



# TEACHER'S QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## ABSTRACT

*The goal of this study was to describe teachers' questions in English classroom Interaction and the function of questions that the teachers asked. A descriptive qualitative design was used in this study. The data and source of data was one English teacher who teaches at grade 11 at SMA Negeri 15 Medan. The data were collected by using videotaping and interviews. The data were analyzed by using descriptive qualitative. The result showed that (1) The teacher asked remembering (81.5), understanding (17%) and applying (1.5%) to students. The teacher asked questions to stimulate and maintain students' interest, encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson, enable teachers to clarify what students have said, elicit particular structures or vocabulary items, check students' understanding and encourage students' participation in a lesson.*

**Keywords:** Bloom's, classroom, interaction, questions, taxonomy, teachers

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In revolution industry 4.0, critical thinking is in the first second soft skills that people must enhance. Critical thinking is the ace and active interpretation and evaluation of communications, observations and argumentation (Fisher & Scriven, 1997, p.21). In enhancing soft skills in critical thinking, it should be started at an early stage, and school is involved in enhancing students' critical thinking.

The 21st century skills are in line with the concept of the 2013 curriculum. Learning activity in curriculum 2013 is using scientific approach (5M) which encompasses observing (mengamati), questioning (menanya), associating (menalar), experimenting (mencoba) and creating networking (membentuk jaringan). Based on revised Bloom's taxonomy by Krathwohl and Anderson, students need to be able to achieve not only LOTS (Lower Order Thinking Skills) namely C1 (remembering) and C2 (understanding), MOTS (Middle Order Thinking Skills) namely C3 (applying) and C4 (analyzing), but they must also able to achieve HOTS (Higher Order Thinking Skills) namely C5 (evaluating) and C6 (creating).

Ennis (1996) states that academic research shows that critical thinking is developed through teacher-facilitated questions. Ennis points up that to build complex conceptualizations and foster critical thinking, asking questions to students is a way to achieve that. Therefore, this research will deal with one aspect of classroom interaction, which is teacher's questions. Classroom interaction is the action that is performed by the teacher and the students in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom. According to Richmond et al. (2009, p.31), classroom interaction concluded that students develop a greater effect for subjects taught via class discussion. When students feel appreciated by the teacher, they will be motivated in communicating, conveying and expressing their thoughts. It is in the same line with the statement of Loewenberg and Forzani (2009, p. 497) who said that teachers are key to students' learning. In enhancing comprehension about certain topics, students need to enhance critical thinking skills. Teacher's questions are very effective in enhancing students' critical thinking skills. Students interpret, evaluate, observe, communicate, inform and argue when the teacher asks a lot of questions.

The teachers' questions, in fact, would have consequences on students' critical thinking. Barjesteh and Moghadam (2014) states that the teachers' questions are a means of attracting the students' attention to promote verbal response and assess students' progress. Researches and experts showed that the questioning dominates the teaching learning process in educational settings. In the classroom, teachers are expected to stimulate students to think critically by engaging them to discuss a certain issue related to the topic being taught. The reason for doing that is to get students to speak English to take part in the teaching and learning process.

In English learning, students are expected to produce in the target language. Those can be achieved by asking a lot of questions related to the lessons being taught. Students' answers to one question can bring more



questions that teachers may ask. There will be an interaction in a classroom when students respond to the teacher's questions actively and enthusiastically, and vice versa. This derives that students can actively take part in the classroom when teachers ask questions to students, and they need to answer the questions in the target language at the same time. Additionally, students' language ability can be improved through teacher-student interactions. Considering the need of teacher's questions, questioning plays a role in comprehension in learning for students. In a classroom setting, teacher questions that are used to expose negation, challenge assumptions, and lead to new knowledge are considered as an important teaching approach. Hence, teachers should be able to design questions to increase students' knowledge and advance their critical thinking. Also, teachers need to design questions that can stimulate each level of students' critical thinking. For example, lower order questions require students to recall previously taught information, while higher order questions require students to manipulate information for some purpose (Perrot, 1986).

