

**Gender Differences of Everyday Talk in Iraqi University Environment****Ass. Lec. Duaa Qasim Naeem****Islamic University/ College of Education / Department of English**

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**الاختلافات بين الجنسين في المحادثات اليومية لطلبة الجامعات العراقية****م.م. حسام رشيد حمود****م.م. دعاء قاسم نعيم****كلية اللغات/ جامعة الكوفة****كلية التربية/ الجامعة الإسلامية****الملخص:**

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى تسليط الضوء على الاختلافات بين الجنسين في الجوانب الادبية واللغوية في مجتمع طلبة الجامعات العراقية. وتتكون عينة البحث من ٢٣ طالب وطالبة في المرحلة الرابعة لقسم اللغة الانجليزية في كلية الآداب- جامعة الكوفة حيث خضعت هذه العينة الى اختبار مجموعة من المفردات الفرنسية والاختلاف في استخدامها بين الاناث والذكور. كما وتشير نتائج الاختبار الذي خضعت له هذه العينة الى التأثير الكبير لهذه الاختلافات في اذهان الطلبة الذين درسوا اللغة الفرنسية كمادة ثانوية لأربع سنوات تؤهلهم للتمييز بين المذكر والمؤنث في تلك اللغة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اختلاف، الجنسين، ذكر، انثى، محادثة، طلبة، جامعة، العراق.

**Abstract:**

This research paper is an attempt to make a modest contribution to the knowledge of the role played by gender in linguistics variation in Iraqi Arabic speaking society considering linguistics and literary aspects. It also sheds some light on the main ideas involved in three parts, gender and language, the approaches to gendered speech, and a distinction between the conversation of males and females. Twenty-three students (11 females and 12 males) from the fourth stage in the Department of English language, College of Arts, University of Kufa have been subjected by giving them a list of French words that have opposing genders in their languages and asked to describe each word in Arabic and determine whether those words are masculine or feminine.

**Keywords:** difference, gender, male, female, conversation, students, university, Iraq.

**Introduction:****1. Background of the Study:****1.1. Research Paper Questions**

- As far as Iraqi University Environment is concerned, what are the dissimilarities in linguistic features in the speech of males and females ?
- Which gender utilizes more polite forms?
- How much female and male talk?

**1.2. Purpose of the study:**

The differences in speech of Iraqis students are probed in this study "males and females". The study will shed light on the features stated by Lakoff (1973, 1975). As a case study, it surveys speech differences of twelve males and eleven females from the Department of English language in Najaf, Iraq. Such features are elected accurately not randomly in this study.

**2. Gender from a Linguistic point of view:**

Gender can be understood by two aspects ;first it is derived from a biological distinction between male and female; second, which is a common way to classify nouns but with little agreement between languages (Yule, 1985).

Natural gender is based somehow on sex (male and female) through the culture of member's society. Whereas grammatical gender based on the type of nouns (masculine and feminine) and it is not tied to sex. In this latter sense, the distinctions between feminine and masculine words seem to have become mostly random.

In the Arabic language, for example it can be found that words with a positive connection (such as, knowledge, feelings, heaven, happiness, health, chastity, dignity, safety, mercy, rest, bless, blessedness, amusement, sacrifice, smile, life, nature, answer... etc.) is of the female gender. And words of a negative and unpleasant (ignorance, hell, sadness, sickness, death, hunger, despair, ugliness, darkness, stupidity, lying, question, cry, envy, work, tiredness... etc.) is masculine. Actually it would be possible if one accept such idea in which feminine equals good, masculine equals bad, but, once again this would not reflect how members of the society view men and women. As such, there evaluations depends on the socio-cultural understandings of human life and behavior.

It should be emphasized that this gender distinction is not based on distinction in sex. The French nouns: le livre (" the book ") is grammatically masculine, and la table (the table) is grammatically feminine, but neither we nor the French people consider a book or a table to be a biologically male and female. When Arabic speakers (a language with grammatical genders), 20 academic students who have been studied French language for about four years were tested and given a list of words that have opposing genders in their languages and asked to describe each word in Arabic and determine whether they are masculine or feminine, it is found that the object's gender was still very much in play. When they were asked to describe a street (Rue) which is a feminine word in French language, most of the test participants were much more likely to characterize a street as long, clean, paved, famous, shapely, orderly, and lovely.

