

## **Cognitive, Affective and Behaviors' Attitudes towards Learning Arabic as a Second Language: A Case Study at SMKA Maahad Hamidiah Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia.**

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between the attitude of students studying Arabic language as a second language and their achievement in the Lower Secondary Examination (PMR). The research also investigated which component of attitude; cognitive, affective and behaviour, gives most impact on achievement in PMR examination. The study was conducted in SMKA Maahad Hamidiah Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia. The instrument used was a questionnaire with 34 items. It was distributed to 132 Form Four students. The study employed descriptive and inferential statistics in the data analysis. The study revealed that the cognitive and affective components of attitude were found to be significantly correlated with achievement. However, the result also showed that there was no relation between the behaviour component and achievement. In addition, the cognitive component of attitude was found to contribute significantly to achievement in Arabic. Thus, the finding of this study suggests that attitude is crucial in determining achievement in Arabic language. Therefore, teachers should encourage positive attitude towards learning Arabic among students in order to improve their achievement in the subject.*

**Keywords:** *attitudes and achievements, attitudes towards language, education in Malaysia, relationship between attitudes and achievement, teaching and learning Arabic*

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### **I. Introduction**

The spread of Islam was the main factor in spreading Arabic language in Malaysia. In the early stage, a great number of Malays learned Islam and Arabic language in Mecca. These religious scholars came back to the country and taught Islamic knowledge and Arabic language to understand Islam (Farid, 2007). Therefore, the people's efforts to acquire the language were influenced and motivated by the need to understand Islamic religion.

According to Hashim (1996) in Doka (2000), Malay Muslims have developed a great deal of respect for Arabic as the Quranic language. Thus, they show a great desire to learn Arabic not only meant for recitation of the Quran and Hadith, but also to understand the teaching of the authentic sources. The attitude and interest towards learning Arabic largely determines the success of teaching and learning Arabic, regardless how effective is the teaching method and curriculum adopted by a teacher (Salah, 1987).

Attitude is a way of feeling or thinking about something and therefore, influences one's behaviour. It is discussed and accepted worldwide, that attitude plays an important role in the language learning process and it makes a significant contribution to foreign language learning and acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) as cited in Baker (1992). According to Wentzel (1991), attitude and behaviour have significant relationship with achievement in language learning.

Realizing the importance of learning Arabic, the Ministry of Education, Malaysia had initiated the introduction of official Arabic language curriculum on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1977, parallel with the establishment of National Religious Secondary Schools (SMKA) (<http://www.japim.edu.my/SMKA.htm>).

Arabic language has been added to the curriculum of these schools to become a compulsory subject. All students have to pass this subject in the Lower Secondary Examination (PMR). The students need to spend at least three years since Form One until Form Three, studying four skills of the Arabic language: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. The three years exposure to Arabic language is considered sufficient for students to be competent in the subject. However, it is hard to be proficient in Arabic language without positive attitude towards learning this subject. Brown (1987) stated that achievement in language is determined by students' positive attitudes towards learning the language which includes how they perceive its importance, their effort and interest in learning the language. Titone (1990) as cited by Cheng (1995) also proposed that positive attitude may cause satisfactory achievement, but at the same time, successful achievement may generate positive

attitudes. However, attitudes are not inborn they can be developed and cultivated. They may decline when classroom anxiety increases and appropriate feedback is not given. Hence, he suggested that developing sound attitudes is the first step toward achievement of learning foreign language.

Therefore, the question is; do the students' attitudes really influence their achievement in Arabic language and which attitudinal component (cognitive, affective and behavioural) much influences the achievement?

### **1.1 Purpose of The Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between the attitude of students studying Arabic language as a second language at SMKA Maahad Hamidiah Kajang, Selangor and their achievement of Arabic language in Lower Secondary Examination (PMR). In this study, the researcher also investigates which component of attitude; cognitive, affective and behaviour, gives much impact on achievement in PMR examination.

### **1.2- Research Questions**

Specifically, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' attitude towards learning Arabic language?
2. Is there a relationship between attitude and students' achievement in PMR Arabic language?
3. Which component of attitudes (cognitive, affective, behaviour) contributes significantly to achievement in Arabic language?

