world communication.

Challenges Teachers Face When Teaching Pronunciation

Teaching pronunciation is not without its hurdles. Pronunciation is deeply influenced by a learner's first language, which often results in persistent accent features or sound substitutions. Additionally, adult learners might find it harder to acquire native-like pronunciation due to neurological factors and established speech habits. Another common challenge is the limited classroom time dedicated to pronunciation practice. With pressing curriculum demands, pronunciation can be sidelined, leaving learners to self-correct or rely on sporadic exposure outside the classroom. Teachers also must balance accuracy with fluency. Overcorrecting every mistake can discourage students, while underemphasizing pronunciation may lead to fossilized errors. This delicate balance requires sensitivity and skill.

Practical Approaches to Overcome Pronunciation Challenges

To tackle these challenges effectively, teachers can adopt various strategies:

1. **Integrate pronunciation into all language skills:** Instead of isolated drills, embed pronunciation in speaking, listening, reading, and even writing activities.
2. **Use visual aids and phonetic symbols:** Tools like the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) charts can demystify sound production and help learners visualize differences.
3. **Encourage self-monitoring:** Train learners to listen critically to their own speech through recordings and playback.
4. **Provide consistent, constructive feedback:** Focus on key errors that impede understanding rather than minor accent features.

By adopting these approaches, teachers can create a supportive environment that fosters gradual improvement.

Effective Techniques for Teaching Pronunciation

There are many engaging and proven techniques that teachers can use to make pronunciation learning enjoyable and effective.

Minimal Pairs and Contrastive Drills

Minimal pairs are pairs of words that differ by only one sound, such as “ship” and “sheep.” Using these helps learners distinguish similar sounds that may not exist in their native language. Contrastive drills encourage repetition and focus on accurate articulation.

Choral and Individual Repetition

Starting with choral repetition allows learners to practice sounds in a low-anxiety group setting. Individual repetition then provides personalized practice where teachers can address specific issues.

Intonation and Rhythm Practice

Using songs, poems, and dialogues can make intonation and rhythm more accessible. Mimicking natural speech patterns through these mediums helps learners internalize the melody of English.

Recording and Playback

Recording learners’ speech and playing it back allows them to hear their own pronunciation objectively. This reflective practice promotes self-awareness and motivates improvement.

Technological Tools Supporting Pronunciation Teaching

Incorporating technology can greatly enhance the teaching and learning of pronunciation.

Language Learning Apps

Apps like ELSA Speak and Pronunroid offer interactive pronunciation exercises with instant feedback, making practice accessible anytime.

Speech Recognition Software

Tools that use speech recognition can assess pronunciation accuracy, guiding learners toward correct articulation.

Online Videos and Podcasts

Authentic listening materials expose learners to diverse accents and natural speech, reinforcing pronunciation patterns in context.

Adapting Pronunciation Teaching to Different Learner Needs

One size rarely fits all in pronunciation instruction. Teachers must tailor their methods based on learners' age, proficiency

level, and goals.

Young Learners

For children, pronunciation teaching should be playful and sensory-rich. Games, songs, and storytelling engage young learners while subtly introducing sound patterns.

Adult Learners

Adults benefit from explicit explanations and phonetic instruction. They often appreciate understanding the ‘why’ behind pronunciation rules and can handle more analytical tasks.

Business or Academic English Learners

For learners focused on professional or academic contexts, clarity and intelligibility are paramount. Teaching focuses on reducing communication barriers rather than achieving native-like accents.

Incorporating Cultural Sensitivity in Pronunciation Instruction

Pronunciation is often tied to identity and culture. Teachers should approach pronunciation teaching with respect and sensitivity, avoiding pressuring learners to erase their accents completely. Instead, the goal is intelligibility and effective communication. Encouraging learners to embrace their unique

linguistic backgrounds while developing clear English pronunciation creates a positive learning atmosphere. This balanced perspective helps learners stay motivated and proud of their progress. Teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages is a dynamic and rewarding aspect of language education. By understanding its importance, facing challenges head-on, and applying diverse techniques tailored to learner needs, teachers can profoundly impact their students' communicative competence. Pronunciation instruction is not just about sounds; it's about empowering learners to connect, express, and thrive in an English-speaking world.

Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Pronunciation is the cornerstone of effective communication in English for speakers of other languages. Mastery of pronunciation transcends mere sound production; it enables intelligibility, fosters confidence, and enhances cultural fluency in both spoken and professional contexts. This comprehensive reference serves as a strategic guide for English language educators, integrating linguistic theory, pedagogical frameworks, empirical research, and real-world application to empower teachers in developing robust pronunciation instruction. Grounded in decades of ESOL scholarship and classroom

experience, this article synthesizes best practices, addresses persistent challenges, and anticipates emerging trends in pronunciation pedagogy.

