

AN ANALYSIS OF FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS IN WOMEN'S SPEECH IN THE TALKSHOW *UNITED STATES OF WOMEN SUMMIT*

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Abstract

This study aims at denoting the features of female speech and its functions that Michelle Obama applied in the Talk Show *United States of Women Summit*. In addition, the purpose of this study is to also denote the features of male speech, so as to see which feature is the most dominant in use. The study results in the finding of 18 data of women's utterances. There are 7 types of speech features consisting of 2 data adjectives, 1 datum of tag question, 2 data of raising intonations on declaratives, 1 datum of avoidance of strong swear words, 6 data of emphatic stress, 2 data of lexical hedges and 3 data of intensifiers. The female speech features in the analysis serve as hedges device and booster device. The present writer also sees that Michelle uses two types of male speech features in 4 data, they are 3 pieces of minimal responses and 1 command and directive. Therefore, it can be said that the use of female speech features in this research are more dominant than male's.

Keywords: *men's speech features, women's speech features, functions of women's speech features.*

INTRODUCTION

Research on language and women or women and their language refers to the exposure of different ways of communication between women and men. Lakoff (1975), quoted by Kuntjara (2012, illustrates that male language is more assertive, mature, and openly spoken. On the contrary, the language used by women is immature, indecisive, not overt (using figurative words) and careful when expressing things, and often uses more refined and polite words.

One way to learn the language of women is to look at the features of female speech and the functions they use in communicating. And finding out whether a woman can also use the male speech feature according to Coates (2004) Michelle Obama is one of the most

influential and respected political figures. As one of the important and influential figures Michelle has a firm and authoritative character in each of her sayings. In this study, the author tries to find features of female speech and its functions and male speech features in a video talkshow for the *United States of Women Summit* attended by Oprah Winfrey and Michelle Obama. The talk show video was titled *First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey Hold a Conversation on the Next Generation of Women*. The talkshow is interesting to be analyzed because it contained female speech features proposed by Lakoff, so that it was known which features were used by Michelle Obama and the male speech features that she also used. In her interview, we can see the features of female speech that are used based on

Lakoff's theory of female speech features and their functions.

In connection with the description above, the present researcher wanted to analyze the speech in the talkshow, namely the features of female and male speech and the speech function used by Michelle Obama. Lakoff's theory of female speech features was chosen for several reasons. The first reason, this theory can include the phenomenon of female speech features in relation to the way women speak in their environment including using hedging, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, specialized vocabularies (precise color terms), intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite form, avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress. Speech function consists of two types, namely the weakening function (hedges device) and the strengthening function (booster device). Meanwhile, the second reason, Lakoff is the first linguist who has put forward ten basic assumptions about what she feels is a special language for women. The third reason, the present researcher also wants to show that women can also use the male speech features proposed by Coates which consists of minimal responses, command and directive, swearing and taboo language, compliments, and questions.

Based on the above explanation, the author sees that the use of female and male speech features used by Michelle Obama in the talkshow, if raised as material for linguistic research, would be very interesting. Another thing that encourages the present writer to do this research is because, according to the present writer's search, there have not been many studies in this field of study that connect political figures with linguistic aspects. Thus, there is a need to conduct this research in the context of the speech features of women who serve as First Lady. (Wahyuni, 2015)

Research Methodology

This research is a descriptive study because the ultimate goal is to explain and describe all the facts objectively related to the female speech features used by Michelle Obama in the talkshow above. This study uses qualitative methods because the research data is in the form of lingual units such as words, phrases and sentences not in the form of numbers.