## **II. Research Method**

This study uses the survey method to gather the data. Since this method is the procedure in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to entire population for the purpose of describing the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the population (Cresswell, 2005).

### **2.1 Population and Sample**

The population of the study was all Form Four students of SMKA (National Religious Secondary School) Maahad Hamidiah, Kajang, Selangor, Malaysia. The number of students is 177. The questionnaires were distributed to 132 respondents because 45 students were involved in co-curricular activities outside the school on the day the survey was conducted. The population of Form Four students, male and female was used because the researcher investigate the relationship between their attitudes and their achievement in PMR exam which they took a year before.

### **2.2 Instrument**

The study collects the data by using a set of questionnaires to explore the students' attitude towards learning Arabic language. This attitude comprises of cognitive component, affective component and behavior component. Consequently, the study analyzes the data to discern the relationship between the cognitive, affective and behavior components of attitude and achievement in PMR. The questionnaires used for this study is the questionnaires constructed based on literature review. However, in order to fit the special circumstances of the students in SMKA Maahad Hamidiah, Kajang, some items are modified. Besides, the questionnaires were translated to Malay language for easy reading and understanding.

The questionnaires consist of four sections as follow:

1. Section A – Demographic data.

The questions are designed to get information about students' background in learning Arabic and academic achievement (result in PMR – Arabic language).

2. Section B – Cognitive component

The questions consist of ten items which are posed to explore the perception, belief and opinion towards the importance of learning Arabic language in education, school, future prospect, social and religion (Q1-Q10).

3. Section C – Affective component

Five questionnaires are posed to explore the feeling of students towards learning Arabic language such as passion, love, pride and confident (Q11-Q15), and five items to explore anxiety in learning Arabic language (Q16-Q20).

4. Section D – Behaviour component

The questionnaires cover the questions of ten items related to students' effort to improve language proficiency (Q21-Q34).

### III. Scale

1. Section B – Cognitive component (Perception, belief towards the importance of Arabic language).  
Scale: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
2. Section C – Affective component (Language anxiety, love, passion)  
Scale: 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neither agree nor disagree 4. Agree 5. Strongly agree
3. Section D– Behaviors component (Activities to improve Arabic language)  
Scale: 1. Never 2. Seldom 3. Sometimes 4. Often 5. Always

The reliability of the questionnaire was determined by calculating Cronbach's Alpha. It was found that the reliability of all 34 items was 0.859. Meanwhile, the reliability quotients of items on Cognitive components of attitude, affective component and behavior component were 0.814, 0.804 and 0.704 respectively. The alpha value of completely perfect test would reach 1.00. Hence, the alpha value of the items over 0.6 is acceptable (Zaidatun & Mohd Salleh, 2003). In other words, the items of the study were sufficiently reliable.

### 2.3 Tools for Data Analysis

The research employs a simple descriptive statistical analysis to interpret respondent's attitudes. Whereas inferential statistical analysis; Pearson's correlation was computed to find the relationship between overall respondent's attitude level and their achievement in PMR.

## IV. Research Findings

### 5.1 Demographic Data

This consists of three variables namely gender, PMR result and previous learning Arabic experience.

**Table 1**  
**Demographic data**

Gender	n	%
Male	49	37.1
Female	83	62.9
Total	132	100

The total number of respondents in SMKA Maahad Hamidiah, Kajang was 132 students. This included 49 males (37.1%) and 83 females (62.9%).

**Table 2**  
**PMR Result**

Marks Range	Grade	n	%
75 – 100	A	67	50.8
60 – 74	B	37	28.0
50 – 59	C	18	13.6
40 – 49	D	10	7.6
0 – 39	E	-	-

The analysis of PMR result showed that Grade A accounts for 67 respondents (50.8%), Grade B for 37 (28.0%), 18 respondents got Grade C 16 (13.6%) and 10 respondents (7.6%) scored Grade D and no respondent failed (Grade E). That means 100% respondents passed and it is worthy to note that this school's overall PMR result was good.