The same thing happens when they asked to describe a cake (Gateau) which is a French word, Iraqi Arabic speakers used words like delicious, ovoid, rounded, candy, and goody. Can you guess which gender the word for "cake" is in French language? See appendix in p. 41.

The important part to remember here is this particular test was carried out in Arabic. So, even if you switch languages but are used to characterizing objects as either male or female, the biases created will follow you around. Additionally, if Iraqi Arabic speakers end up to learn all the nouns genders systematically, they will make mistakes because of the impact of gender of the mother tongue is still there in our minds.

## 2.1. Different Approaches to Gendered Speech:

In her book (Women, Men and Language), Coates, outlines the historical range approaches to gendered talk. Coates builds on Deborah Tannen's ideas.

The deficit, dominance, difference, and dynamic, these four approaches were contrasted by Coates.

### 2.1.1 Deficit:

It is an approach established by Robin Lakoff in her influential book (Language and Women's Place, 1975). As indicated by the name, the book considers women's language as an basically " deficient " version of male's language, the theory first emerged in the work of Danish grammarian Jespersen (1922). In lakoff's views, women language was deficient because their social position was so. Thus, this approach created a dichotomy between women's language and men's language.

### 2.1.2 Dominance:

Man \_ " I'm very excited to go on vacation in Spanish "

Women \_ " me too, the weather will be great, won't it ? "

Man \_ " yeah, I checked before.... ".

This example of conversation illustrates the dominance approach in which Lakoff proposed that men are naturally more dominant than women, this could be through behavior around women. However, the example also indicates and proves that women act less dominant around men, the males are not the only once who take part. And this is highly proved when the women in the above example used the tag question, this proposed that women use tag questions, not only for politeness but to make

sure they are correct as a second male opinion is needed. Actually this is something naturally due the fact that men act dominant around the women.

### 2.1.3 Difference:

It is an approach of equality, it was further studied by Deborah Tannen (1990), in her popular book (You just Don't Understand). She presented the idea that men and women are differentiated in their lifestyle since they belong to different cultures.

Tannen summarizes her theory in six main categories:

Statuses V. support:

Man talks in order to get more power and dominance in the society whereas woman use speech to comfort others.

Advices V. Understanding:

Women look for sympathy and comfort for their issues. While men want solutions to the problems.

Information V. Feelings:

Women in their part, consider the conversation is very essential for building relationship. For men, Tannen suggests that conversation is a method based upon mutual information.

Orders V Proposals:

Women used to be super polite with others, thus they encourage the indirect speech forms, such as: (" let's ", " would you mind if... ? "). While males may utilize direct orders, for example: (" Eat the pizza ", " close the door ").

Conflict V. compromise:

Tannen states that most women, somehow try to avoid being in clash or conflict with others, and to compromise situations. Whereas a man would seek conflict to show his power.

Independence V. Intimacy:

Difference theory affirms that men favor independence while women are more likely to seek intimacy. Tannen displays this with the example of a husband who makes his decisions without consulting his wife. Women on the other hand, like to ask their husbands about their opinion on almost everything.

### 2.1.4 The Dynamic or Social Constructionist:

This is the last and perhaps the most common approach within present and fashionable sociolinguistic research in this field, gender is something that people do rather than something that people have. In this way, gender is something dynamic, changing, active, fluid, moving, and malleable, it is something that we do every time we speak. In this sense, gender is cultural and the dissimilarities between male and female's speech is condescend by cultural expectations about what it is to speak like a man and speak like a women.

## 3. Methodology:

The given data and statistical analysis are collected in February, 2018 from twenty three students of University of Kufa, College of Arts, Department of English Language, fourth stage. Those students are come from similar cultures, customs, religions, and beliefs.

The main language used in communication is the Iraqi Arabic. Iraqi people used to talk at coffee shops, taxis and at the supermarkets, and this is a common sight. The data are recorded and the conversations were done on February 10, 2018 using a voice recorder. The researcher collected 40-minute recordings with observation. This study is limited to only 23 Iraqis. Thus the findings cannot be generalized.

### A. Research Design:

A survey has been applied on 23 students by recording their normal speech and their spontaneous conversations between each other as males/ females in the presence of their professor who asks them about their activities on last holiday. More than one record is used in this study.

