An Ethnic Minority's use of languages on Social Media – A study of Lebanese Armenians in Lebanon

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Abstract

English is believed to be among the most frequently used languages on social media platforms. Recently social media has become an integral part of people's everyday lives. It is used for all sorts of activities and occasions whether educational, political, social, or cultural. The purpose of this paper is to study the language choice of an ethnic minority- Lebanese Armenians- on social media. It also studies whether people's educational, social, financial, linguistic and cultural background have any impact on their language choice on social media. The study answers two research questions: (1) What language(s) do Lebanese Armenians use for their social media posts? (2) What factors impact the Lebanese Armenians' language choice on social media? The subjects are multilingual Lebanese citizens of Armenian descent whose grandparents and great grand-parents settled in Lebanon after the Armenian Genocide in 1915. For privacy purposes, the contacts will remain anonymous. Data will be collected in two means. (1) a survey questionnaire that includes 40 objective questions and one open ended question seeking information about demographics, social media accounts owned, what languages they use on social media and why. (2) the posts of six randomly chosen contact accounts (three male and three female) on Facebook and three contact accounts on Instagram. The posts analyzed are from October 2021 till February 2022. The study analyzes the language(s) they use for their posts. Last but not least, the study conducted defines relevant terms such as language, social media, identity, English as a global language, and caption.

Key terms: Ethnic Minority, Armenians in Lebanon, language choice, social media

ملخّص

يُعتقد أن اللغة الإنجليزية هي من بين أكثر اللغات استخدامًا على منصات التواصل الاجتماعي. أصبحت وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي مؤخرًا جزءًا لا يتجزأ من حياة الناس اليومية. يتم استخدامها في جميع أنواع الأنشطة والمناسبات سواء كانت تعليمية أو سياسية أو اجتماعية أو ثقافية. الهدف من هذا البحث هو تبيان اختيارات اللغة من قبل الأقلية العرقية (الأرمن اللبنانيين) على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. كما يدرس أيضًا ما إذا كان للخلفية التعليمية والاجتماعية والمالية واللغوية والثقافية للأشخاص أي تأثير على اختيارهم اللغوي على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي. تجيب الدراسة على سؤالين بحثيين: (1) ما هي اللغة (اللغات) التي يستخدمها الأرمن اللبنانيون في منشوراتهم على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟ (2) ما هي العوامل التي تؤثر على اختيار اللغة من قِبل الأرمن اللبنانيين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟ هؤلاء هم مواطنون لبنانيون متعددو اللغات من أصل أرمني استقر أجدادهم وأجداد أجدادهم في لبنان بعد الإبادة الجماعية للأرمن في عام 1915. ولأغراض الخصوصية ، ستبقى هويات هؤلاء الاشخاص سرية. سيتم جمع البيانات عن طريق وسيلتين مختلفتين. (1) استبيان مسح يتضمن 40 سؤالًا موضوعيًا وسؤالًا مفتوحًا للحصول على معلومات حول التركيبة السكانية وحسابات وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي المملوكة وما هي اللغات التي يستخدمونها على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ولماذا. (2) منشورات ست حسابات وسائل تواصل اجتماعي تم اختيارها عشوائيًا (ثلاثة ذكور وثلاث إناث) على Facebook وثلاثة حسابات اتصال

على Instagram. المنشورات التي تم تحليلها تمتد من أكتوبر 2021 حتى فبراير 2022. تحلل الدراسة اللغة (اللغات) التي يستخدمونها في منشوراتهم. أخيرًا وليس آخرًا ، تحدد الدراسة التي تم إجراؤها المصطلحات ذات الصلة مثل اللغة ووسائل التواصل الاجتماعي والهوية والإنجليزية كلغة عالمية والتعليق على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

الكلمات المفتاحية:- أقلية عرقية ، الأرمن في لبنان ، اختيار اللغة ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي

Introduction

At the turn of the century, revolutionary inventions and technology turned the world upside down - Local TV channels were replaced by satellite dishes, landline telephones were replaced by mobiles, handwritten letters by emails, traditionally developed photos by digital ones and face to face communication by social media platforms. Recently, social media has become an integral part of people's everyday lives. It is used for all sorts of activities and occasions whether educational, political, social, or cultural. It is argued that there are about 4.5 billion users around the world that encompass almost 57% of the world population (Ang, 2021). Merriam-Webster defines it as "forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as videos)." In the past few decades, several scholars have defined social media. Almost all of them agree that social media is an online tool that helps people who have common personal or professional interests build social networks for the purpose of communicating and exchanging information and data and getting news (Akram & Kumar, 2018; Douai et al., 2014; Kane & Alavi, 2014). According to Akram and Kumar (2018), social media can be used on the following three levels:

- ➢ Individual Level: To entertain, gain knowledge, and communicate with friends and family
- ➢ Professional Level: To build professional network, connect with others in the same field, and expand knowledge in a particular domain
- ➢ Business Level: To gain customers, communicate with them, and promote and improve the business brand

Statement of the Problem

With the advent of the new millennium, humanity has witnessed change in almost all fields and domains whether linguistic, economic, political or social. Actually, the introduction of social media revolutionized life in general and communication in particular. Several research studies related to language and social media have been conducted around the world; however, none tackles the case of Lebanese Armenians-an ethnic minority that is considered an essential constituent of the Lebanese textile.

Research Questions

The purpose of this paper is to study the language choice of an ethnic minority- Lebanese Armenians- on social media. It also studies whether people's educational, social,

financial, linguistic and cultural background have any impact on their language choice on social media. The study answers two research questions:

RQ1. What language(s) do Lebanese Armenians use for their social media posts?

RQ2. What factors impact the Lebanese Armenians' language choice on social media?