**Table 3**  
**Learned Arabic in Primary School**

Learned Arabic	n	%
Yes	127	96.2
No	5	3.8
Total	132	100

From the analysis, the percentage of respondents who studied Arabic language in primary school was 96.2% (n=127) and only 3.8% (n=5) did not study Arabic in primary school.

### 5.2 Respondents' Opinion on the Importance of Studying Arabic

**Table 4**  
**Cognitive component**

Item	D		N		A	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Understand Al Quran	-	-	1	0.8	131	99.2
2. Understand Al Hadith	-	-	3	2.3	129	97.7
3. Understand rituals (solat)	-	-	6	4.5	126	95.5
4. Understand Islamic books	2	1.5	24	18.2	106	80.3
5. Specialize at university level	11	8.4	34	25.8	87	65.9
6. Merit for Social recognition	7	5.3	16	12.1	109	82.6
7. Get a good job	11	8.4	30	22.7	91	69.0
8. Be educated person	2	1.5	10	7.6	120	90.9
9. Understand way of life	15	18.6	26	19.7	91	69.0
10. Study in Arab countries	3	2.3	20	15.2	109	82.6

D = Disagree N = Neither agree nor disagree A = Agree

The majority of respondents agreed that Arabic language is important. They agreed that they should learn Arabic to help them in understanding the Quran, Hadith, the religious rituals (eg: salat) and the Islamic heritage books. The percentages are 99.2%, 97.7%, 95.5%, 80.3% respectively. The results show that respondents may study Arabic language because of the religion.

In addition, the majority of respondents responded that they agree with the importance of Arabic language in helping them to further study in Arab country and understand the native speakers' way of life. The percentages are at 82.6% and 69.0%, respectively. However, the minority is at 2.3% and 18.6% stated that they disagree that learning Arabic language helps them to further study in Arab country and understand the native speaker's way of life respectively. Moreover, the highest percentage of respondents (82.6%) agreed with the importance of Arabic in getting the merit for social recognition and the lowest percentage at 5.3% disagreed with the statement.

Furthermore, the majority (65.9%) agreed that Arabic language is important to enable ones to specialize in Arabic at university level compared to only 8.4% did not agree. The highest percentage of respondents at 69.0% countered that Arabic language is useful in getting a good job and majority (90.9%) agreed that Arabic language makes them a better educated person compared to only 8.4% and 1.5% respectively responded disagree.

Thus, the results indicate that most students agreed that learning Arabic language is important for their future education and job prospect besides having social recognition and tolerance.

### 5.3 Students' Feeling towards Learning Arabic

**Table 5**  
**Affective component**

Item	D		N		A		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
11. Like Arabic more		55	41.7	34	25.8	43	32.6
12. Studying Arabic is interesting	21	15.9	23	17.4	88	66.7	
13. Prepare very well for Arabic	43	32.6	46	34.8	43	32.6	
14. Excited to learn Arabic		30	22.7	49	37.1	53	40.1
15. Confident speaking Arabic	80	60.6	37	28.0	15	11.3	

D = Disagree N = Neither agree nor disagree A = Agree

The results show that only 32.6% respondents countered that they like Arabic language more than other subjects compared to 41.7% like other subjects more than Arabic language. Therefore, respondents study Arabic not because they like the Arabic language but because of the religious factor and the requirement to pass in the exam.

However, the result shows that majority of respondents (66.7%) agreed that studying Arabic is interesting compared to 15.9 % felt it is not interesting and 17.4% was neither agree nor disagree. Moreover, the percentage of respondents who countered for feeling pressured to prepare very well for Arabic class is the same with respondents who did not feel pressured (32.6%). In respect to excitement in learning Arabic, the results show that the respondents responded that they feel teaching and learning Arabic session make them excited to learn Arabic more. This contributes the highest percentage of 40.1%. While, 22.7% respondents disagreed and 37.1% were neither agree nor disagree. The majority of respondents (60.6%) confessed that they do not feel confident when they speak Arabic in the Arabic class and only minority of respondents (11.3%) agreed that they feel confident.