1. The Foundational Role of Pronunciation in Second Language Acquisition

Pronunciation is often underestimated in language curricula, yet it is a critical component of communicative competence. For English as a second language (ESL) learners, accurate pronunciation directly influences listener comprehension, social integration, and academic success. Research consistently demonstrates that intelligibility—how clearly a speaker is understood—correlates strongly with pronunciation proficiency, particularly in high-stakes environments such as job interviews, academic presentations, and cross-cultural negotiations.

Linguistically, pronunciation encompasses phonetics (the physical production of sounds), phonology (the mental organization of sound patterns), and prosody (rhythm, stress, intonation, and timing). Each layer presents unique challenges for L2 learners due to phonological transfer from the native language. For instance, Japanese speakers often struggle with English vowel distinctions and final consonant clusters, while Arabic speakers may find vowel length and intonational contours unfamiliar. Understanding these transfer effects enables teachers to design targeted interventions.

Historically, pronunciation instruction evolved from early phonemic awareness drills in the 20th century to the integrated, communicative approaches of the 21st century. Methods such as the Auditory-Oral approach (Green, 1951), the Pronunciation Method (Sayce, 1940s), and later, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) emphasis on functional fluency, all reflect shifting priorities—from mechanical accuracy to natural, context-appropriate expression.

2. The Mechanisms Underlying Pronunciation Development

Effective pronunciation instruction is rooted in cognitive and perceptual mechanisms. At its core, pronunciation learning involves auditory discrimination, motor planning, and articulatory control. The brain's auditory cortex processes speech sounds, while motor regions coordinate tongue, lip, and vocal fold movements to replicate target phonemes. This neurocognitive interplay explains why explicit, multimodal instruction outperforms passive exposure alone.

Phonetic awareness—the ability to perceive, identify, and manipulate individual sounds—is foundational. Teachers must scaffold this awareness through activities such as minimal pair discrimination (e.g., "ship" vs. "sheep"), shadowing, and articulatory feedback using mirrors or acoustic visualizations. Research in psycholinguistics confirms that explicit phonological training accelerates L2 learners' ability to perceive phonemic distinctions absent in their native tongue.

Prosody, often overlooked, plays a pivotal role in naturalness and meaning. Stress patterns affect word recognition and sentence emphasis; intonation conveys questions, attitudes, and emotional tone. For example, a rising intonation at the end of a declarative sentence ("You're coming?") signals uncertainty, whereas a falling contour ("You're coming.") signals certainty. Misproportionate stress or flat intonation can distort meaning and reduce listener engagement.

3. Evidence-Based Pedagogical Frameworks and Models

Several frameworks guide systematic pronunciation instruction, each with distinct strengths and applications. Among the most influential are:

3.1 The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) as a Diagnostic Tool

The IPA provides a precise, universal system for transcribing sounds, enabling teachers and learners to identify and compare phonetic differences objectively. By mapping pronunciation to IPA symbols, educators can clarify subtle distinctions (e.g., /θ/ vs. /s/ in "think" vs. "sink") and support self-assessment through recording and analysis.

3.2 The Pronunciation Teaching Cycle

This cyclical model—assess, diagnose, target, practice, evaluate—ensures structured, progressive development.

Assessment begins with baseline audios or surveys (e.g., the Cambridge English Pronunciation Profile). Diagnosis identifies specific errors (e.g., vowel reduction, consonant cluster simplification). Targeting focuses on high-impact features using minimal pairs, tongue twisters, and prosodic drills. Practice embeds pronunciation in communicative tasks (role-plays, discussions). Evaluation uses audio recording, peer feedback, and self-monitoring.

3.3 The Noticing Hypothesis and Conscious Processing

Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages **teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages** serves as an essential resource in the realm of language education, particularly in the field of ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). Pronunciation, often overlooked in favor of grammar and vocabulary, plays a crucial role in effective communication and learner confidence. This article delves into the significance of pronunciation instruction, explores the key features of effective teaching materials, and investigates practical strategies that educators can employ to enhance their students' spoken English.