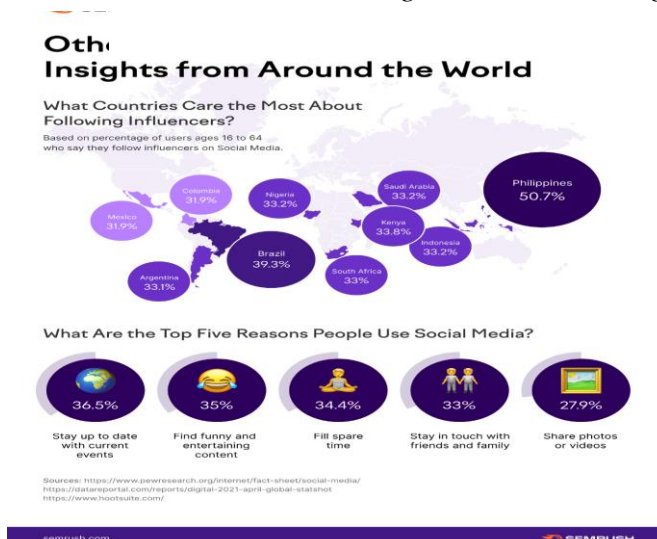## Most Frequently Used Social Media Platforms

Thus far, previous studies have confirmed that some of the most familiar social media platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Messenger, LinkedIn, YouTube, TikTok, and WhatsApp which are mainly owned by the two American and Asian giants Meta and Bytedance respectively (Ang, 2021). Figure 1 provides a clear overview of the largest social networks and platforms worldwide in addition to their monthly active users (MAUs). In recent years, th

Figure 1

Social Media Giants

Note. Ang (2021)

Figure 2

Fascinating Social Media Insights

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amount of literature on different social media platforms and their MAUs. Facebook is believed to be the most dominant with about 2.9 billion users (Akram & Kumar, 2018; Ang, 2021; Pavlovskaya, 2021; Walsh, 2021). The vast majority of studies claim that Facebook is followed by YouTube with 2.29 users, WhatsApp with 2 billion users, Messenger 1.3 billion users and Instagram 1.12 billion (Ang, 2021; Pavlovskaya, 2021; Walsh, 2021). Figure 2 highlights the countries that follow influencers on social media most and the reasons they use it for. According to Pavlovskaya (2021) Philippines has the highest percentage of social media users who follow influencers (50.7%) and Columbia and Mexico the lowest (31.9%).

Most Frequently Used Language on Social Media

Various studies have assessed the efficacy of social media. According to Jongbloed-Faber et al. (2015), for minority languages; that is the language of those who are less than 50% of the population in a country or a region, social media is considered a threat and an opportunity at the same time. Although social media provides minority groups with the opportunity to practice their language on online networks and gives them the chance to connect with speakers of the same language, the majority of those platforms are controlled and dominated by a few languages. It has been indicated that English is among the most frequently used languages on social media platforms (75%). Eleta (2012) stated that

> In multilingual computer mediated communication tackles language choice in global forums and in multilingual countries, language use by diasporic online communities, and the role of English as a Lingua Franca, including a variety of languages such as Arabic, Japanese, Thai, Greek, Spanish, Catalan, among others (p. 2).

Consequently, it is worth noting that as a result of misrepresentation of world languages on the web, 95% of them are threatened to be extinct due to three important factors: loss of function, loss of prestige, and less of competence (Komani, 2003 as cited in Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2015).

Social Media, Language and Identity

A series of recent studies has indicated that social media, language and identity are interrelated. Goffman (1990) compares identities of social media users to face masks that can be worn and taken off based on the context of the interaction (as cited in Lee, 2014). While Norton (2013) defines identity as "the way one understands his or her relationship with the world and how that relationship is constructed across space and time" (as cited in Gervasio & Karuri, 2019, p. 43), Bucholtz and Hall (2010) define it as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 18). In addition, Ochs and Capps (1996) make reference to social identity of the participants that includes their roles, positions, relationships, reputations and other dimensions of "social personae".

Several studies have highlighted how significantly language and identity are related. According to Gervasio and Karuri (2019), language both changes and shapes our identities. They continue their discussion by stating two essential points: first, one's linguistic behavior displays their identity and second, in different contexts, people demonstrate different identities through the different varieties of language they use. Coulmas (2005) pinpoints that one of the most important functions of language is to operate as identity marker. What people say reveals their age, gender, where they grew up, groups they belong to and several other demographic factors.

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In his article Language and Identity in the Digital Age, Darvin (2016) maintained that social media and language are significantly related in the sense that "As the digital provides multiple spaces where language is used in different ways, learners are able to move across online and offline realities with greater fluidity and perform multiple identities" (p. 524). In the findings of his research, Coulmas (2005) claimed that marking the students' identities was enhanced through the linguistic patterns they used in their chats.

Armenians as Ethnic Minorities in Lebanon

The presence of Armenians in Lebanon goes back to the days of Tigranes the Great, the Armenian King who rule 140-55 BC. However, the present day Armenians are the descendants of those who left Armenia and Cilicia after WWI in general and the Armenian Genocide of 1915 in particular and settled in Lebanon. They have been granted the Lebanese citizenship as per the international Treaty of Lausanne (1923). They have representatives in both the Lebanese Parliament (6 members) and the government. Lebanese Armenians are considered an ethnic minority group that have preserved their linguistic, religious, and cultural identity (Joukoulian, 2021).

Factors Impacting Language Use on Social Media

People make personal choices on daily basis. One of the most important choices they currently make is what language to use on social media. Nurhantoro and Wulandari (2017) claimed that many social media users choose a foreign language because of its prestige and global status as a lingua franca. English is the linguistic choice of a vast population on social media due to its status as a global language and a lifestyle. Another reason people prefer using a foreign language instead of their own is because of the tendency that the culture of the foreign language is more superior than their own. Androutsopoulos (2014) identified three fundamental strategies that contacts of heterogeneous groups follow for their linguistic choice:

1. The language of choice is the language that everyone can understand;
2. Several languages are used in one or several consecutive messages to address the audience;
3. Language use is avoided and only pictures, video and/or emoticons are used (as cited in Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2015, p. 29).

Methodology

The type of research used in this study is both quantitative and qualitative. While quantitative research gathers and analyzes numerical data using mathematical methods (Aliaga & Gunderson, 2002), qualitative research operates through gathering and analyzing live data about individuals in addition to understanding and interpreting their values, customs, and beliefs (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2005).

