



An Unaccusativity Diagnostic at the Syntax-Semantics Interface: *there*-Insertion, Indefinites and Restitutive *again*

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Abstract. This paper argues that the unaccusativity mismatch observed in the literature concerning the availability of *there*-insertion points to a syntactic difference between two classes of unaccusatives. The paper shows that the theme argument of change-of-location unaccusatives occupies Spec,ResultP, while that of change-of-state unaccusatives occupies Spec,vP. Insertion of *there* is blocked in the latter case, as the theme and the expletive compete for the same position.

1 Introduction

As is well known, *there*-insertion is possible in the context of *unaccusative verbs* but impossible with *unergative* and *transitive verbs*.¹ However, only a subset of unaccusative verbs allows *there*-insertion (Levin 1993), leading to an unaccusativity mismatch (1a vs. 1d).

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|----|----|--|------------------|
| 1) | a. | There arrived a man (in the garden) | (unaccusative-1) |
| | b. | *There walked a man (in the garden) | (unergative) |
| | c. | *There kissed a girl a boy (in the garden) | (transitive) |
| | d. | *There broke a glass (in the kitchen) | (unaccusative-2) |

In this paper, we argue that this *unaccusativity mismatch* points to a syntactic difference between the two classes of unaccusatives. Building on the “low-*there*” hypothesis, recently proposed by Richards & Biberauer (2005), Richards (2007) and Deal (2009), we argue that the theme argument of the two classes of unaccusatives can occupy different structural positions within the vP, namely Spec,vP and Spec,ResultP, see (2a vs. 2b). Insertion of *there* is blocked, if the theme DP obligatorily occupies Spec,vP, because the two compete for the same position. This is the case for *break*-type verbs.

¹ We only discuss “presentational *there*”, i.e. expletive *there* in the context of *lexical verbs*. We will not be concerned with expletive *there* in the context of the copula *be* (i.e. in progressives, passives and existentials); see Deal (2009) for a recent discussion within the “low-*there*”-hypothesis applied here.

- (2) a. [_{vP} *there* [_{ResultP} *theme*]]
 b. [_{vP} **there/theme* [_{ResultP}]]

2 The Standard Account of *there*-Insertion: *there* in Spec,TP

Chomsky (1981, 1995 and subsequent work) proposes that *there* is externally merged in the derived subject position Spec,TP to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle (EPP) (i.e. to check the strong D-feature on T). On this logic, (1b, c) are ungrammatical for the following reason: in English, a language lacking Transitive Expletive Constructions (TECs), the subject and the expletive compete for a single specifier position, Spec, TP.² In TEC-languages such as Dutch in (3), the counterparts of (1b, c) are grammatical because these languages have two specifier positions available for subjects outside the vP.

- (3) *dat er iemand een appel gegeten heft* (TEC)
that there someone an apple eaten has

Note that this standard analysis of *there*-insertion cannot account for the contrast in (1a, d) (cf. also Borer 2005, Deal 2009, Alexiadou 2011).

3 Against the Standard Analysis: *there* down in Spec,vP

The standard analysis of *there*-insertion has recently been challenged by Richards & Biberauer 2005, and Richards 2007 (see also Deal 2009) as it faces a number of problems which we can touch upon here only superficially.

In Chomsky (2000, 2001, 2004), *there* is a head with [uF] and probes from Spec,TP into TP and values T. This proposal faces a technical problem: only root nodes should probe. Since *there* in Spec,TP is not the root node (which is T), its probing is counter-cyclic. Moreover, it needs a number of extra assumptions to derive *Bure's Generalization*, i.e. the observation that TECs are available only in languages with Object Shift(OS)/Scrambling of full DPs. (Why should the availability of a second specifier in the TP-region be related to the availability of a derived object position? (Cf. Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001, 2007, Richards 2004).

As the aforementioned authors argued, for conceptual reasons, *MERGE-Expletive* should be a property of phase heads (C, v), i.e. expletives are externally merged either in Spec,CP or in Spec,vP. If an expletive occurs in

² A crucial assumption is that the subject must leave the vP (see Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2001, 2007).

Spec,TP, it must have moved there. The consequence is that the EPP on T is checked only via *MOVE*.