The data source in this study was taken from the talk show of the United States of Women Summit entitled *First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah Winfrey Hold a Conversation on the Next Generation of Women* which was uploaded by the official account of The White House. The text in the talkshow is the result of a transcription from <http://obamawhitehouse.archive.gov>

In collecting data, the present writer uses skillful listening-free techniques and the follow-up technique is the note-taking technique. In this technique, the present writer is not involved directly at all to determine the formation and appearance of prospective data except only as observers (Sudaryanto, 1993; 133). This skillful free listening technique can be done on oral data and written data. This data is then analyzed by recording the relevant language usage. The data that have been observed and recorded are then identified according to the problem statement. As a final process, the data after that are classified based on ten types of women's features that have been suggested by Lakoff, namely hedging, tag question, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, specialized vocabularies (precise color terms), intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite form, avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Features of Female Speech

Lexical Hedges

Lakoff said that hedging is one of the characteristics of women's language. This shows a lack of confidence and reflects the feeling of women's insecurity. With hedges, women refer to the frequency of using phrases like *sorta / sort of, like, you know, well, kind a, kind of, I guess, and it seems like*.

Hedges as an example of female language characteristics including verb capital such as *could, might, may, would, should, lexical like perhaps,* and pragmatic particles such as *sort / sort of, I think, you know, well, kinda / kind of, like and I guess*. It refers to the repetition of these phrases in a utterance.

Tag Question

The Tag question gives the partners freedom of speech, does not urge him to agree with the views of speakers (Lakoff via Cameron, 1990: 229). Sometimes, tag questions are used in the case when the speaker and partner know what the correct answer is, and do not require confirmation. Such a situation when the speaker is starting a small conversation, he is also trying to start a conversation with the speech partner, like the following sentence:

(1) *Sure, it's cold here, isn't it?*

One possible interpretation of the sentence below is that the speaker has a certain answer or no, but is very hesitant to state it.

(2) *The way prices are raising is horrendus, isn't it?*

According to Lakoff (via Cameron, 1990: 230), this type of tag question is more appropriate for women than men because this type of sentence provides a means so that a speaker can avoid involving himself and avoid disputes with his partner. Then, tag question is a kind of polite statement that does not require the approval or trust of what the partner said.

Raising Intonations on Declaratives

As Lakoff found in English, there is a pattern of intonation of typical sentences among women. This not only has a declarative form of answer to a question but also has a distinctive upward tone of voice, *no*, and *seems* to be primarily doubtful (via Cameron, 1990: 230). The effect is that the speaker is looking for confirmation at the same time maybe he is the only one who has the information needed.

(3) *When will dinner be ready?*

(4) *Oh ... around six o ??clock?*

From the sentence above, it can be said that what is meant by sentence b (4) is if *six o ??clock ??at six o'clock right ??ok* with speaker a or if speaker (3) agrees. Speakers (3) are in a position to provide information, and speakers (4) sound uncertain. Here it seems that unwillingness confirms a very big opinion. As a result, speech patterns such as these are used to reflect something tangible about a character and play a part in taking women seriously or trusting them with real responsibility, because they cannot decide and are unsure of themselves. Women also often use high intonation on declarative sentences to show emotion or empathy for something. In addition, according to Lakoff, one of the other female speech characters that often appears is *intonation, asking*, as an answer when the woman is given a question. This shows the tendency of women who often feel unsure of the questions conveyed to her, or she wants to highlight politeness by turning back to the opponent she said.

Empty Adjectives

There is a group of adjectives, in terms of vocabulary, that have specific and literal meanings and also indicate the approval or admiration of the speaker for something. This adjective is called "empty adjectives",

which means that the word only concerns emotional reactions rather than specific information. Some of these adjectives are neutral, whatever the sex of the speaker, men and women may use them. But there are adjectives that seem to give a limited impression to be used by women only. Some adjectives are neutral (*great, neat*) and only for women (*adorable, charming, sweet, lovely, divine, gorgeous, cute*).