**Table 6**  
**Affective component (language anxiety)**

Item	D		N		A		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
16. Feel tense in Arabic class		65	49.2	41	31.1	26	19.7
17. Shy to answer	24	18.1	36	27.3	72	54.5	
18. Never feel quite sure	13	9.8	22	16.7	97	73.4	
19. Heart pounding		13	9.8	20	15.2	99	75.0
20. Students will laugh when speaking	35	26.5	40	30.3	57	43.2	

D = Disagree N = Neither agree nor disagree A = Agree

The items: 16-20 were asked to investigate the anxiety level in the Arabic classroom. The respondents who stated agree for feel tense in Arabic class is 19.7% compared to 49.2% disagreed for being tense. This shows that majority of respondents reported they do not feel tense in Arabic class.

However, the highest percentage counters for the respondents who agreed that they are shy to volunteer answering in Arabic class (54.5%) compared to 18.1% responded disagree. The majority of respondents (73.4%) countered agree for they never feel quite sure of themselves when speaking in Arabic class compared to the lowest percentage (9.8%) feel confident of themselves in Arabic class. In respect to feeling of heart pounding when one is going to be called on in language class, the percentage of response agree is 75.0% and disagree is 9.8%. This means majority of respondents experienced heart pounding when their names are going to be called on in Arabic class. Furthermore, the percentage of respondents who responded agree to the statement "I am afraid that other students will laugh at me when I speak Arabic" is 43.2% and disagree is 26.5%. Based on the overall results of items 16-20, Majority of respondents showed anxious feeling in Arabic class.

#### 5.4 Respondents' Readiness for Action in Response to Arabic Language

**Table 7 Behaviors component**

Item	N		S		A		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	
21. Read Arabic newspaper	93	70.5	39	29.5	-	-	
22. Read Arabic story books	38	28.8	94	71.2	-	-	
23. Listen to Arabic news	54	40.9	69	52.2	9	6.9	
24. Listen to Arabic songs (Nasyid)	10	7.6	80	60.6	42	31.8	
25. Watch Arabic movies	73	55.3	58	43.9	1	0.8	
26. Speak Arabic with teachers	41	31.1	88	66.7	3	2.3	
27. Speak Arabic with friends		46	34.8	86	65.2	-	-
28. Complete homework on time	6	4.5	74	56.1	52	39.4	
29. Do extra exercises		10	7.6	97	73.5	25	18.9
30. Obtain extra lessons	47	35.6	51	38.7	34	25.8	
31. Involve in Arabic co-curricular	110	83.3	21	15.9	1	0.8	
32. Use Arabic-Arabic dictionary	81	61.4	36	27.3	15	11.4	
33. Use Arabic-Malay dictionary	1	0.8	11	8.3	120	90.9	
34. Use Malay-Arabic dictionary	-	-	10	7.6	122	92.5	

N = Never      S = Sometimes      A = Always

The table indicates the calculated results of respondents' effort to improve Arabic language proficiency. Pertaining to the effort to read Arabic language materials, the majority of respondents (70.5%) never read Arabic newspaper and only the minority of them (29.5%) read it sometimes. In contrast, the percentage of respondents who sometimes read the story books is the highest (71.2%). This results show that the high percentage of respondents read Arabic story books but not the newspaper. This happens because they may not have access to Arabic newspapers at school or at home compared to Arabic story books which can be found in the school library.

Pertaining to the effort of the respondents in listening to Arabic news in radio the results show that the smallest number of respondents, 6 respondents (6.9%) stated always, 69 respondents (52.2%) stated sometimes and the highest number, 54 respondents (40.9%) stated never listen to Arabic news. This indicates results may be due to the lack of Arabic news aired in radio or on local television channels.

Moreover, the above table also shows that the majority of respondents sometimes listen to Arabic songs (n = 80, 60.6%) and quite high number of them (n= 42, 31.8%) always listen to it. This pattern of response shows that the respondents have the interest to listen to the Arabic song since there may have much Arabic songs available on radio, cassettes and CDs. The table also indicates that the highest percentage of respondents (55.3%) never watches the Arabic movies, 43.9% of respondents stated sometimes and the lowest percentage (0.8%) stated always. These results may due to unavailability of Arabic movies on local TV channels and it is difficult to find the Arabic movies VCD in the local market.