The Importance of Pronunciation in English Language Teaching

Pronunciation is a fundamental component of language competence, influencing intelligibility and the ability to convey

meaning accurately. For learners of English as a second or foreign language, mastering pronunciation is often a significant challenge due to the language's complex phonetic system and irregularities. According to the International Phonetic Association, English contains approximately 44 phonemes, which vary widely in articulation and accent. A resource like **teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages** offers detailed guidance on these phonemes, helping instructors to address common learner difficulties such as vowel length, consonant clusters, and stress patterns. Moreover, research in applied linguistics highlights the correlation between pronunciation proficiency and learner motivation. Students who feel understood by native speakers are more likely to participate actively and take risks in their language use. Conversely, poor pronunciation can lead to communication breakdowns and frustration. Thus, pronunciation teaching is not merely about “sounding native” but about fostering clear and effective communication.

Challenges in Teaching English Pronunciation

One of the most persistent challenges in teaching pronunciation lies in the diversity of learners' first languages (L1) and their respective phonological systems. For example, a Mandarin speaker may struggle with English's /r/ and /l/ distinction, while a Spanish speaker might find the /θ/ sound (as in “think”) difficult to produce. A comprehensive reference like **teaching*

pronunciation a reference for teachers of English to speakers of other languages* provides insights into these L1 transfer issues, enabling teachers to anticipate and address specific pronunciation hurdles. Another challenge is the variability of English accents and dialects. British English, American English, Australian English, and other varieties differ substantially in pronunciation norms. Teachers must decide which accent or standard to teach, balancing between global comprehensibility and local relevance. This decision often depends on the learners' needs, goals, and contexts.

Features of an Effective Pronunciation Reference for ESL/EFL Teachers

A well-designed pronunciation reference guide should encompass several critical features that make it practical and user-friendly for educators.

Comprehensive Phonetic Descriptions

A thorough explanation of English phonemes, including both vowels and consonants, is fundamental. Visual aids such as IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) charts, articulatory diagrams, and sound wave illustrations help teachers understand the mechanics of speech production. These tools assist in demonstrating the placement of the tongue, lips, and airflow, which are essential for accurate pronunciation.

Practical Teaching Techniques

Beyond theory, effective resources provide actionable classroom strategies. These include drills, minimal pairs exercises, stress and intonation practice, and communicative activities that integrate pronunciation with speaking skills. For example, controlled repetition exercises focusing on problematic sounds can build muscle memory, while role-plays and dialogues encourage natural speech patterns.

Assessment and Feedback Tools

A reference guide should also offer methods for assessing pronunciation proficiency and giving constructive feedback. Techniques such as peer correction, audio recordings, and self-monitoring are valuable for tracking progress. Additionally, rubrics focusing on intelligibility, fluency, and accuracy provide objective criteria for evaluation.

Strategies for Teaching Pronunciation in the Classroom

Integrating pronunciation teaching into ESL/EFL curricula requires a balanced approach that respects the complexity of learners' needs and the constraints of classroom time.

Incorporating Pronunciation into

Communicative Activities

One effective strategy is embedding pronunciation practice within meaningful communication rather than isolating it as a separate skill. For instance, practicing intonation patterns through question-answer exercises or focusing on sentence stress during storytelling can improve learners' naturalness without sacrificing fluency.

Using Technology and Multimedia Tools

With advances in educational technology, teachers now have access to a variety of digital tools designed to enhance pronunciation learning. Software like pronunciation apps, online phonetic trainers, and interactive whiteboards can provide immediate auditory feedback and engaging practice opportunities. For example, apps that visualize pitch and rhythm help learners self-correct their intonation.

Addressing Individual Learner Differences

Pronunciation instruction must be tailored to individual learner profiles, including their age, motivation, and exposure to English. Younger learners might benefit more from games and songs that emphasize rhythm and sounds, while adult learners often appreciate explicit explanations and contrastive analysis with their L1. *Teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages* frequently underlines the importance of such differentiated instruction.

Pros and Cons of Formal Pronunciation Instruction

While pronunciation teaching is vital, it is important to weigh its advantages and limitations within the broader language learning framework.

1. **Pros:** Improved intelligibility, enhanced learner confidence, reduced misunderstandings, and greater social integration.
2. **Cons:** Time-consuming, potential overemphasis on “perfect” pronunciation, and risk of learner frustration if progress is slow.

Balancing these factors requires teachers to set realistic goals and integrate pronunciation seamlessly into the overall language curriculum.

Comparisons with Other Language Skills

Unlike vocabulary or grammar, pronunciation is largely an oral-aural skill that demands repeated practice and auditory discrimination. This makes it distinct in both teaching methodology and learner engagement. Whereas grammar can often be learned through rules and written exercises, pronunciation benefits from real-time feedback and physical awareness of speech organs.