According to Lakoff, if a man uses female adjectives, it will damage his reputation (via Cameron, 1990: 226-227). On the other hand, a woman may use neutral adjectives as freely as possible. However, a woman using female adjectives is not at risk. Women are free to choose between neutral words and women's words, which men do not have, he may express very different things about his personality and his views on conversational material with his choice of neutral words or women's words. Lakoff gives an example for this term, look at the following two sentences:

(5) *What a terrific idea!*

(6) *What a divine idea!*

From the example above, sentence (5) may be used under the right conditions by female speakers, then speakers (6) are more specific and may be used appropriately only when speakers feel that basically the ideas mentioned are not important or are just a pleasure for speakers only. In other words, the use of neutral words is more appropriate for formal situations, while the use of female words is only used in non-formal situations. However, the choice of words for men is not truly free. Words that are limited to the language of women state that the concepts that men use are not relevant to the real world of male influence and power.

Precise Color Terms

Women give color details far more precisely in naming colors than men do.

Men consider talking about the term "the right colors" ludicrous because they think such a question is trivial and not relevant to the real world (via Cameron, 1990: 223). Words like beige, yellowish gray, lavender, bluish purple, maroon, reddish dark brown, is an example of ordinary words in the active vocabulary of women, but it is absent for most men.

Color discrimination is relevant for women, but not for men. Women handle things that are not so important as a matter of course. Determination of whether to name an ordinary lavender or mauve color or something that is common for women (via Cameron, 1990: 224). In lexical differences, women prefer to use the right words to name colors (mauve, light purple, plum, dark red) and have a vocabulary that is richer in an area which is traditionally a female specialty.

Women have the ability to be able to distinguish colors very sharply. Women are able to recognize some red colors well, whereas according to men all red is the same. This can happen because women have two X chromosomes, while men have only one X chromosome.

Intensifiers

Intensifiers such as so, just, very, and quite more indicate the characteristics of the language of women than men. So is stated to have something eternally feminine about it (Jespersen, 1922: 250). Women stop more often without completing sentences than men, because he starts talking without having a plan for what he will say. Look at the following sentence:

- (1) *I feel so unhappy*
- (2) *That movie made me so sick!*

Men seem to have difficulty using sentences like this when sentences are not emotional or non-subjective conditions

without mentioning the speaker himself. Compare sentences (1) and (2) with sentences (3) and (4).

- (3) *That flower is so beautiful*
- (4) *Fredi is so dumb*

Lakoff said that substituting intensifiers like so for absolute superlatives (such as very, really, utterly) seemed to be the best way to involve himself more strongly in an opinion, rather than tag questions (via Cameron, 1990: 223). One might avoid this method by making perfect and appropriate aesthetic judgments, as in (9), or intellectual judgments, as in (10). But it is also strange to evade describing one's emotional or mental state. To circumvent this situation is to seek and avoid making strong statements as characteristic of women's speech.

Hypercorrect Grammar

Hypercorrect grammar is the use that conforms to the standard verb form. This includes circumvention of abusive language, apologizing more frequently, and using the most polite forms as additional features. In other words, women speak as much as possible close to the standard English form. Lakoff attributed these features to each other because they all converged on the fact that women were not expected to speak harshly or less politely than men. (Norman, 2006: 8).

Superpolite Forms

Lakoff (via Cameron, 1990: 231) suggests that in the same sense a request might be a very polite order, which does not require open obedience but suggests something to do as a help or sympathy to the speaker. Blatant orders (in an imperative form) express the alleged superior position of the speaker to the speech partner, together with him the right to enforce obedience. The implication is that the partner is not in

danger if he does not do it, only he will be happy if it is done. The decision is in the hands of the speech partner. However, the suggestion is more polite than a command. A woman more often uses language that is more polite than a man. And the reason why women use polite language more often is because:

"They are involved in child rearing, and the transmission of culture, and are more aware of the importance, for the children, of the acquisition of (prestige), norms (Fasold, 1996: 187)

Holmes (1992: 234), has an opinion similar to Fasold, the reason a woman uses language that is more polite than a man in conversation is because a woman is more aware of her status than a man. Women know the facts better, where or with whom they speak. And it also reflects social status or background in society and the level of education also influences the way someone speaks.