## B. Participants:

The participants of research are students in the English language Department, College of Arts, University of Kufa (Evening Study). A number of 23 senior students (12 male, 11 female) has been subjected to the survey of the research. The range of their ages is between 20 to more than 30 years old. Most of them both are between 23 to 30 years old.

### 3.1 Findings:

After analyzing the conversations of both genders, it is discovered that men and women or to be specific males and females display some distinctive linguistic features in their speech. These distinctive linguistic features can easily spot in topics of Tannen and a number of situations like address, humour, and questions.

#### 3.1.1 Terms of Address:

Term of address or form of address: a word, or title that is used when speaking or writing to someone without using his, her or its name. "Habibati" is an affectionate term of address in Iraqi Arabic.

It is observed in this paper that male students utilize address lesser than the female ones. In the 20- minute conversations of the female students, it is obvious that the latter utilize dissimilar terms of address such as (my husband, il hejee "an old man", Habibi "my love", abona "our father", aboo ilbet "the father of the house", il hub "love") referring to their husbands. Sometimes female address her husband by associating him with the name of his eldest son or daughter such as (abo Ali, abo Fatima). The other intimate form of address are (noor einei "my eye's light", felethet kabdi "a peace of my heart" and others) these Iraqi terms are used by female when addressing their sons/ daughters and brother/ sister).

In contrast, male students seldom use addresses. And the reason is probably the kind of the topics in their talks which are mostly about sports, jobs and work. Besides, the fact that their speech drifts fairly fast and a lot of cutting are used in their communication, and this is abandon them from addressing each other. Nevertheless, when they tend to speak about their wives or fiancées or even their sisters, males student specially who are married using the term of address (ehlee "my wife", ilmera "the women", and okhti "my sister").

#### 3.1.2 Humour:

Humour, according to Oxford Dictionary definition, the quality of being amusing or comic, especially as expressed in literature or speech. Humour is a very complex phenomena, according to Long and Graesser (1988), humour is "anything done or said, purposely or inadvertently, this is found to be comical or amusing" (p. 4). According to Martin (2007), humour may be viewed as a habitual pattern, an ability, a temperament, an aesthetic response, an attitude, a word view, a coping strategy, or defense mechanism.

In this study, humour is found to help individuals cope with stress and provide entertainment or amusement, it also can be seen as a way of social communication to establish a closer relationship. However, this is depending on comprehension of a person whether he was a male or female. As follows:

Conversation 1: Humour:

وين كظيت العطلة يا فلان؟ A:

(C, Where did you spend your holiday.)

(All giggling)

فلان مو بس ما سافر لأي مكان, هو ما طلع من البيت اصلا B:

(Not only he did not travel anywhere, "C" didn't even leave his house.)

ME & A: Ha! Ha! Ha!

خلصت كل الوقت على بحثي C:

(I spend all the time on my research paper.)

شاطر مو بيده ! B:

(He could not be but smart.)

انت مبين راح تموت نفسك A:

(Obviously you will kill yourself)

(All giggling)

In the aforementioned conversations, male students are saying humour. They jokingly answer A's question and say that he is not only did not travel out, but he (C) did not go out from his house. They uttered incomplete sentences in order to create humour. This is shown as ME and all the students burst in laughter. Note that "A" represents their professor of poetry who is quite familiar with his students. Additionally, all the students were known where "C" has spent his holiday.

Female students here do not use humour a lot in the presence of the strangers men, because of the Islamic traditions and social conventions, or they consider humour somehow reduce their position in men's society. At the same time females used humours a lot in privet conversation. Actually, it is found a large number of women's conversation.

### 3.1.3 Directness and Indirectness in Speech:

Women are often seen as indirect and men as more direct. Many research papers on gender and language been conducted, but the general assertion that women are more indirect than men is apply to this study. The results of the investigation show that most of the female students are mainly indirect, three females and two males are largely indirect. There is only one male character that I can notice a difference in his usage of directness and indirectness toward female and male scholars. That is a man who used to be more direct with women and more indirect to men.

Friends got together to spend some time at the cafeteria, they debate an essential issue in our society which is women's right, each of them has his own view. The participants were told that their meeting would be recorded for study. There was another female student invited to the meeting did not know about the recording. However, the researcher was absent during the conversation time. In addition, the participants were asked about by the fact of being recorded. As a result, they were some kind feeling intimidated. After being informed that only the linguistic features would be analyzed, they felt more comfortable.