Pertaining to speaking using Arabic language, the highest percentage (66.7%) respondents sometimes speak to teachers, 31.1% never and the lowest percentage (2.3%) responded always communicate with teachers using Arabic language. Besides, majority of respondents with the percentage of 65.2% countered they sometimes speak Arabic with friends. On the other hand, 34.8% respondents stated they never use Arabic language in speaking with friends and no one responded always speak in Arabic language with friends. Based on the results, it is inferred that majority of the respondents had put some effort in speaking with teachers and friends using Arabic language though not as many as always use Arabic language.

In respect to the lesson mastery (items: 28, 29, 30), the highest percentage of respondents (56.1%) countered for sometimes complete their homework on time, 39.4% respondents always, compared to minority (6 respondents, 4.5%) never complete the homework on time. In addition, majority of respondents (73.5%) stated sometimes do extra exercises. While, 8.9% responded always and the minority is 7.6% countered for never do extra exercises. It can be said that students to improve their Arabic language by completing the homework on time and doing extra exercises.

The minority of respondents (n= 34, 25.8%) always obtain extra lessons in Arabic somewhere else, compared to the majority of respondents (n=51, 38.7%) reported sometimes and 47 respondents (35.6%) never obtain extra lesson outside school. This result may be due to the fact that the majority of respondents stay at hostel. For involvement in Arabic co-curricular activities, the big number of respondents (83.3%) responded never, 15.9% sometimes and only one respondent (0.8%) always involved in Arabic co-curricular activities. This result probably due to the lack number of Arabic language co-curricular competitions held in school.

The table above also shows that the highest percentage of respondents (61.4%) responded they never use the Arabic-Arabic dictionary, whereas 27.3% of them stated sometimes and only 11.4% responded that they

always refer to Arabic-Arabic dictionary in their learning. However, the result clearly indicates that the majority of respondents (90.9% and 92.5%) always use Arabic-Malay and Malay-Arabic dictionary respectively. This suggests that students are aware of the importance of dictionary to enrich their vocabulary. In this regard, they prefer to use either Arabic-Malay or Malay-Arabic dictionary in their learning.

5.5 The Level of Respondent's Attitudes towards Learning Arabic Language

**Table 8**

**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cognitive	132	3.00	5.00	4.2644	.48443
Affective	132	1.20	4.40	2.8000	.60809
Behaviour	132	1.43	3.50	2.4275	.40087
Valid N (listwise)	132				

The descriptive data summarized in table 8 represents an indicator of respondents' attitudes towards learning Arabic language. This is meant to answer the research question 1 (What is the level of students' attitude towards learning Arabic language?)

There are 34 items dealing with attitudes towards learning Arabic language. The items were grouped into three components of attitudes. These components are cognitive (items: 1 – 10), affective (item: 11 – 20) and behavior (items: 21 – 34). The table (8) shows the mean scores of each component of attitude.

The highest mean score is cognitive component of attitude at 4.26 and the standard deviation at 0.48. It indicates that, the respondent strongly agreed with the statement of learning Arabic language is important. The mean score at 2.80 and the standard deviation at 0.61 of affective component indicate a moderately high. This shows that the respondents' feeling towards learning Arabic language was moderately positive. The mean score for behavior component was 2.43 and the standard deviation was 0.40. This result shows that respondents countered their behavioral actions to improve Arabic language is slightly low.

5.6 The Relationship between Attitudes and Achievement in PMR Examination

To address the research question 2, the relationship between attitude which has been categorized into three components: Cognitive, affective and behavior and students' achievement in PMR was analyzed. This was done by calculating the Pearson Correlation. The Pearson correlation provides the direction, significance and the strength of correlation which can assume any value between - 1 and + 1 (Grimm, 1993).