For the purpose of numerical data collection, a 41 question survey questionnaire was adapted from Gervasio and Karuri (2019). The survey aimed at seeking information about demographics such as age, gender, place of living, educational background, social media accounts owned, what languages they use on social media and why. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms which is a free survey administration software offered by Google. The link to the survey was shared by the participants via WhatsApp. It is worth noting that 40

out of 41 questions were objective; only one open ended question was included which examined the participants' occupation.

As for qualitative data, the posts of six randomly chosen contact accounts (three male and three female) on Facebook and Instagram between October 1, 2021 and February 28, 2022 were analyzed. The study examined the language(s) they used for their posts. Table 1 introduces the demographic backgrounds of those accounts. In addition to that, two subjects (one male and one female) were interviewed asking them about the language(s) they used most on social media and why. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the researcher has received the consent of the account holders and interviewees via the phone.

Table 1
Demographics of the Facebook Contacts

Facebook						
	Subject 1	Subject 2	Subject 3	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6
Age	37	64	40	40		35
Work	Secretary	Photographer	Supermarket Owner	Insurance Broker	Services	Medical Field
Educational Background	Grade 12	BS	Elementary	BS	Elementary	BS
Linguistic Capital	**multilingual**	**multilingual**	**multilingual**	**multilingual**	**multilingual**	**multilingual**

The subjects of this study are divided into two categories. For the quantitative data, 72 participants have responded to the survey questionnaire. They come from different age, gender, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Among the 72 subjects who participated in the survey, 58 are female (82.1%), 13 are male (17.9%) and one did not reveal their gender. As for age, they belong to different age groups. Among the 72 participants, 11 belong to the age group 36-40 (15.3%), followed by the age groups 15-20, 21-25 and 56-60 with 9 subjects in each (12.5%). The age groups 41-45, 46-50 and 51-55 encompass 11.1% of the respondents with 8 subjects each while the 26-30 year olds 8.3% with 6 participants. The age groups 31-35 and 65 and older include 2 subjects each (2.8%). Not a single participant belonging to the age groups younger than 15 and 61-65 has responded to the survey questionnaire. Figures three and four give a clear overview of the gender and age distribution respectively. To protect the privacy of all the subjects and participants, anonymity was assured.
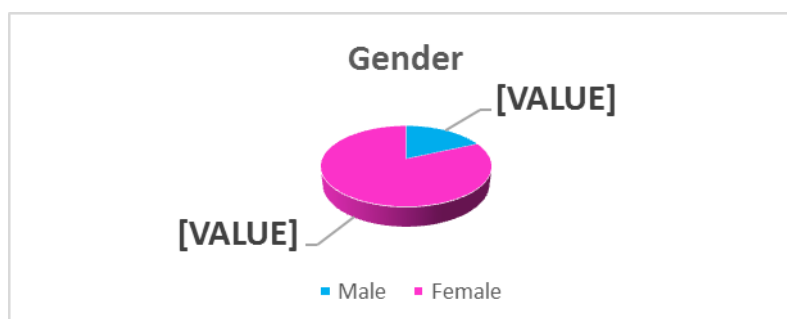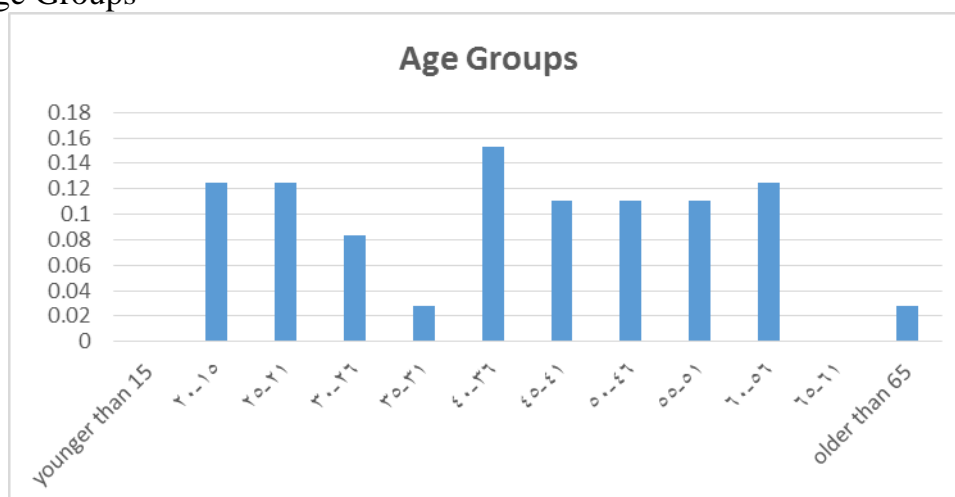
Figure 3

Gender

Figure 4

Age Groups

Findings

This section aims at presenting the collected data through the Facebook accounts of three subjects, Facebook and Instagram accounts of three others, two interviews, and the survey questionnaire.

    a. Instagram

Between October 2021 and February 2022, Subject four posted on Instagram 39 times. Out of those 39, 36 were in English, one in Arabic and two of them had no captions. Subject five posted 112 times on Instagram out of which 32 were English, 38 English and Arabic, one English and Armenian, two English, Arabic, and Armenian, 35 Arabic, and four Armenian. Subject six posted 24 times on Instagram among which 19 have been in English, two in Arabic, and three Armenian using English letters. Table 2 gives a clear overview of that.

Table 2
Analysis of Three Instagram Contact Accounts

	Subject 4	Subject 5	Subject 6
Number of posts Oct. 1, 2021-Feb. 28, 2022	39 (2 no caption)	112	12
Posts in Armenian	0	4	0
Posts in Arabic	1	35	0
Posts in English	36	73 E=32 English+Arabic= 38 English+Armenian= 1 English+Arabic+Armenian= 2	12

   b. Facebook

   Between October 2021 and February 2022, subject one posted 68 different items on Facebook. Among the 68, 66 posts were written in English, one post in Arabic (mixed with English), and a single post in Armenian. Subject two has posted 255 times on Facebook. Among the 255, 126 posts were in Arabic, 113 in Armenian, 15 English and a single post in French. Subject three had 24 posts on Facebook, out of which 19 were in English, two Arabic, and three Armenian. It is worth noting that for the Armenian posts English letters were used. Subject four posted 72 times on Facebook and 39 times on Instagram. Among the 72 on Facebook, 54 were in English, 11 in Armenian, three in Arabic, two in French and two in Greek. Subject five posted 222 times on Facebook where 60 were in English, 69 English and Arabic, five English and Armenian, 70 Arabic, 15 Armenian (one post written using English alphabet), and three Greek. Subject six posted 12 times on Facebook where all have been in English. Table 3 gives a clear overview of that.

   c. Interview

   For this study, three of the account holders were interviewed. They were all asked the same question: On what basis they made their language choice when writing on social media platforms.