The Role of Teacher Training in Effective Pronunciation Instruction

A significant determinant of successful pronunciation teaching is the teacher's own phonetic competence and pedagogical skills. Many English language teachers report a lack of confidence in this area, underscoring the need for targeted professional development. Courses and workshops based on resources like **teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages** equip educators with theoretical knowledge and practical tools. They also help teachers develop an ear for subtle pronunciation features and foster a positive classroom atmosphere where learners feel safe to experiment with sounds. In addition, ongoing research and collaboration within the TESOL community continue to refine best practices for pronunciation teaching, encouraging innovation and adaptability. The multifaceted nature of pronunciation instruction demands continuous reflection and adaptation by teachers. By leveraging comprehensive references and embracing diverse methodologies, educators can significantly improve their students' communicative competence and overall language experience.

Most people do not set out with the intention of downloading a book. Usually, it starts with a small need. A question that lingers longer than expected, a topic that keeps appearing in conversations, or a moment when surface-level information simply is not enough. That is often when **Teaching**

Pronunciation A Reference For Teachers Of English To Speakers Of Other Languages enters the picture.

At first, the goal might be modest. Read a chapter. Find one useful explanation. Move on. But having the book available in PDF format quietly changes that intention. There is no rush to finish, no pressure to read everything at once. The book sits there, ready, waiting for attention.

Reading begins to happen in fragments. A few pages in the morning while the day is still quiet. A bookmarked section checked again in the afternoon. A highlighted paragraph revisited at night because it suddenly makes more sense. These moments do not feel like formal study. They feel natural.

The layout remains familiar every time the file is opened. Pages look the same, headings stay where they were, and visual cues help the mind remember. Over time, readers stop searching and start navigating instinctively.

Notes appear almost without effort. A sentence stands out, so it gets highlighted. A thought forms, so it gets written in the margin. Weeks later, those notes feel like messages left behind by an earlier version of the reader.

Search tools quietly save time. Instead of flipping through pages or scrolling endlessly, one keyword brings clarity. It turns the book into something useful long after the first read.

There is also a sense of relief in knowing the source is trustworthy. When a book comes from a reliable platform, attention stays on understanding, not on questioning accuracy or safety.

For students, this kind of access feels stabilizing. Materials are always there, even when schedules are chaotic. Studying becomes less about urgency and more about familiarity.

Professionals experience it differently. Certain sections become references. Others gain meaning only after real-world experience catches up. The book grows alongside the reader.

Independent learners often appreciate the absence of structure. There is no deadline, no checklist. Progress happens when curiosity returns, not when it is demanded.

Accessibility options quietly matter. Adjusting text size, using reading tools, or switching devices makes the experience more comfortable without drawing attention to itself.

Files stay organized. Even after months, returning does not feel like starting over. The content feels known, not overwhelming.

What stands out over time is how the relationship changes.

Teaching Pronunciation A Reference For Teachers Of English To Speakers Of Other Languages stops feeling like a file that was downloaded. It becomes something familiar,

something useful in quiet ways.

Sometimes, a passage read long ago suddenly feels relevant. A concept that once seemed abstract now makes sense. Growth shows itself in these small moments.

Reading no longer feels like an obligation. It becomes something to return to when clarity is needed or curiosity resurfaces.

In this way, learning slips into everyday life without announcement. The book does not demand attention. It simply remains available.

And often, that quiet availability is what makes it valuable. Knowledge does not have to be chased when it is already close at hand.

In the shadow of linguistic globalization, where English functions as both a bridge and a barrier, the teaching of pronunciation stands as a critical yet under-examined pillar of language pedagogy. Far from a mere technical exercise, pronunciation instruction reflects deeper currents of power, identity, and economic aspiration. For teachers of English to speakers of other languages (ESOL), mastering this domain is not simply about correcting accent—it is about unlocking access, equity, and cognitive engagement in a world where spoken English remains a gatekeeper to opportunity.

The origins of systematic pronunciation teaching trace back to

the late 19th century, rooted in the British Empire's linguistic infrastructure and the rise of phonetics as a scientific discipline. Pioneers like Henry Sweet, often hailed as the father of modern English phonetics, codified the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) in the 1890s, laying the groundwork for a standardized, empirical approach to speech. This innovation emerged amid colonial expansion, where accurate pronunciation was equated with authority and civilizational superiority. Pronunciation teaching thus became entangled with imperial ideology—teaching “correct” English not only facilitated communication but also reinforced cultural hierarchies.

By the mid-20th century, the geopolitical landscape shifted with U.S. ascendancy in global affairs, particularly after World War II. American English, amplified by Hollywood, radio, and later digital media, became the de facto global standard. This shift redefined pronunciation pedagogy: where once British Received Pronunciation (RP) held symbolic capital, American accent—especially General American—gained prestige as the model for international communication. This transition was not neutral; it reflected economic power and media dominance, embedding a subtle bias toward North American norms in ESOL curricula worldwide.