Ahmadi and Kurniawan (2020) investigated a teacher's question in the intensive listening course at an institute of Islamic studies in Ponorogo. Meida et al. (2020) analyzed teacher's question on Thematic Learning of Curriculum 2013 at Primary Schools. Fadilah and Zainil (2010) investigated teacher's question types and students' speaking performance in EFL classroom.

After concluding the previous studies above, the writer finally considered the research on analyzing teachers' questions that focuses on teaching explanation text in grade 11, where the researchers above have never done this research.

Based on the preliminary observation in grade 11 at SMA Negeri 15 Medan on September, 3rd 2023, the researcher found that the English teacher that the researcher observed dominantly asked Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) to students. The total number of questions asked by the teacher was 12 questions. The preliminary data that the writer got in SMA Negeri 15 Medan did not meet the expectations above, that is why the researcher wants to do deeper research on what is the dominant level that the teacher asks students and what are the functions of the questions that the teacher asks to students.

The researcher has formulated the gap and this study needs to be done to know more about the question level asked by the teacher. Therefore, this study answers these research questions

1. What are the levels of questions asked by the teachers in English classroom interaction at SMA Negeri 15 Medan?
2. What are the functions of questions that the teachers ask?

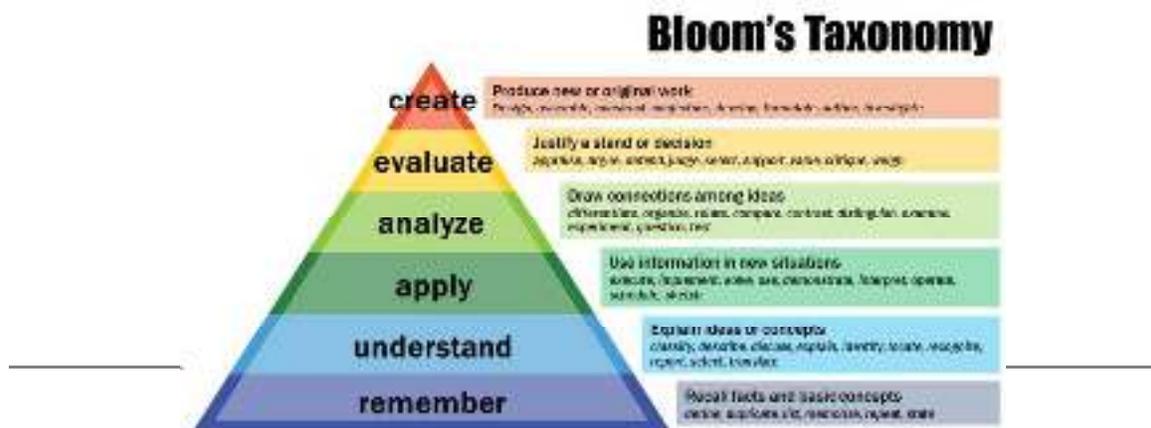
The research contributes to finding methods in enhancing students' critical thinking in further research.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Bloom's Taxonomy*

In 2001, Bloom's Taxonomy was revised by Bloom's former student, Lorin Anderson, and one of Bloom's original research partners, David Krathwohl. They hope that the updates will increase the relevance for students and teachers of the 21st century. Critical thinking questions can be used in the classroom to develop thinking at all levels in the cognitive domain. The result will be improved attention to details, better understanding and better problem-solving skills.

Futher information about the level of the revised Bloom's Taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) can be seen in figure 1.





## Figure 1. Level of Questions Based on Revised Bloom's Taxonomy

### *Function of Questions*

Research demonstrates that questioning is one of the foremost techniques used by teachers in a classroom (Lewis, 1990). Richards and Lockhart (1994) state that there are several functions of questions.

#### *a. Stimulate and Maintain Students' Interest*

Dewey (1913) believes that to awaken and stimulate the direct needs of the individual, educational activities should be done. Some task features called cooperative variables can affect attention and arousal (Berlyne, 1970). In order to stimulate students' interest in new topics, they can use their personal interests by teaching in the context of the interests. For example, teachers stimulate students to consider the need of describing things or places in descriptive text before teaching it. Teachers begin the teaching by asking questions "if you ask someone about a place and you are about to go there, what information can you ask to him/her?", "if they cannot mention a single information about the place, can you go there?"