   The first interviewee is a 64-year old married man. He is a multilingual photographer who holds a Bachelor's Degree in Chemistry from the Lebanese University. He is active on Facebook but has no Instagram account. The second interviewee is 40-year old lady with two daughters. She is a multilingual insurance broker with a Bachelor's Degree in Mathematics from the Lebanese University. She is active on both Facebook and Instagram. The third interviewee is a 35-year old woman who is married with one daughter. She is the head of the Nuclear Medicine Department and has MD (Medical Doctor) in her field in addition to a

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fellowship. She is active on both Facebook and Instagram. It is worth noting that all interviewees are Lebanese Armenians who are born and raised in Lebanon by Lebanese Armenian parents. The first and the third are third generation Lebanese Armenians, while the second belongs to the fourth generation.

Table 3

Analysis of Six Facebook Contact Accounts

Facebook						
	Subject 1	**Subject 2**	**Subject 3**	**Subject 4**	**Subject 5**	**Subject 6**
Number of posts Oct. 1, 2021-Feb. 28, 2022	68	255	24	72	222	9
Posts in Armenian	1	113 (1 using English letters)	3 (English letters)	11 (2 using English letters)	14 1 (English letters)	0
Posts in Arabic	1 (mixed with English)	126	2	3	70	0
Posts in English	66	15	19	54	134 English= 60 English+Arabic= 69 English +Armenian=5	9
Posts in French	0	1	0	2	0	0
Posts in Greek	0	0	0	2	3	0
Notes		*Hampig Sassounian's release from prison was posted in Armenian, Arabic, and French *An obituary in Arabic			*An obituary in Arabic	

The first interviewee informed that he uses Facebook on daily basis during his leisure time. He also informed that 80%-90% of his posts are in Arabic though he uses other languages as well but less often. The reason why he makes his posts in Arabic is because he is Lebanese and because he has many non-Armenian friends who are either Lebanese living in Lebanon or others who live abroad in the Arab World.

As for the second interviewee, she informed that although she prefers using Armenian no matter where or why including social media, she uses English for almost all her posts. She rarely uses Arabic or Armenian. Whenever she posted something in Armenian, she was asked for a translation; hence, she decided to adopt English ever since.

The third interviewee reported that she prefers writing her posts in English on Facebook and Instagram. She works in a hospital and uses English all the time. Hence, she feels more comfortable using it on social media as well. In addition to that, since her friends come from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds, she uses English-the language that all her contacts understand.

d. Survey Questionnaire

Based on the results of the survey questionnaire, the majority of the respondents reported to be working (66.7%) while only 16.7% reported being students. Among those who reported they work, 12 are in different business fields, 6 are accountants, 17 teachers, 9 secretaries, 5 in the medical field, in addition to a translator, consultant, researcher, and a pianist. Moreover, among the 72, the majority hold a Bachelor's Degree (50.7%), followed by those who have a secondary education with 26.8%, and Master's Degree with 16.9%. While a single participant was a PhD holder, none reported having primary education only. While the majority of the respondents reported Armenian being their native language (76.4%), 18.1% reported that they have two native languages- Armenian and Arabic- and 5.6% using only Arabic as their native language. Among the 72 who participated in the survey questionnaire, 66 reported that both their parents have Armenian as their native language, 3 whose mothers only speak Armenian, 2 only fathers speaking Armenian and one participant who reported that neither of the parents spoke Armenian.

Participants were asked their language preference and usage. With respect to language preference, 81.9% reported preferring Armenian over other languages. As for what languages they speak, 43 participants reported speaking Armenian with their friends all the time as opposed to 19 and 26 speaking Arabic all the time and often respectively. However, 66 out of 72 reported speaking Armenian with their parents.

The participants were also asked about their language proficiency in four skills of the language. Figures 5, 6, 7 and 8 give a clear overview of the results.

Figure 5
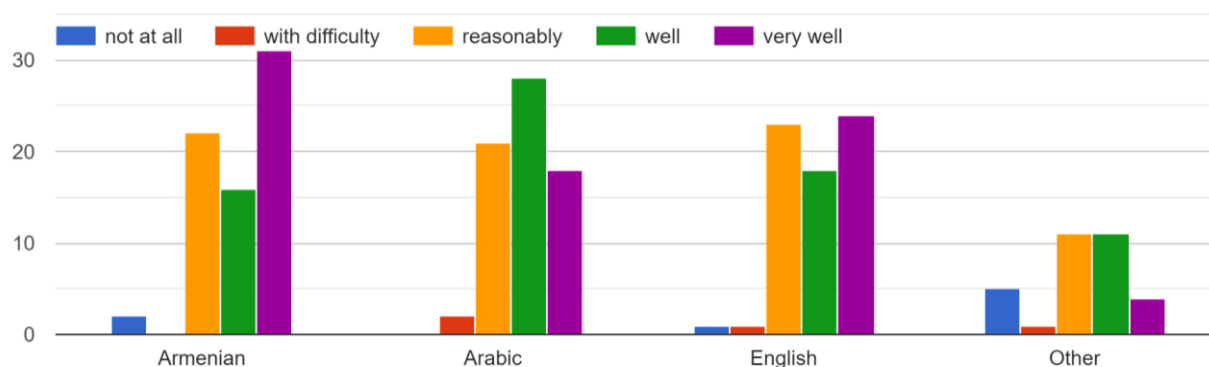Proficiency in Speaking Armenian, Arabic and English