Returning to Lakoff's list, she published a number of basic assumptions about what spots the language utilized by females. Among them she prepared some claims that women:

**Hedge:** using phrases like "sort of", "kind of", "it seems like" and so on

**Use (super)polite forms:** "would you mind...", "I would appreciate It if...", "if you don't mind".

**Use tag questions:** "You are going to dinner, aren't you?"

**Speak in italics:** intonational emphasis equal to underlining words - so, very, quite.

**Use empty adjectives:** divine, lovely, adorable, and so on.

**Use direct quotation:** men paraphrase more often.

**Have a special lexicon:** women use more words for things like colours, men for sports.

**Use "wh-" imperatives:** (such as, "why don't you open the door")

**Speak less frequently**

**Overuse qualifiers:** (for example, "I think that...")

**Apologise more:** (for instance, "I'm sorry, but I think that...")

**Use more intensifiers:** especially so and very (for instance, "I'm so glad you came!")

**Lack a sense of humour:** women do not tell jokes well and often don't understand the punch line of jokes.

**Use indirect commands and request**

**Use model constructions:** (such as can, could, should, ought

,Should we turn up the heat)

(Lakoff, 1975)

Lakoff states a group of hedges and tag questions. These questions and hedges are considered language features that express indirectness and uncertainty. Some of them were spotted in the recordings and are summed up in table 1 below:

Language features	Subjects			
	AS	BS	AD	BD
Hedges				
" I think"	2		1	
"I guess"	1	1	1	1
" You know"	3		4	
"oh", "ah", "Yeah", "uh"	4		5	1
Tag questions	2		3	
Polite forms	2		2	1
Empty adjectives	7		5	2
Intensifiers	5	2	4	1
Total	26	3	23	6
Word count	361	373	150	505

Table 1: Use of indirect language

Notice that ("AS", " AD") represent females students and ("BS", "BD") characterize males students. As can be seen AS and AD are generally indirect in their speech than BS and BD. However, the utilize of hedges, tag questions and the host of other language features listed by Lakoff do not sound to vary drastically. As i it found above, there is no considerable quantitative differences between the number of words uttered and the number of hedges devices used. In spite of the fact that all the female students in this study argued to be direct, but the example below shows the indirect pattern of their speech.

Conversation 2: Females indirect style.

هاي ليش هيج تأخرتي؟! RR:

(why are you late ?)

حقيقةً أنا ردت أجي فد صديقتي أتصلت عليه وكالت أنه أستاذة البحث مالتى طالبتي لذلك: SS قررت ما أجي ويأكم للنادي

(In fact, I intended to join you but I got a call from my friend telling me that my supervisor needed to see me, thus, I made my decision not to go.)

Male students also clarified that they were direct in their talks. Their claim is dominant our study and is plainly demonstrated in the flowing instance.

Conversation 3: Males direct style:

وين هالغطة E:

(Where you have been?)

شغل وروحة ورجعة لبغداد B:

(Going and getting back to work at Baghdad)

نفس الروتين؟ A:

(It is the same routine?)

إيبيبي B:

(Yup)

أكره هالشي E:

(I hate that!)

وأني همينه B:

(me too.)

شلونها الأجواء هناك؟ A:

(What is going on over there?)

زينة ماشي الحال B:

(It's ok. Everything is fine.)

This conversation reveals that student B is largely direct the aforementioned answers and responses when student E asked him where he was all that time that has passed.

### 3.1.4 Intensifiers:

As the findings of Nemati & Bayer (2007), the same results have been noticed and analyzed about women's use of intensifiers, the females students in this current study used intensifiers more than males students. Actually women used more than one intensifier in one sentence. Table 2 shows the frequency of each grammatical item.

Grammatical Item	Male	Female
Intensifiers	21	57

Table 2: Frequency of intensifiers

It is clear that from Table 2 the frequency of occurrences of intensifiers is higher in females (n=57) than in males (n=21). Note that, these results have been gathered by a single record for both males and females conversations in their gatherings.