#### *b. Encourages Students to Think and Focus on The Content of The Lesson*

There are many factors why students do not feel motivated to learn English, one of them is that the teacher implements passive teaching. Teacher is lecturing without accepting any feedback from students. Students feel drained by receiving knowledge from teachers only without thinking and stay focused on the content of the lesson. Here, asking questions to students can help to cope with that problem to make students be active to think and stay focused on the lesson.

#### *c. Enable Teachers to Clarify What Students has Said*

Students sometimes answer teachers' questions indirectly or students cannot explain it correctly and clearly. In this situation teachers clarify what the students meant to say by asking and dig more information about the answer, for example:

- T : Who can mention 5 continents?  
S : Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe and United States  
T : United States? United States is a country. What continent is United States in?  
S : America, Ma'am  
T : Correct

#### *d. Elicit Particular Structures or Vocabulary Items*

For students to be better in English skills, they must know the fundamentals of language itself, structures and vocabulary. The teacher asks about particular structures and vocabulary items to students. If a student answers the teacher's questions, the rest of the students know particular structures or vocabulary items.

- T : How can you say *ayah saya sedang menjemput saya*? What is *menjemput* in English?  
S : Pick up, ma'am. My dad picks me up  
T : Your dad is on the way to pick you up, he's doing it, so you need to add an additional formula. So how is it supposed to be?  
S : My dad is picking me up, Ma'am  
T : Good job



*e. Check Students' Understanding*

To check students' understanding, teachers can measure to what extent the students understand. For example, the teacher had explained the explanation text.

- T : How many generic structures are in explanation text?  
 S : 2 ma'am  
 T : What are they?  
 S : General statement and sequenced explanation  
 T : If the explanation is a fact, what tense you use to explain it?  
 S : Simple present tense  
 T : How do you say "tape diproduksi dari ubi yang difermentasi? What language feature do you use?  
 S : Passive voice ma'am, tape is produced from fermented cassava

*f. Encouraging Students' Participation in a Lesson*

It is essential to encourage students' participation. One way to achieve that is by implementing a classroom discussion. Teachers can ask HOTS and LOTS questions to students which can guide a lot more questions asked by the teacher.

**3. METHODS**

The research employed qualitative techniques on what the level of questions are used in English Classroom and the functions of questions. The data are information or facts used in discussing or deciding the answer to a research question (Arikunto, 2010, p. 129). The data of this study were videotaping from teachers' utterances which consist of teachers' questions and the interview consists of the function of teacher's questions. The setting of the research was SMA Negeri 15 Medan, which is located in Medan Sunggal Regency. The research was conducted at grade 11 of SMA Negeri 15 Medan. The participant of this study was an English teacher at SMA Negeri 15 Medan

**4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

*RESULTS*

*Level of Questions*

The total number of questions asked by the teacher was 65 questions during a 36 minute meeting via Google Meeting. The topic of the material taught by the teacher was about personal letters. The topic that the teacher taught was the topic that had been taught in previous meetings before. The teacher explained and rechecked students' comprehension about the material that the teacher asked them to read in the previous meeting. Thus, the teacher asked the students about the material so it may emphasize the students' comprehension. The total number of questions asked by the teacher can be seen in table 4.1.

**Table 1. Level of Questions Asked by Teacher LR**

Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001)						Total
Rem	Und	Ap	An	Eva	Cre	
53 questions	11 questions	1 question	-	-	-	65 questions
81.5%	17%	1.5%	-	-	-	100%

*Note:*



Rem : Remembering  
Und : Understanding  
An : Analyzing  
Ap : Applying  
Eva : Evaluating  
Cre : Creating

From table 4.1, it is clearly can be seen that the dominant level of questions asked by the teacher was remembering and understanding. Those level of questions appeared during a 36 minute meeting. The highest level of questions was remembering which had 76.9% then, understanding (21.5%) respectively. Applying level of questions appeared once which gave 1.5% of all the teacher's questions. However, no HOTS questions such as evaluating and creating questions asked by the teacher.

In conclusion, the types of questions asked by the teacher during a 36 minute meeting were remembering, understanding, and analyzing. From the level of questions above, the dominant level of questions was remembering. Meanwhile, no applying level of questions in MOTS and no evaluating and creating in HOTS used by the teacher. The researcher described each level of questions deeper as well as the evidence as follows.