**Table 9**

**Correlations**

		PMR Result	Cognitive	Affective	Behaviour
PMR Result	Pearson Correlation	1	.323**	.278**	-.024
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.001	.788
	N	132	132	132	132
Cognitive	Pearson Correlation	.323**	1	.412**	.391**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	132	132	132	132
Affective	Pearson Correlation	.278**	.412**	1	.396**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000		.000
	N	132	132	132	132
Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	-.024	.391**	.396**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.788	.000	.000	
	N	132	132	132	132

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The above table (Table 9) shows the correlation between each three components of attitude and achievement in PMR. Cognitive component of attitude is found to be significantly positively correlated with achievement,  $r = 0.323$ ,  $p = 0.000$ .

Affective component of attitude and achievement is found to be significantly positively correlated at  $r = 0.278$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . However, the behavior component of attitude is found to be negatively correlated with achievement,  $r = -0.024$ ,  $p = 0.788$ . The correlation is not significant; hence there is no relation between behaviour component and achievement.

#### 5.7 The Component of Attitude That Contributes Significantly to Achievement in Arabic Language

Pertaining to this research question, the results from Table 8 shows that cognitive component of attitude is found to contribute significantly to achievement in Arabic at  $r = 0.323$ , followed by affective component of attitude at  $r = 0.278$  and the behavior component does not contribute significantly to achievement in Arabic language ( $r = -0.024$ ,  $p = 0.788$ ).

### V. Conclusion

The findings indicate that, the level of cognitive component of attitude is high. The majority of respondents strongly agreed with the statement of learning Arabic language is important. However, the respondents' feeling towards learning Arabic language was moderately positive. This result shows that respondents countered their behavioral actions to improve Arabic language is slightly low. It was also revealed that cognitive component of attitude is found to be significantly positively correlated with achievement,  $r = 0.323$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . Affective component of attitude and achievement is found to be significantly positively correlated at  $r = 0.278$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . These results support some previously reported findings. For example, Stern & Brown (1987) stated that achievement in language learning is determined by students' favorable attitudes include their perceptions towards the importance of learning language. That favorable attitude includes students' perception towards the importance of learning language, students' continuous self effort and strategy in improving foreign language. Moreover the findings also coincide with Macintyre & Gardner (1991) stated that students' feeling towards learning foreign language has significant relationship with achievement in language. Therefore, language anxiety has been negatively correlated with language course grades and teacher's rating of achievement.

However, the behavior component of attitude is found insignificant,  $r = -0.024$ ,  $p = 0.788$ . It is quite different from the previous research of Gardner (1981), which revealed that students who expended a considerable amount of energy in learning French were those who had favorable attitudes towards French.

The results also reveal that cognitive component of attitude is found to contribute significantly to achievement in Arabic at  $r = 0.323$ , followed by affective component of attitude at  $r = 0.278$ . In contrast, the behavior component does not contribute significantly to achievement in Arabic language ( $r = -0.024$ ,  $p = 0.788$ ). This implies that students' achievement in learning Arabic is contributed by students' cognitive and affective components of attitude but not by behavior component of attitude.

### VI. RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, it is recommended that the school should offer more chances for having real language situations such as listening to Arabic songs, news broadcasts, speaking Arabic, reading Arabic publications, writing diary, compositions in Arabic in class instruction or school environment. Additionally, to increase students' interest to learn, the teacher should adopt more interesting instructional aids such as, role playing games, videotapes, video cassettes and computer aided interactive lesson.

Moreover, it is suggested that teachers should design more activities that can stimulate positive attitude towards learning such as activities that promote problem-solving and critical thinking skills to encourage students' participation in class. This will develop positive attitude towards learning Arabic as communicative language.

Teacher also should establish a cooperative task or reward structure for students for example by giving a coupon for student who responds using Arabic language. This can reduce anxiety and promote more interaction, thus produce favorable attitude towards learning Arabic.

It is recommended that the school conducts various competitions dealing with Arabic learning same as activities conducted by Malay and English language panels, such as Arabic drama, speech, songs, debate, games and monthly assembly in Arabic language. These activities allow students to practice the skills they have already developed in their Arabic language.



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