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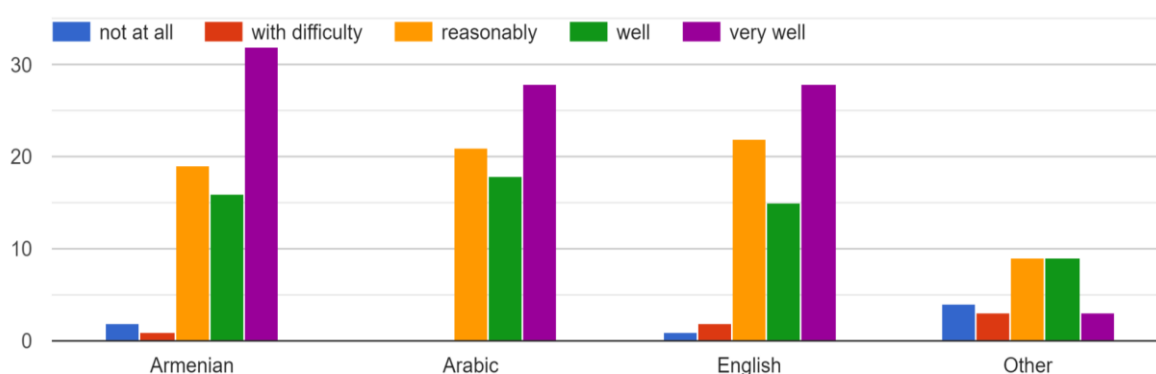**(Trends in English Language, Literature, and Linguistics)**

Figure 6
Proficiency in listening Armenian, Arabic and English

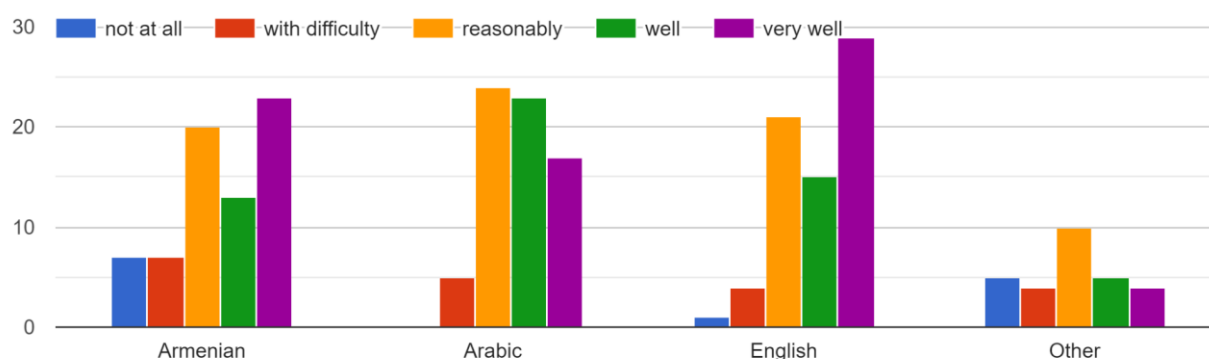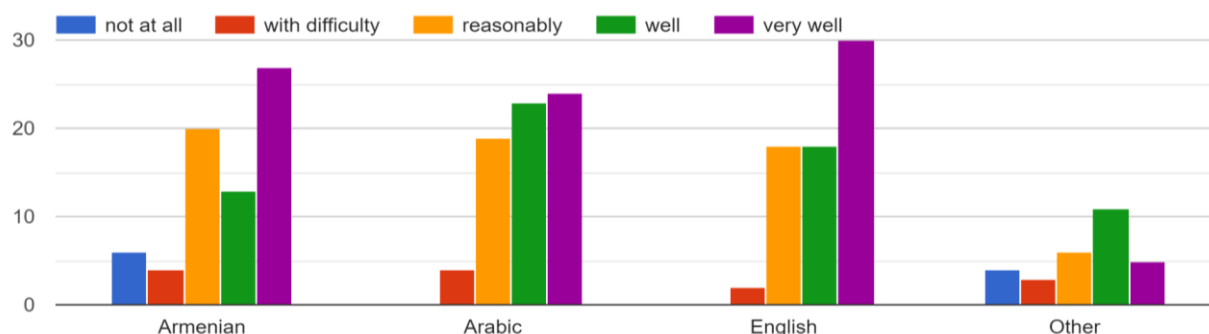**Figure 7**
Proficiency in Writing Armenian, Arabic and English

Figure 8
Proficiency in Reading Armenian, Arabic and English

66

When asked about the importance of proficiency in a specific language to find a job, 36 participants admitted proficiency in English to be very important, followed by 25 of them who considered proficiency in Arabic is important. Figure 9 gives a clear overview of that.

Figure 9

Importance of Proficiency in Armenian, Arabic and English to Find a Job
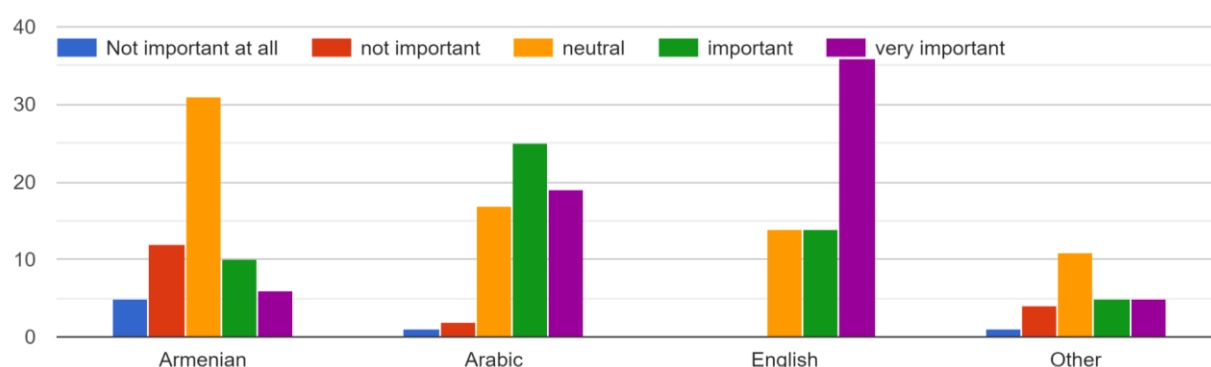
The survey checked the number of hours they spent on social media. According to the results obtained, 23 (31.9%) of them spend 1 to 2 hours a day, 19 (26.4%) 2 to 4 hours a day, 14 (19.4%) over 4 hours a day and 9 (12.5%) 0 to 1 hour per day. It is worth mentioning that only 1 person among the 72 respondants reported not being on social media encompassing 1.4% of the population only.