In agreement with Richards & Biberauer (2005) and Richards (2007), we conclude that i) *there* is not a *probe* but a goal (like any other nominal category/DP); ii) it merges in Spec,vP where it is in the probe domain of T; iii) it has the interpretable but incomplete ϕ -feature set [person], rendered active via an unvalued Case feature.³ It is probed by T and gets its case valued. T's ϕ -feature set remains unvalued as *there* is ϕ -incomplete. T therefore remains active for Agree with the associate DP. Afterwards, *there* moves to Spec,TP.

As *expletives* are dummies (they do not have reference and cannot bear a theta-role), they can merge (externally) only in *non-thematic specifiers*, i.e. as a) the specifier of a defective head v_{passive} ; b) the specifier of a defective head $v_{\text{unaccusative}}$ or c) the outer specifier of thematic v/Voice (the OS-position).

The third option determines the availability of TECs; English lacks both TECs and OS as it has no outer Spec,vP/outer Spec,VoiceP (the complementarity between *Expl* and external arguments is due to the mutual exclusivity of thematic and non-thematic v in English).⁴ It also explains the complementarity between *expletives* and raised internal arguments of unaccusatives in (4)-(5); both target the non-thematic specifier of $vP_{\text{unaccusative}}$. Note that under the traditional *Expl*-in-TP-approach (4c)/(5b) should be fine. It also explains why in languages that have both OS and TECs the former bleeds the latter (6): again, we have competition for the same position.

- (4) a. *There seems [_{TP} a man to be $t_{a \text{ man}}$ in the garden]
 b. There seems [_{TP} to be a man in the garden]
 c. *[_{TP} There [_{VP} a man [_{VP} arrived $t_{a \text{ man}}$]]]
 d. There arrived a man
- (5) a. dat *(daar) gister 'n skip gesink het (Afrikaans)
that (there) yesterday a ship sunk has
 b. dat (*daar) 'n skip gister gesink het

³ But see Deal (2009) for the claim that *there* must have *uninterpretable* ϕ -features and that it locally probes the associate DP. This, she claims, is necessary in order to avoid the “too-many-*theres*” problem (*There seemed there to arrive a train in the station). We do not discuss the feature content of *there* but concentrate on its configurational, i.e. external-merge properties.

⁴ Something in addition has to be said about cyclic A'-movement of vP-internal elements which is, of course, possible in English.

- (6) a. *dat er veel mensen dat boek gisteren gekocht hebbe
 that EXPL many people the book yesterday bought have (Dutch)
 b. dat daar baie mense baie/*die bier gedrink het (Afrikaans)
 that EXPL many people many/the beer drunk have

The conclusion we can draw for English is that *there* is blocked if i) an external argument occupies the specifier of v/Voice or ii) an object raises to Spec,_{v_{defective}} in passive or unaccusative structures.

Now, recall our mismatch within the class of unaccusatives in (1a vs. 1d) replicated in (7):

- (7) a. There appeared a man in the garden.
 b. *There melted a lot of snow on the streets of Chicago.

The verb's influence on *there*-insertion holds also in raising constructions (Deal 2009).

- (8) a. There seemed to appear a dagger in front of Macbeth.
 b. *There seemed to melt a lot of snow on the streets of Chicago.

Ideally, we should be able to explain the contrast between the two classes of unaccusatives along the same lines as the contrast between e.g. transitives and passives. More concretely, *appear/arrive*-verbs should make available an empty Spec,vP where *there* can merge, while *melt/break*-verbs should not make available such an empty Spec,vP; it follows then that Spec,vP of *break*-unaccusatives must be occupied. The question then is: what is located in Spec,vP of *melt/break*-unaccusatives?

4 What Does *there* Correlate with? Two Classes of Unaccusatives

4.1 A Classification of Verbs Allowing *there*-Insertion

Levin (1993) characterizes the verbs allowing *there*-insertion roughly as *verbs of existence or appearance*. They can be broken down into the following subclasses (a-f) of unaccusatives. *Verbs of change of state* (g) do not permit *there* although they are unaccusatives too:⁵

⁵ Levin (1993) points out that *verbs of manner of motion* also allow for *there* in the context of directional PPs, but they differ in that the subject must follow this PP.