In some responses, I found the repetitive use of "very" and "so" in the Iraqi Arabic language from both males and females alike:

(I am very very sorry, / I am really really sorry/ I am so so sorry) which is a result of transfer from Iraqi Arabic such as:

SS: أنا أسفة جدًا جدًا ما كان هذا قصدي

(I am very very sorry, I did not mean it)

AS: إبيبي بابا هي نرفزتني كولش كولش كولش بحيث اختكت منها

(yeah dad, she makes me very very very nervous, she took me to the limit.)

In the Iraqi Arabic data the repetitive use of Kulish and Jiddan (very) and (so) as intensifiers is clearly noticed.

### 3.1.5 Questions:

Using questions is another clear-cut difference between males and females linguistic feature. As opposed to Linda Babcock & Sara Laschever's findings (women don't ask, 2009) in that women are much less likely than men to see the benefits and importance of asking for what they want. Surprisingly, female students tend to ask on almost everything they want to know, which enhance the research conducted by James and Clarke (1993). In this study, it is observed that men asked lesser questions (17 to 5). They asked to request for information about something that they need or just they to know for the purpose of knowledge as seen in the example below.

Conversation 4: Females indirect pattern:

AD: وااو قبعج حلو كولش !!! وين سويتها ؟؟

(Wow, your graduation hat is so beautiful, where did you buy it)

ME: بشارع الروان بخمس دقائق خلصت. إلا صدوك ام فلان تجي ويانا

(At Al\_Rawan street, it was prepared in five minutes. Eh! Has Z come with us?)

AD: لا بعد وكت.. ليش أنت ما اطييتها خبر؟

(It is still early. Why you didn't invite her?)

ME: تصورتها تعرف

(I thought she knew.)

In these utterances, it is noticeable that AD and ME used questions freely to keep the balance of communication going on and encouraging each other to engage in the topic of their conversation. Thus, women or females used questions and there are a variety of using WH- questions.

On the other hands males were liked to be asked and they are ready to talk and convers continuously just to present their opinions about the topic of debating. May be it appears rude when the other speaker simply cut or pauses or stops although the second speaker is still talking, but being friends for almost 4 years knowing each other, this didn't bother them.

### 3.1.6 Verbosity:

Verbosity has more than one meaning in computer science as well as in native English in a simple words, it is a quality used to categorized how much a speaker talked. We counted here not only the turns number but also the words number each individual may produce.

Speakers	Turns	Words	Turns	Words	Turns	Words	Turns	Words
A	3	78	8	48	6	55	4	19
B	2	44	1	17	4	26	6	33
C	2	7	-	-	4	27	2	8
D	1	18	2	20	-	-	-	-
E	4	26	-	-	2	11	7	113

Table 3:

Table 3 displays that in almost the four conversations, student A is controlling the conversation. This is apparently dominated in conversation 2 in that speaker A takes 8 turns and uttered 48 words in contrast with student D with 2 turns and 20 words, B with 1 turn and 17 words, C and E with no words. Nevertheless, we find student E dominated in conversation 4 (7 turns and 113 words). As it shown by the example that male students trying to have greater verbosity than females.

Speakers	Turns	Words	Turns	Words	Turns	Words	Turns	Words
AS	3	26	2	24	1	6	-	-
AD	3	25	3	14	7	41	4	45
ME	3	13	2	13	2	18	2	3
RR	1	2	-	-	5	52	-	-
SS	1	9	-	-	-	2	17	-

Table 4:

Table 4 shows that turn-number taking of female in almost of the conversations is equal, except for the conversations 3 and 4. It is obviously that there is no dominating in those conversation, there are exceptions, for example when females asked about their habits and their emotional side, the opposite thing happens. Females speak twice as much as male.

### 3.1.7 Adjectives:

In the use of adjectives, females used it plenty. In another words females tend to use adjectives more than male, 6 times in contrast to males. In this study, Females tend to utilize verbs in the Iraqi dialect as adjectives, They used verbs to describe someone or something. such as:

عسل, يخنن, يخل, فدوة, كولش حلو, يموت, عسل Etc. They transform from Iraqi Arabic

Wonderful, very beautiful, sweat, nice, lovely, frenzy, etc.)