Regarding the languages they used for text messages, emails, and chatting via social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Messenger and others, the majority (47, 64 and 51 subjects respectively) reported using English. As for the language used for commenting on someone else's posts, the majority admited using English with 79.2% on Facebook and 92.4% on Instagram.

The participants were also asked how often they use Facebook and Instagram. The results of the questionnaire revealed that 25 participants (34.7%) used Facebook a few times a day and 26 of them (37.1%) used Instagram a few times a day. As opposed to that, 3 (4.2%) repondents reported not having a Facebook account and 5 of them (7.1%) not having an Instagram account.

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The survey questionnaire also checked what languages participants used for writing status updates, captions, and posts on Facebook and Instagram. According to the results of the survey questionnaire, the majority of the particiants reported using English. In addition to that, participants also revealed using English for their private messages via both Instagram and Facebook with 36 participants (50%) for each platform.

The survey also demonstrated whether particippnts mixed langugaes in a single message or not. Almost similar results were revealed in mixing Armenian-Englsih and Arabic-English everyday with 28 and 27 participants respectively followed by those who mixed Armenian and Arabic (22 participants).

The participants were asked to express their personal opinion regarding two statements.While 23 subjects agreed on the fact that the language they use on social media is the same as the language they usually speak with their friends, 17 answered "I don't agree" and 19 remained neutral. In addition, 23 subjects informed that the language they use on social media is different from the language they use with their family.

Regarding the langugae used on social media, 43.5% of the participants reported using English all the time. As for the reasons why they did not use Armenian, 81% of them admited that fact that not all their friends understood Armenian. This was followed by 47.6% who admited English being easier and 25.4% who found writing Armenian difficult.

Finally, when asked whether their friends on social media know Armenian, 20.6% of the participants informed that more than 75% of their friends know Armenian and 23.4% of them reported that 50% of their friends on Instagram know Armenian.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of the survey conducted reveal that English is the most dominant and most frequently usded language by Lebanese Armenians on social media platforms regardless of the subjects' age, gender, education, or occupation. The results of the survey conducted highlight this point clearly. Figures 10-16 give a clear overview of that. Participants have reported using English all the time for status updates, writing captions and posts, and sending private messages on both Facebook and Instagram. In addition to that, 30 out of 69 respondents (43.5%) reported using English all the time on social media and 79.2% reported commenting on others' posts on Facebook and Instagram in Englsih. They use Armenian only for posts related to the Armenian culture and Armenian community.

The findings of the study also highlight that subjects reveal their political identity through their posts written in Armenian. Data collected from the Facebook accounts of the six subjects confirms this point. For instance, some of the Armenian posts of subjects two and five on Facebook reveal their political orientation and identity. Each one of them belongs to a major and well known political party. For instance, while subject two has posted news and pictures about the 131st anniversary celebrations of the Tashnag Party that took place in December 2021, subject five has posted pictures and news of the regular weekly practice of the HMM (Armenian Sports Organization) football team.

Figure 10

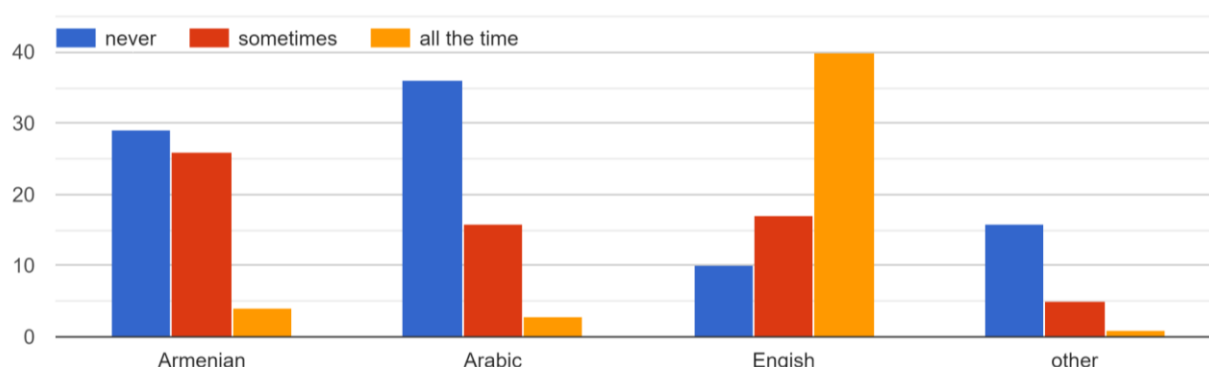Frequency of Languages Used in Status Updates on Facebook

Figure 11

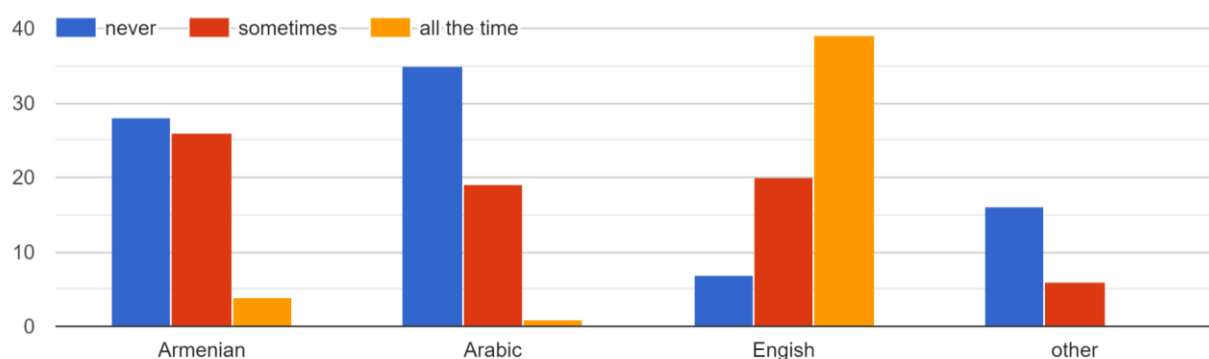Frequency of Languages Used in Writing Captions on Facebook