- (i) a. There arrived three gentlemen from Verona.
 b. ??There arrived from Verona three gentlemen.
 (ii) a. *There ran a raggedy looking cat into the room.
 b. There ran into the room a raggedy looking cat.

- (9) a. *Verbs of Existence*: blaze, bubble, cling, coexist, ...
 b. *Verbs of Spatial Configuration*: crouch, dangle, hang, kneel, ...
 c. *Meander Verbs*: cascade, climb, crawl, cut, weave, wind, ...
 d. *Verbs of Appearance*: accumulate, appear, arise, ...
 e. *?Verbs of disappearance*: die, disappear, vanish, ...
 f. *Verbs of Inherently Directed Motion*: arrive, ascend, come, ...
 g. **Verbs of Change of State*: bend, break, chip, rip, shatter, split, ...

4.2 Is there a Causative Event in Spec,vP (Deal 2009)?

Deal (2009) offers an account for the contrast between the two classes of unaccusatives concerning *there*-insertion that strongly influenced our analysis. Specifically, she proposes that *there* is inserted at the edge of a vP that lacks an external argument, i.e. into a non-thematic Spec,vP position. Unaccusatives rejecting *there* have Spec,vP already occupied by a causative event.

While we are sympathetic with her blocking account, her proposal faces a number of theoretical and empirical problems which we will not discuss here for reasons of space. Below, we make an alternative proposal about what blocks *there*-insertion at the edge of vP which, in turn, strongly builds on the work by Dobler (2008a, b).

4.3 Hypothesis: There Is an Internal Argument in Spec,vP

Hale & Keyser (2000) assume two different lexical syntactic representations for unaccusatives. With verbs such as *arrive*, *occur*, ..., the theme is introduced within the complement of the verb, in the specifier of a small-clause headed by a (potentially covert) P-projection (10a). With verbs such as *break*, *open*, ... the theme is introduced in the specifier of the verb that takes an adjective as its complement (10b). ((10b) is a composite dyadic lexical projection, also called a complex predicate; see e.g. Beck & Johnson 2004, Embick 2004, McIntyre 2004).

- (10) a. [_{vP} arrive [_{PP} many guests [P_{covert}/in the garden]]]
 b. [_{vP} the sky [v A_{clear}]]

Hale & Keyser do not actually propose this solution, but with the background of the “low-*there*”-hypothesis discussed above, these structures

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- (iii) Suddenly there flew through the window [that shoe on the table]

Cases such as (iib) are called “outside verbals” in Deal (2009). Outside verbals do not obey the definiteness restriction (iii) and allow “a bewilderment variety of verbs” (Milsark 1974). See Deal (2009) for an analysis of these cases. We concentrate here on “inside verbals”.

could, in principle, explain the distribution of *there* in the context of unaccusatives. With *clear*-type predicates, Spec,vP is already occupied by the theme argument; with *arrive*-type predicates, Spec,vP is available. In the next section, we investigate whether this is the correct explanation for the unaccusativity mismatch observed with *there*.

5 Tracing the Position of Internal Arguments

Both structures in (10) above are bi-eventive/resultative. They differ concerning the position where the theme argument is merged; either it is merged as the argument of the lower-event small-clause or as the argument of the higher-event verb. Over the years, there has been a lot of discussion about the correct analysis of resultative structures. Some authors argued that the small-clause analysis is generally correct (e.g. Hoeckstra 1988), some claimed that the complex-predicate analysis is generally correct (e.g. Beck & Johnson 2004).

Dobler (2008a, b) discusses transitive, resultative constructions and concludes that both structures co-exist. The small-clause analysis is correct for transitive resultatives referring to a *change of location*, i.e. the position of the object in (11a) is similar to that of the theme argument in the unaccusative structure in (10a). The complex-predicate analysis is correct for transitive resultatives referring to a *change of state*, i.e. the position of the object in (11b) is similar to that of the theme argument in the unaccusative structure in (10b).

- (11) a. Thilo sent the plane to Yubara .
 b. He wiped the floor clean.

To determine this, she investigated whether an existential operator in object position can be part of the presupposition of *restitutive again*. In what follows, we summarize her argumentation.