### *1. Remembering Level of Questions*

Remembering the level of questions were asked by the teacher also. Remembering the level of questions appeared 53 times during a 36 minute meeting. As shown in the table, there were 81.5% of all levels of questions asked during the teaching and learning process. In this level of questions, the teacher recalls facts and basic concepts of the material being taught.

#### *Data 1/Rem*

T : Okay, I want to ask you. We start ya. I want to ask you.  
What is our last topic? What was our last topic?  
S : personal letter, ma'am

In data 1, the teacher tried to recall what their last topic was. By asking the question to students, it retrieves knowledge from long term memory of specific details and elements. The teacher's question belongs to factual knowledge in the dimension of knowledge. Factual knowledge contains the basic elements students must know if they are to be acquainted with the discipline or to solve any of the problems in it (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). The teacher's question encompassed the basic elements to communicate about their academic discipline, understanding it, and organizing it systematically.

#### *Data 2/Rem*

T : Okay what is the definition of personal letter?  
S : Personal letter is an informal letter that we send to (inaudible) our relatives

Data 2 showed that the teacher asked the question to trigger students' factual knowledge of specific terminology of the topic. Before explaining further material, the teacher asked basic elements of the topic that the students must know first. The teacher asked the definition of a personal letter. By asking the basic terminology to students, the students tried to remember the technicality of the personal letter itself. Technically, a personal letter is an informal letter, a letter that we send to our relatives and so on.

### *2. Understanding Level of Questions*

This level of questions was the most questions asked by teacher LR with 17% of all teacher talk. This level of questions appeared 11 times during a 36 minute meeting. The teacher asked this level of questions so that students could explain ideas about the topic being taught. By answering the teacher's questions, students were



understanding the topic well before the teacher delivered the material. Some of the excerpts of the understanding level of questions taken from the transcription of the videotaping can be seen below to support the facts.

*Data 1/Und*

- T : Okay now, we move to January 12, 2015. What do we call it?  
S : Date

Data 1 belongs to the understanding level of questions because the teacher asked the question so that the students were able to classify and determine that January 12, 2015 belongs to the date in the generic structure of personal letters. Classifying occurs when a student recognizes that something such as a particular instance belongs to a certain category (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Classifying involves detecting relevant features or patterns that "fit" both the specific instance and the concept or principle.

*Data 2/Und*

- T : Enggak enggak. Sampai disitu saja sayang. Hanya itu saja. Bagian atasnya saja saja (no no. that's it dear. Just the top). Okay what do we call it? According to the parts of the letter, personal letter I mean. What do we call it?  
S : Address

Data 2 also belongs to understanding the level of questions to encourage the students to classify that a specific part of personal letter belongs to a certain generic structure of personal letter. By asking these questions to students and the students were able to answer the teacher's questions, that means students understand the all parts of a personal letter. Classifying begins with a specific instance or example and requires the student to find a general concept or principle (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001)

*Data 3/Und*

- T : Keluarga yang bagaimana itu relatives? (what family are relatives?)  
S : Kayak (like) inaudible  
T : Kayak? (like?)  
S : Yang dekat gitu ma'am? (that close to us, ma'am?)

Data 3 showed that the question belongs to the understanding level of questions because it triggered the students to explain the concept of relatives. The word translation of relatives in Indonesian is 'keluarga'; however, the meaning of relatives in English is not the same as the meaning in Indonesian. In Indonesian uncles, aunts, nephews, cousins are keluarga, meanwhile in English, those can be said as relatives. Those kinds of questions are intended to construct the idea of something and encourage the students to understand the idea of relatives itself.

### *3. Applying Level of Questions*

This level of questions showed once in the teaching and learning process for 36 minutes meeting. This gives 1.5% of all the teacher's questions.