Figure 12
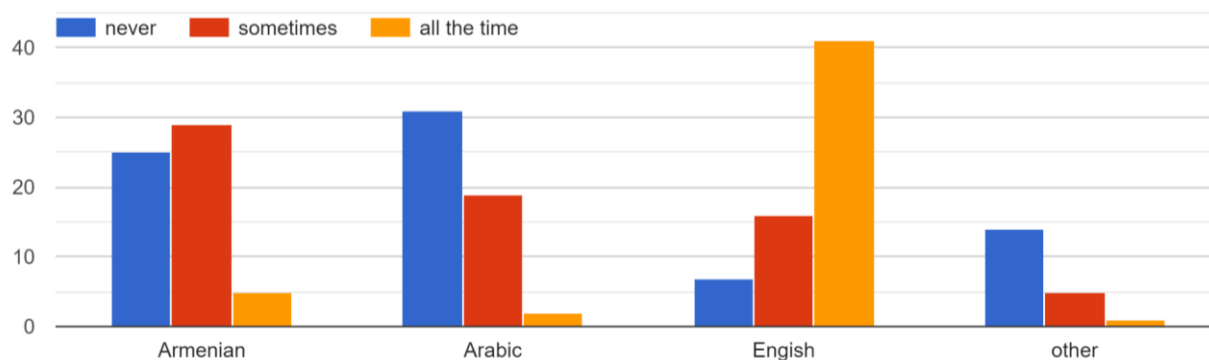
Frequency of Languages Used in Writing Posts on Facebook

Figure 13

Frequency of Languages Used in Writing Posts on Instagram

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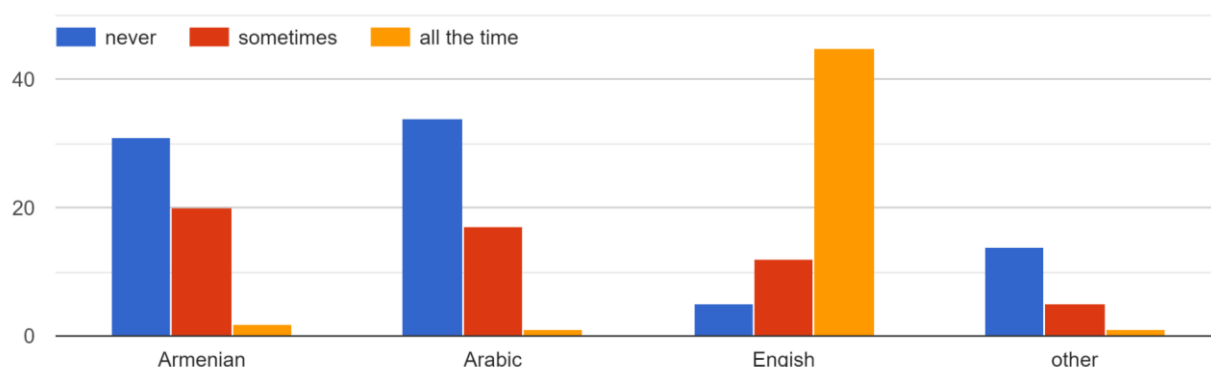**(Trends in English Language, Literature, and Linguistics)**

Figure 14
Frequency of Languages Used in Writing Captions on Instagram

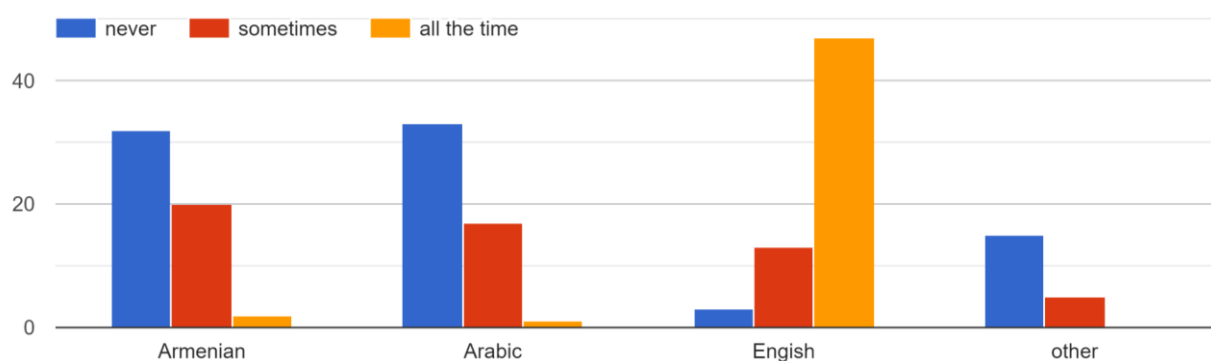**Figure 15**
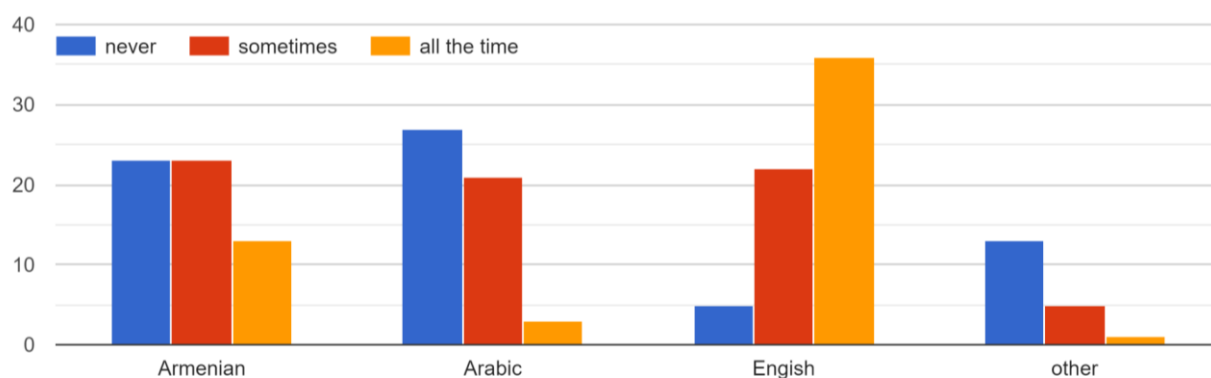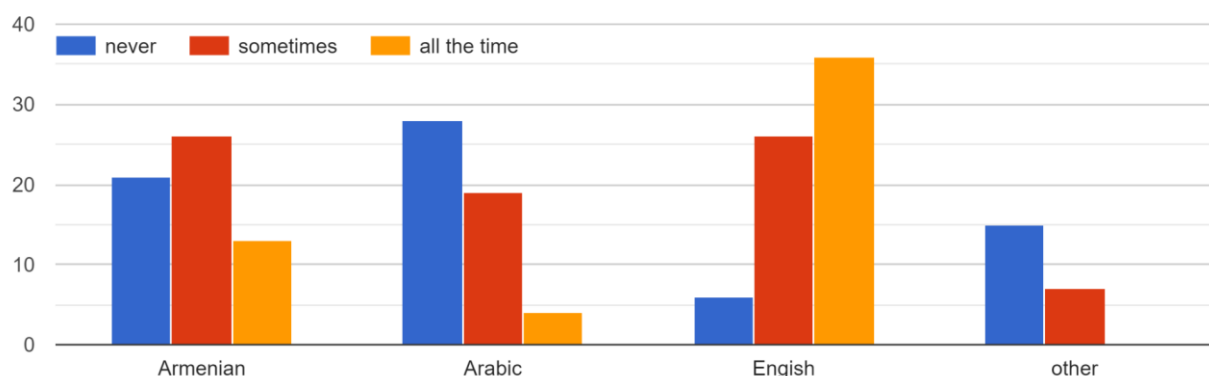Frequency of Languages Used in Private Messages on Instagram