5.1 The Interaction of *wieder/again* and Existential Operators in Object Position

Von Stechow (1996) argued in detail that the repetitive vs. restitutive interpretation associated with the adverb *again* is the result of a structural ambiguity. Evidence for this is provided by word order facts such as the ones in the German examples in (12), where the syntax disambiguates between the two interpretations. Von Stechow took this as evidence for the syntactic decomposition of the VP into a vP and a ResultP component.

- (12) a. Thilo öffnet die Tür wieder

- Thilo opened the door again*
 i) *He had opened the door before* (repetitive &
 ii) *The door used to be open* restitutive)
 b. Thilo öffnet wieder die Tür (only repetitive)

As is well known, German definite objects always leave the vP, cf. (13) (von Stechow 1996, Dobler 2008a, b modifying Webelhuth 1992). The examples in (14) show that if the adverb *again* precedes the theme, it has necessarily wide scope over vP and ResultP, leading to a repetitive reading. If the adverb follows the theme, the adverb might either outscope just the ResultP, leading to a restitutive reading, or once again both the vP and the ResultP leading to the repetitive reading.

- (13) a. weil er (wohl) das Buch (wohl) gelesen hat
 as he particle the book particle read has
 b. weil er (wohl) [_{vP} das Buch [_{vP}(wohl) [_{vP} t_{subj} t_{obj} lesen]]
- (14) a. weil er wieder die Tür geöffnet hat
 as he again the door opened has
 a'. *wieder*_{repetitive} [die Tür [_{vP} t_{subject} v [_{AP} t_{obj} offen
 b. weil er die Tür wieder geöffnet hat
 as he the door again opened has
 b'. [die Tür [(*wieder*_{repetitive}) [_{vP} t_{subject} v [_{AP} (*wieder*_{restitutive}) t_{object} offen

(15) shows that indefinite objects remain inside the vP (unless they get a strong interpretation). As shown in (16), this is compatible with both the small-clause analysis as well as the complex predicate analysis of resultatives, if we assume that the subject is introduced by an extra projection (VoiceP):

- (15) weil er (wohl) ein Buch (*wohl) gelesen hat
 as he particle a book particle read has
- (16) [_{VoiceP} Subject *Voice* [_{vP} (Object) v [_{ResultP} (Object) *state*]]]

Von Stechow (1996) only discusses the interaction of definite DPs and *again*. Nissenbaum (2006) investigates scope-interactions between *again* and indefinites. In (17), we get different readings, depending on where the indefinite is interpreted, within the vP or in the IP.

- (17) Someone is sneezing again
 a. again [∃x.x is sneezing] (different person)
 b. ∃x [x is sneezing] (same person)
 c. [_{IP} Someone_i is [[_{vP} t_i sneezing] again]

⁶ The #-sign indicates that a reading ‘restitutive *again* > indefinite theme’ is not available.

of-location predicates. The contexts given before the test sentences are meant to exclude an irrelevant repetitive reading and force a restitutive reading:⁷

- (22) a. Context: *Sally owns a brown mouse and a great number of white mice. While she is gone, Harry takes care of them and the brown mouse dies. Harry is freaked out and wants to cover up the loss...*
 b. #Er färbt wieder eine Maus braun.
 c. #He dyes a mouse brown again.
- (23) a. Context: *Yesterday, Sally visited a popsicle factory. There she had the opportunity to taste the popsicle mixture before it was frozen. She really loved it.*
 b. #Daheim angekommen hat Sally wieder ein Eis am Stiel geschmolzen.
 c. #Once she was home, Sally melted a popsicle again.
- (24) a. Context: *Until about 200 years ago, bears used to live in the Alps.*
 b. Gestern haben Biologen wieder Bären in den Alpen angesiedelt.
 c. Yesterday, scientists put bears in the Alps again.
- (25) a. Context: *The island had a mountain that practically disappeared in the course of an earthquake.*
 b. Die Bewohner der Insel haben wieder einen Berg errichtet.
 c. The inhabitants constructed a mountain again.