*Data 1/Ap*

- T : Ya okay so to read it, membacanya bagaimana Aliza? (how to read it Aliza?) 7?  
S : 755009 Nusa Tenggara Timur

Data 1 of applying level of questions belongs to applying because the teacher asked the questions to encourage students to apply a procedure to a familiar task. In this question, the teacher encouraged students to apply a procedure of reading an address in a personal letter. The address contained numbers, so the teacher wanted to train students' ability to read numbers in an address. Whether the students read the numbers one by one



as it supposed to be or the students read it by mentioning hundreds, thousand, etc. In executing, a student is faced with a familiar task and knows what to do in order to complete it. The student simply carries out a known procedure to perform the task. (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

### ***The Functions of Questions***

Based on analysis, teacher LR asked questions for several functions: stimulating and maintaining students' interest, encouraging students to think and focus on the content of the lesson, enabling the teacher to clarify what students have said, eliciting particular structures or vocabulary items, checking students' understanding and encouraging students participation in a lesson. The further information about the function of questions asked by the teacher can be seen below.

#### ***1. Stimulate and Maintain Students' Interest***

The teacher asked questions to stimulate and maintain students' interest as teacher LR asked "pernah gak mengirim surat izin kalau kalian mau permisi ke sekolah? (have you ever sent a permission letter if you cannot come to school?) Maybe you are sick, when you were sick, ketika kalian sakit ya kan? (when you are sick, right?). This question stimulates and maintains students' interest because the teacher asked the question that the students can relate to themselves. The teacher also asked the question "why do we discuss this?" to dig into students' curiosity and interest in the lesson. Then the teacher explained further on why they should discuss the topic.

#### ***2. Encourage Students to Think and Focus on The Content of The Lesson***

The teacher also asked questions to encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson. The teacher ask questions and relates the question to Indonesian ethnic groups so that students are able to think and focus on the content of the lesson. The teacher first explained to members of a family "in Bataknese there is uda, inang uda, nang boru. In Karonese, there is mami, kila, mama, bibi". Then the teacher asked "What do we call them?". By asking members of a family in English and students can relate them into their own knowledge, it triggers students to think and focus on the content of the lesson.

#### ***3. Enable Teachers to Clarify What Students has Said***

Sometimes, students do not know how to answer teachers' questions clearly or the teachers cannot hear students' answers clearly. To solve the problem, teachers ask questions to clarify what students has said. The teacher asked "who are our relatives?" then one of the students answered unconfidently "keluarga gitu ya ma'am? (is it family?)". To clarify students' answer, teacher asked "keluarga in English is family, is it right? Keluarga yang bagaimana itu relatives (what family is relatives?"

One of the students answered "the recipient address" when the teacher asked "whose address?". To clarify what students have said, the teacher asked "what's the meaning of that? do you mean penerima surat? (do you mean the receiver of the letter?)"

#### ***4. Elicit Particular Structures or Vocabulary Items***

The teacher asked questions about vocabulary so that students know certain vocabulary of the topic being learned. The teacher asked "jadi in Indonesian, relatives means what? (so in Indonesian, what's the meaning of relatives?)". Then one of the students answered "kerabat". The teacher wanted the students to elicit the meaning of relatives.

The teacher asked "what's the meaning of cute?". One of the students answered "cute", then the teacher asked one more time "what's the meaning of cutest?". The teacher wanted the students to understand the difference between cute and cutest. Teacher also asked "what is the meaning of main?", then one of the students answered "inti" right away.



In order to know the suffix in English, the teacher asked the students “what is the meaning of signature?”. One of the students answered “tanda tangan”. The teacher LR asked one more time to students “how to say menandatangani?”. Then one of the students answered “sign”

##### *5. Check Students' Understanding*

To check students' understanding, teachers must ask questions to students whether the students have understood the topic or not. The researcher interviewed teacher LR to get further data of the research. The researcher asked “when you ask questions about the material you are about to deliver, do the students pay attention to you and answer your questions?”. Teacher LR answered that the students pay attention to her when she is teaching and they respond when she asks questions to them. To check students' understanding, teacher LR asked questions to students while she was teaching. When students are able to answer teacher LR's questions, that means students understand about the topic being taught.

The teacher asked the students for parts of a personal letter to students. One of the students answered “the introductory paragraph, body paragraph and closing. It means that the students understand the parts of personal letter. In an interview held by the researcher, the researcher asked whether the teacher has a strategy to increase student's interaction in class or not. The teacher said she asks some questions to make them pay attention when she is teaching.