Avoidance of Strong Swear Words

The word invective is a type of interjection or exclamation that can express anger very extreme and has been considered a very strong expression (Eckert, 2003: 181). This is seen as a powerful language and sometimes can actually achieve an impressive effect. This is also considered not suitable for use by women and children. The use of invective words is often associated with men rather than women because men use them more often in speech. In other words, swearing or swearing is a pure male habit so that the use of invective words is identical to the typical male language. Look at the following sentence:

- (1) *Oh, dear! you broke my glasses again*
- (2) *Shit! you broke my glasses again*

The two types of sentences above are the same in syntactic form and in lexical reference terms. The only difference is the

choice of meaningless particles. The first sentence will be grouped as female language and the second sentence will be male language. Men and women have different preferences for using swear words. Men often use rude and forbidden invective words like *damn*, *bloody hell* and *shit* often found in male language. While men use strong harsh words, women use more polite versions such as *oh dear*, *my dear*, *my goodness*, *goodness* and *good heavens*.

When using invective words, women are more careful and avoid using harsh words. Women give a smoother impression in these invective words, far from being rude, dirty and painful. This is adjusted to the role of women as guardians of values society. In society, women are not allowed to speak harshly. People tend to expect better behavior from women than men. Women are also seen as models in behavior in the community. Therefore, it must be reflected in the use of good and polite forms of language.

Emphatic Stress

Women tend to use words that emphasize speech to strengthen the meaning of speech. For example, it was a brilliant performance, the word brilliant "missing" is one example of emphatic stress. This is used to emphasize the meaning of appearance.

Functions of Speech Features

In Wahyuni's (2015) study according to Lakoff the function of female speech features generally has the following two functions.

1. Hedges Device

Hedges devices can be used to weaken the power of speech. Hedges devices explicitly indicate lack of confidence. In other words, these features are used to express uncertainty.

2. Strengthening Function (Booster Device)

Boosting devices can be used to strengthen the power of speech. Boosting devices illustrate the anticipation of speakers for speech partners who may still be unsure and therefore additional information is provided. In short, these features are used to convince the speech partner of his speech.

Male Language

There are differences in the way men and women use language due to the way men and women are raised linguistically. Language differences between men and women have been widely discussed, most of the literature on the subject concentrates on the two main theories. The first is the domination approach (supported by Lakoff 1975; Fishman 1983), which states that language differences between men and women are a consequence of male domination and women's subordination. In this view, women are a suppressed minority group. Proponents of the difference approach (Coates 1986; Tannen 1990) on the other hand, believe that men and women have different subcultures and that linguistic differences can be associated with cultural differences.

Holmes (1992), which discusses male language characteristics such as ungrammatical forms, multiple negations, pronounced in forms, deletes the end of forms in pronunciation, and impolite forms. And the theory that addresses linguistic male speech features uses a theory written by Coates (2004). Coates mentions several types of male speech features such as minimal responses, command and directive, swearing and taboo language, compliments, and questions.

Male speech is considered a normative language. Male speech is referential and competitive. Swear words and the use of

taboo words are accepted. The use of pure imperatives without adding any words such as *get the ball*, *bring the book*, cut the conversation of other people is normal. Questions are more frequently asked. Sorry praise and requests are minimized. Language is used as a tool of power. The non-standard form is preferred to the standard form.

ANALYSIS

Synopsis of the TalkShow United States of Women Summit

In *First Lady Michelle Obama's TalkShow and Oprah Winfrey Hold a Conversation on the Next Generation of Women*, Oprah Winfrey interviewed Michelle Obama about Barack Obama's eight years of leadership with Michelle and what their future plans were after the end of Barack Obama's leadership period.