5.2 Conclusion

To conclude, Dobler (2008a, b) shows that there are two classes of transitive bi-eventive verbs that differ in whether the indefinite/existential object can be in the scope of restitutive *again* or not. Below, we list some further verbs of these two classes:

Group A: #restitutive *again* > existential operator

⁷ The repetitive reading (repetitive *again* > indef) is available in English and German but it is irrelevant for the present argumentation. The sentences in (22b, c) have therefore the following interpretative properties:

- (i) a. again [$\exists x$. x is a mouse and x is brown]
 → impossible reading (restitutive)
 → There is a brown mouse and there was a (different) brown mouse.
 b. again [$\exists x$. x is a mouse and x is dyed brown]
 → possible reading (repetitive)
 → A mouse is (being) dyed brown and at a previous time, there was a (different) mouse that was (being) dyed brown.

melt, freeze, cool, warm, empty, fill, open, close, paint (in) pink, dye brown, ...

Group B: restitutive *again* > existential operator
put, place, donate, construct, build, ...

At first sight, it seems that group A contains verbs undergoing the causative alternation. However, this does not seem to be the correct generalization, as group B contains such verbs too (e.g. German (*sich*) *ansiedeln* and its English counterpart *settle*). Group A contains de-adjectival verbs, but we get the same result if we replace for example “paint pink” with “paint in pink”. The correct generalization is a division into *change of state verbs* and *change of location verbs* (as well as *creation verbs* ≈ cause to be in a location (see Dobler 2008a, b for detailed discussion)).

To explain these differences, we conclude with Dobler (2008a, b) that the direct object of change-of-state predicates is necessarily located outside of the Result phrase (when scope is computed). With change-of-location predicates, we note the reverse situation; the direct object can be located inside of the Result phrase (when scope is computed). Following Hale & Keyser (2000), we assume the structures in (26) for these two types of (transitive) verbs/predicates. (For structural variants of (26a, b) which are, in principle, compatible with the above findings, see Beck & Johnson (2004), von Stechow (2007), Dobler (2008a, b) or Ramchand (2008)).

- (26) a. [_{VOICEP} subject *Voice* [_{VP} object *v* [_{RP} Result]]] (*change-of-state*)
 b. [_{VOICEP} subject *Voice* [_{VP} *v* [_{RP} object Result]]] (*change-of-location*)

6 On the Position of the Subjects of Unaccusatives; Are They Blocking *there*-Insertion in Spec,vP?

Dobler (2008a, b) investigated transitive constructions while we are interested in unaccusatives. Many of the verbs in Group A discussed in Dobler’s work express a change of state and have an unaccusative counterpart. If the widely held assumption is correct that the object of transitives has the same syntactic base position as the sole argument of unaccusatives, we expect that the unaccusative counterparts of these verbs should behave alike in terms of scope interaction between an indefinite theme argument and restitutive *again*. The transitives in Group B are change-of-location verbs. As noted in 4.1, the unaccusatives allowing *there*-insertion also express a change of location (come into existence ~ come to be in a location). We thus predict that these verbs should behave like transitive change-of-location verbs as far as scope interaction between an indefinite theme argument and restitutive *again* is

concerned. In other words, if the argument of change-of-state unaccusatives is responsible for the blocking of *there*-insertion, it should necessarily be located outside the ResultP in the specifier of the un-accusative vP and it should never occur inside the scope of restitutive *again*. On the other hand, the argument of change-of-location un-accusatives should be located inside the ResultP and thus inside the scope of restitutive *again*; if it stays there, it does not block *there*-insertion in Spec,vP.

These predictions are indeed borne out, as shown in the following two sub-sections.⁸

6.1 Verbs of Change of Location

Unaccusative verbs of appearance (27) and unaccusative verbs expressing an inherently directed motion (28) both allow, as predicted, the relevant reading where the indefinite/existential theme argument is in the scope of restitutive *again*.⁹

- (27) a. Context: *Until about 200 years ago, bears used to live in Bavaria, but they were completely wiped out by the inhabitants in the 19th century.*
 b. Letzten Sommer ist wieder ein Bär in Bayern aufgetaucht/erschienen.
 c. Last summer, a bear appeared in Bavaria again.
- (28) a. Context: *Until about 200 years ago, bears used to live in Bavaria, but they were completely wiped out by the inhabitants in the 19th century.*
 b. Letzten Sommer ist wieder ein Bär nach Bayern gekommen.
 c. Last summer, a bear/bears came to Bavaria again.