Figure 16
Frequency of Languages Used in Private Messages on Facebook

Discussion of the Findings

This study intended to examine the language choice of Lebanese Armenians on social media platforms in general and Facebook and Instagram in particular. It confirms positive association with previous research that emphasizes the role of English as a dominant social media language.

First, the results and data analysis of the survey conducted show that subjects make their language choice based on the linguistic competence of their audience. This suggests that posts on social media are not written spontaneously; on the contrary, they are all planned. This finding is in line with Androutsopoulos (2014) who pinpointed that "The language of choice is the language that everyone can understand" (as cited in Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2015, p. 29). The study also confirms findings of a positive association with the findings of both interviewees who reported that they make their language choice based on the audience that would be reading them. Moreover, according to the results of the survey questionnaire, 81% of the respondents reported that they do not write Armenian on social media simply because not all their friends understand it.

Another key finding is that social media is used for instrumental purposes. This demonstrates that subjects use social media either to advertise their products, make announcements, or raise awareness about something. This is consistent with Ray (2011) and Berenger (2013) who claim that "social media have been instrumental in the facilitation of dissenting movements' efforts" such as during the Arab Spring revolutions that started in 2011 (as cited in Douai et al., 2014, p. 92). In addition, the same concept is confirmed through the data collected from the six Facebook accounts. For instance, subject three who is the owner of a supermarket advertises his goods via his personal Facebook page and another one created for that purpose. This is in accordance with Akram and Kumar (2018) who believe in the significance of social media on business level for the purpose of promoting brands and gaining customers. In addition to that, subject two has posted the same news of the release of the Armenian activist Hampig Sassounian in French, English, Arabic, and Armenian to spread the news and have the widest exposure ever. He wanted everyone to know that after 40 years in prison he was liberated and free. In fact, "it can be considered to be a political statement to choose the minority language instead of the majority language" (Jongbloed-Faber et al., 2015, p. 29).

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A further novel finding is that Armenian which is considered an ethnic minority language in Lebanon is mostly used for writing posts related to the Armenian community. In fact, this finding is associated with findings reported by Jongbloed-Faber et al. (2015) who claimed that "the use of a minority language is therefore generally limited to genres that are closely related to the respective minority culture, more in particular for formulaic discourse purposes and citations" (p. 29). This concept is clearly presented through the data collected from the Facebook and Instagram content of the six subjects. For instance, subject four posted in Armenian when she posted videos of the live performance of the Armenian dance group SIPAN as she attended the show. Actually, all subjects posted news about the Armenian community and the Armenian Cause in Armenian.

Limitations

Although these findings extend our understanding of the language choice of Lebanese Armenians on social media, this study has several limitations. The main limitation is the lack of information about the language subjects use for the purpose of commenting on others' posts. Keeping track of that was technically not possible. Another limitation involves the issue of conducting the interviews via WhatsApp voice note due to the necessary pandemic precautions required. Had the interviews been conducted face-to-face, the interviewees would have elaborated more, hence receiving more feedback. Moreover, for this study, the researcher has looked at Facebook and Instagram only. Last but not least, the percentage of female participants who filled the survey questionnaire (81.7%) outnumbers that of males (18.3%).

Recommendations

For the purpose of clearer overview of the linguistic choice of Lebanese Armenians on Social Media platforms, a few recommendations are suggested. More research is needed to clarify the language used by the same subjects to comment on others' posts. In addition, more research like the present should also be conducted with focus on other social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Messenger and YouTube. Last but not least, to avoid gender bias, more male participants should have responded to the survey questionnaire.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is hardly possible to arrive at an ultimate final conclusion with regard to the languages Lebanese Armenians use on social media due to different reasons. First of all, only six Facebook accounts and three Instagram accounts were analyzed. In addition to that, the results of the survey questionnaire prepared specially for this research study may not apply to every single Lebanese Armenian living in Lebanon since it includes 72 subjects only. Hence, they should be interpreted as suggestive trends rather than conclusive. For instance, the fact that not a single subject younger than 15 has participated in the data collection process can be indicative of a potential limitation. The results of this research study would have been different if that age group had contributed. Overall, results demonstrate a strong dominance of English. Nurhantoro and Wulandari (2017) believe that "English has become a lifestyle of most society in the world" (p. 37) which is strongly evident in conversations and other linguistic activities on social media. People usually show tendency towards the more superior foreign culture; consequently, in this case they prefer using English.

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