On the other hand, Iraqi males students used adjectives less than females, but mostly when they tend to used adjectives for describing something or someone, males try to express that with standard Arabic such as: جميل, لطيف, رائع

### 3.1.8 Fillers, hedges and affirmatives:

So far, males and females used a limited number of fillers, hedges and affirmatives in their speech. Females have a subtle difference in the use of such terms. On the other hand, males are using these features lesser than females. This is nearly the same result of past researchers findings. Female students utilized fillers only 3 times for example: " ahh....", "emm....". While male students utilized it for once.

### 3.2 The characteristics of male speech:

Some categories of language features emerged from the data analysis terms of address, intensifiers, humour, questions, directness, adjectives, and hedges. Evidences from each category have been presented to give a better explanation. Table 5 shows the characteristic of Males conversation:



Grammatical item	Male
Terms of address	Males do not use forms of address.
Humour	Males used humour in public and privet conversations.
Directness	Men show that they used direct speech more than women.
Intensifiers	Males used less intensifiers in their conversations.
Questions	Men show that they are ready to answer than to ask.
Adjectives	Males used lesser number of adjectives.
Fillers, hedges	Men used fillers as much as women's use, for hedges, males use them with slight difference as compared with women.
Verbosity (turns, words)	Males have higher verbosity than females, they try to be dominant in their gatherings.

Table 5:

### 3.3. The characteristics of Females speech:

Grammatical item	Female
Terms of address	Women used terms of address largely.
Humour	Women students do not utilized a sense of humour in presence of a strange men, they used humour in privet conversation.
Directness	Females are mostly indirect in their style of speech.
Intensifiers	Females used intensifiers higher than males.
Questions	Women use questions freely and much more men.
Adjectives	Females used adjectives 6 times as compared to males.
Fillers, hedges	Females used fillers as much as males, considering with hedges there is a slight differences as compared with males use of hedges.
Verbosity (turns, words)	Women show that they talk less than men and there is no directing or dominating in their conversations.

Table 6: the characteristics of female speech.

### 3.4 Discussion:

The study has confirmed some of the main findings and the hypothesized made by past researchers. The participant's speech is affected by his selected linguistic aspects. Females tend to utilize forms of address in that they are addressing each other with the the name of the son or daughter. They used different terms of address throughout their conversations and they argued that these forms are used to indicate politeness and respect. This concept is supported by Lakoff (1975), and Hass (1979) also. It seems familiar when females address a married men with their children names such as:

أبو علي، أبو فاطمة

Considering with humour, unlike women, men use humour a lot in public to create an easygoing atmosphere that is fiddled with sudden giggles and laughter. Women also used a humour a lot but in privet conversation with each other, it is seems somehow forbidden for females to say a jock in the presence of strange males. Anyhow, this sounds contrasting, because they burst in laughter when they transact with any sense of humour that is uttered by males.

Concerning the terms of directness and indirectness, the study found that females notably used indirect ways. Thus, their talks sound indirect to other interlocutors. In contrast, males are direct in their speech although there are some instances whereby they are indirect in their talking.

Further, it is found out that males focus more on sports and jobs conversations in contrast with the females who focus more on family, emotions, themselves and feelings.

Additionally, there was a written test presented at the beginning of this study, when we give the participants a list of French nouns that have the opposite gender in their mother tongue which is Iraqi Arabic, they asked to determine whether those nouns are masculine or feminine, it is found that the impact of gender is still in play for both genders. Further, I found that females were abounding in their written answers, thus, they use verbosity in written language more than males who used verbosity in spoken language largely.

#### 4. Conclusions:

The research paper sheds light on the dissimilarities in the linguistic features of male- female speech. Although there is some kind of similarity in using humour in their speech, the differences are superior in frequency or dominant when it comes to utilize directness, addresses, questions, adjectives, verbosity, and intensifiers.

It is so important to know that the results concluded by this present study, may not appropriate to other males and females in other places, races, beliefs, and religion, since the participants have been selected precisely considering their education level, ages, and genders. A sample of twelve males and eleven female are utilized in this paper, that is why its results cannot be generalized.

Cultural differences can be a source of misunderstanding but they can also be a source of enjoyment, creativity, and different perspective. Thus, by understanding the findings of our study, anyone will be able to understand and respect differences and also to move beyond them to get things done and therefor, this is should not prevent us from meeting others especially those who are completely different from us, increasing confidence to discuss and resolve cultural differences, improving our communication.

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