Economically, the rise of English as a lingua franca in business, science, and diplomacy intensified demand for precise pronunciation. The World Bank and OECD reports consistently highlight language proficiency—including pronunciation—as a predictor of labor market outcomes. In countries like China,

India, and Brazil, national education policies now prioritize English pronunciation training, often aligned with international benchmarks such as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Yet, this alignment risks homogenizing linguistic diversity, privileging neutrality over regional identity. Teachers now navigate a paradox: equipping students to communicate clearly while honoring their native phonological systems as valuable assets.

From a pedagogical standpoint, modern pronunciation instruction has evolved beyond rote mimicry. Early approaches, such as the “drill and correct” model, emphasized repetition and error correction, often alienating learners by stigmatizing accents. Contemporary frameworks, informed by sociolinguistics and cognitive science, recognize that pronunciation is deeply tied to identity, emotion, and social context. Scholars like Janet O’Leary and Peter Roach emphasize that learners’ first language (L1) phonology inevitably shapes their perception and production of English sounds. This “phonological interference” is not a flaw but a predictable, natural process—one that teachers must anticipate and leverage.

Research from institutions such as the University of Cambridge’s Centre for Applied Linguistics reveals that targeted pronunciation instruction significantly boosts learners’ communicative confidence and comprehension. For instance, training in vowel reduction, consonant clusters, and syllable stress—often overlooked in basic ESOL programs—can reduce misunderstandings in high-stakes settings like job interviews or

academic presentations. Yet, many ESOL curricula still treat pronunciation as a secondary skill, buried beneath vocabulary and grammar. This marginalization persists despite evidence that phonetic awareness correlates with improved reading and listening accuracy.

The professional landscape for ESOL teachers is increasingly shaped by technological innovation. Digital platforms now offer AI-driven pronunciation feedback, speech recognition tools, and immersive virtual environments. Companies like ELSA Speak and Speechling integrate real-time analysis of articulation, intonation, and rhythm, enabling learners to self-correct with granular precision. However, reliance on technology raises critical questions: Can algorithms truly capture the nuance of accent pride, prosody, and sociolinguistic appropriateness? Or do they risk reducing pronunciation to a set of quantifiable metrics, stripping it of its cultural and emotional depth?

Expert educators caution against a one-size-fits-all model. Dr. Caroline Brindley, a leading phonetics scholar at the University of Manchester, argues that effective pronunciation teaching must be “context-sensitive and learner-centered.” She advocates for diagnostic assessments that identify individual phonological profiles, followed by personalized feedback that respects learners’ linguistic backgrounds. For example, a Mandarin speaker may struggle with /θ/ and /ð/ due to absence in native phonology, not because of cognitive limitation, but due to phonetic incompatibility. Targeted training in these contrasts, embedded within meaningful communication tasks, yields more

sustainable gains than generic “pronunciation drills.”

Controversies persist around the politics of accent. The implicit assumption that “neutral” or “Americanized” English is optimal

Questions & Answers About teaching pronunciation a reference for teachers of english to speakers of other languages

N o	Question	Answer
1	What is the main focus of 'Teaching Pronunciation: A Reference for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages'?	The book focuses on providing practical guidance and theoretical insights for teachers to effectively teach English pronunciation to non-native speakers.
2	Who is the primary audience for this reference book?	The primary audience includes ESL/EFL teachers, language instructors, and educators involved in teaching English pronunciation to speakers of other languages.
3	Which pronunciation features does the book emphasize for teaching?	It emphasizes segmental features like individual sounds (vowels and consonants) as well as suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation.

4	How does the book address the challenges of teaching pronunciation?	The book offers strategies for diagnosing pronunciation problems, designing lessons, and incorporating pronunciation practice into broader language teaching contexts.
5	Does 'Teaching Pronunciation' include practical classroom activities?	Yes, the book provides numerous classroom activities, exercises, and techniques that teachers can adapt to help students improve their pronunciation skills.
6	How does the book recommend integrating pronunciation teaching with other language skills?	It advocates for integrating pronunciation instruction with speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities to create a holistic language learning experience.
7	What role does technology play in teaching pronunciation according to the book?	The book discusses the use of technological tools such as audio recordings, language labs, and pronunciation software to enhance teaching and provide students with ample listening and practice opportunities.

teaching pronunciation, English language teaching, TESOL, ESL pronunciation, phonetics, second language acquisition, pronunciation practice, language instruction, pronunciation techniques, accent reduction

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