##### *6. Encouraging Students' Participation in a Lesson*

The teacher taught students online by using Google Meeting, that is why the students must turn their camera on. However, some of the students did not turn their camera on. Therefore, teacher LR encouraged students to participate in a lesson by asking them to turn their camera on. The teacher asked “baru dapat paket kan dari pemerintah kalian kan sayangku? (have you got internet data from the government, dear?)”, Then the teacher asked the student “there is something wrong with your phone?”. Those questions asked by the teacher aimed to encourage students to participate in a lesson by turning their camera on while the teaching and learning process occurred.

## *DISCUSSION*

Teachers' questions can be defined as stimuli or instructional cues to construct students' way of thinking. This can be achieved by asking the level of questions from the revised Bloom's Taxonomy namely LOTS, MOTS and HOTS to students. These questions take part in enhancing students' critical thinking.

The teacher asked dominantly about LOTS questions. This finding had similar results with Fadilah and Zainil (2020) where LOTS questions were the most asked questions type by teachers, however HOTS questions attracted students to speak more compared to LOTS questions under some circumstances. The questioning is so crucial since it will invite students to think and find a solution to the questions asked (Fadilah & Zainil, 2020). In a study conducted by Döş et al. (2016), the teachers proved to be asking questions mostly in order to attract students' interest and attention. This finding had similar results with researcher's finding that the two teachers asked questions to students to stimulate and maintain students' interest.

The teacher asked to remember, understand and apply. The teacher asked remembering and understanding questions. This finding had a slightly similar result with Modjanggo (2018) where the teacher asked three levels of questions, knowledge, comprehension and evaluation. In revised Bloom's Taxonomy (2001), the teacher's questions are remembering, understanding and evaluating. Meanwhile, the similarity between Modjanggo (2018) and the researcher's findings is that there are no HOTS questions asked by the teachers.

The questioning strategies should be applied based on lesson and the level of students to make the learning process run well (Nashruddin & Ningtyas, 2020). It was found that the teacher applied more than one type of questions. It had similar results with the researcher's findings that the teacher applied more than one type of questions. Teacher's questions are dominantly remembering and understanding in LOTS questions, few MOTS questions asked by the teacher during the teaching process (Ahmadi & kurniawan, 2020). The goals of teaching and learning can be achieved by posing the right questions. Teachers may propose various types of questions



depending on the circumstances that require them. The findings of the research had similar findings with the researcher's findings, however researchers found out that no HOTS questions were proposed by the teachers while conducting the research.

Critical thinking should be started at an early stage. It increases as the students grow older. When students are in senior high school, the students are able to construct abstract thought, follow the form of argumentation and handle many possible hypotheses with many possible solutions (Piaget, 1936). Critical thinking can be achieved by asking questions to students. Teachers ask questions that lead students to construct abstract thoughts, argue and handle many possible hypotheses with possible solutions.

The analysis of data revealed that the teachers at SMA Negeri 15 Medan asked dominantly about LOTS questions to students. Teacher LR asked LOTS and MOTS. Teacher LR asked dominantly about LOTS questions in remembering the level of questions that gives 81.5% of all teacher talk. The second dominant level that teacher LR asked was understanding level of questions that gives 17% of all teacher talk. The lowest level of questions asked by teacher LR was MOTS in applying level of questions that gives 1.5% of all teacher talk. However, no HOTS level of questions asked by the teacher. The teacher did not ask about analyzing, evaluating and creating levels of questions, perhaps it is because of the teaching and learning process held online via Google Classroom, that is why the teacher only recalled the material that had been taught in previous meetings.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This research is a descriptive qualitative on the Teachers' Questions in English classroom interaction at SMA Negeri 15 Medan. Based on data analysis and finding, the researcher concluded that the questions asked by the English teacher at SMA Negeri 15 Medan are still of lower order thinking skills. The teacher asked dominantly about LOTS and a few MOTS. And it answered the first problem of the study.

The functions of questions that the teacher asked are to stimulate and maintain students' interest, encourage students to think and focus on the content of the lesson, enable teachers to clarify what students have said, elicit particular structures or vocabulary items, check students' understanding and encourage students' participation in a lesson.

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