6.2 Verbs of Change of State¹⁰

Unaccusative verbs of change of state, on the other hand, do not allow the relevant reading; their indefinite/existential theme argument cannot be

⁸ We would like to thank Eva Dobler (German), Andrew McIntyre, Walter Pederson, Marc Richards and Mike Putnam for their judgements.

⁹ Levin (1993) notes that *verbs of disappearance* allow *there*-insertion marginally. Deal (2009) argues that these verbs do not allow *there*-insertion. We do not discuss this class here, as it is hard to test (see also footnote 10).

¹⁰ There is a general complication with change-of-state verbs. Many of these verbs express “the disruption of material integrity” (Levin 1993). Since we are interested in a restitutive reading, these verbs are complicated to test; how can something start out broken, become united and break again?

interpreted as being in the scope of restitutive *again*. (Repetitive *again* can outscope the indefinite theme but this reading is irrelevant for the argument.)

- (29) a. Context: *Yesterday, Sally visited a popsicle factory. There she had the opportunity to taste the popsicle mixture before it was frozen. She really loved it.*
 b. #Daheim angekommen ließ sie wieder ein Eis am Stiel schmelzen.
 c. #Once she was at home she made/let a popsicle melt again.
- (30) a. Context: *Many years ago, a type of squirrel existed which was yellow. Unfortunately, they all died due to a mysterious infection.*
 b. #Forscher haben es geschafft, dass sich in einem Labor wieder ein Eichhörnchen gelb gefärbt hat.
 c. #Scientists working in a Swiss laboratory managed to bring it about that a squirrel turned yellow again.

6.3 'Verbs of Change of State' under a 'Come into Existence'

Reading

In addition to its use as a verb of change of state, the verb *break* also has a use as a verb of coming into existence, as in "*The war broke (out)*". Similarly, the verb *open* has an appearance sense which can be paraphrased as 'become visible' or 'come into existence' in addition to its change-of-state sense. The question then is whether this difference is relevant for the availability of *there*-insertion. The judgements of our four informants shown in (31a, b) vs. (31c, d, e) suggest that such an effect indeed exists at least as a general tendency (1[(very good)] - 5[(very bad)]).

- (31) a. There broke a vase in the living room 5 4 4 4
 b. There opened a window in the living room 5 4 3 5
 c. During the spring, there suddenly broke (out) a war in west India 5 2 2.5 2
 d. Suddenly, there opened a cavity underneath their feet 1 2 2 3
 e. Suddenly, there opened a gap in the middle of the street 3 1 4 3

Crucially, and in accordance with our overall proposal, the '*come into existence*' reading of these basically change-of-state verbs makes available the scope *again*_{restitutive} > indefinite:

- (32) a. Context: *For hundreds of years, people could get into the mountain through a small hole/crack. After a strong earthquake, this entrance was blocked. But after a long period of rain,*
 b. A hole opened in the rock again which allowed people to enter.

- c. Im Laufe der Zeit hat sich aber wieder eine Lücke geöffnet.
- (33) a. Context: *When we started here, all the walls were covered with numerous gaps and holes which we closed with great effort.*
 b. But during the storm, a huge gap opened again.
 c. Durch den Sturm hat sich plötzlich wieder ein Spalt in der Wand geöffnet.

This suggests that the relevant parameter is not strictly syntactic/categorial (adjectival vs. prepositional), but semantic/conceptual (change-of-state vs. change of location/existence). However, this semantic parameter is syntactically reflected in the position available for the theme.

We thus conclude that the theme of change-of-location verbs originates inside the Result phrase where it can stay in principle. The theme of change-of-state verbs is obligatorily located in Spec,vP, not in the Result phrase. *There*-insertion is blocked in the latter context as it competes with the theme argument, see (34).

- (34) a. [_{vP} *there* [_{ResultP} *theme*]] vs. b. [_{vP} *theme*/**there* [_{ResultP}]]

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we argued that the *unaccusativity mismatch* observed in the literature concerning the availability of *there*-insertion points to a syntactic difference between two classes of unaccusatives. We showed that the theme argument of change-of-location unaccusatives occupies Spec, ResultP, while that of change-of-state unaccusatives occupies Spec,vP. Insertion of *there* is blocked in the latter case, as the theme and the expletive compete for the same position.

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