Oprah and Michelle talk about what efforts Michelle is doing as the first lady and how Michelle answers every person's hopes for him. After that, Michelle talked about her pride when she saw Obama stepping off the plane and walking to the White House for the first time. The first lady also never forgets the husband's message that reminds her to remain herself. Michelle also told how she asked Obama to remain calm while serving her position and not to forget to pay attention to her teenage daughters aged 17 and 15 years.

The interview topics include violence against women, health, education, economic empowerment and motivation, entrepreneurship, citizen involvement and leadership.

One way to learn female language is to look at the features of female speech that are used in communication. In this study, the present researcher tries to find features of female speech in the Oprah Winfrey TalkShow video with Michelle Obama.

The talkshow was interesting to study because it contained female speech features suggested by Lakoff so that it was known which features were used by Michelle Obama. In several conversations spoken, Michelle Obama uses speech features commonly used by women. In his interview, we can see the features of female speech and their functions that are used based on Lakoff's theory of female speech features and their functions. In addition to female speech features, Michelle also uses male language speech features. The present researcher analyzes these male speech features based on the theory written by Coates.

Data Analysis

Women's speech was chosen because this theory could include the phenomenon of features and speech functions of women in relation to the way women speak in their environment including using hedging, tag questions, rising intonation on declaratives, empty adjectives, specialized vocabularies (precise color terms), intensifier, hypercorrect grammar, superpolite form, avoidance of strong swear words and emphatic stress, and by hinting at the function of weakening (hedges device) or strengthening (booster device).

The present researcher will also analyze male speech features based on the theory put forward by Coates such as minimal responses, command and directive, swearing and taboo language, compliments, and questions. The present researcher does not analyze the function of male speech features because the theory was put forward by Lakoff for female speech features only.

Analysis of Women's Speech Features and Functions

Empty Adjective

In First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah's TalkShow, two empty adjectives were found which will be described below:

Data # 1

Context: The conversation below illustrates Michelle who is explaining how humans find their true identity. To find that identity, man must know himself. To find out yourself does require a lot of time, there are those who find it when they are adults, some also understand themselves because of the experience they have experienced. And several factors from family and environment.

(1) Michelle: “But it takes the time to know who you are able to deal with the negative messages that you are re bound to get. So for me, I came into a pretty clear sense of myself. And some of that comes with age. Some of that comes with experience. Some of that comes from being fortunate enough to have a loving mother, strong, focused, and a father who loved me dearly. “

(04: 07-04: 41)

In the conversation used by Michelle above words or utterances *loving, strong, focused, and loved* is another example in empty adjective. The words were told to describe her gratitude for being well cared for by her parents, the words above also illustrate the feeling of admiration for every parent who loves their children. This explains how women use empty adjective to complement and support their speech in expressing an opinion.

The function of the speech feature above is included in the booster device or as an amplifier in Michelle's speech by adding a number of supporting adjectives to provide

additional information to the speech partner.

Tag Question

In the First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah TalkShow, tag questions were found which will be described below:

Data # 2

Context: Michelle gave an opening speech to the guests present, Michelle invited them to pray for safety and help the Orlando community who was experiencing disaster.

(1) Michelle: “ Now, I know you have had a busy, packed, full day - very inspiring, right? (Applause.) And hopefully, our conversation will live up to the hype. But before we begin, of course, I want to take a moment to just acknowledge what has happened in Orlando - that even as we gather here today and we talk about the challenges that we face, we have to remember those that we lost in Orlando, as well as those who were injured, and all of their loves, and know that we will continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers. “

(0: 03-0: 57)

The sentence above belongs to the tag question group, Michelle describes her feelings to the speech partner through the above statement, such as feeling not so sure and looking for a confirmation from the speech partner so that adding the right words through her speech. The statement of the sentence above is polite and does not require the partner to agree with the opinion given by the speaker.

The speech feature function in the conversation above is a hedges device that explains Michelle's uncertainty in her statement so Michelle adds a tag question at the end of her speech.

Raising Intonations on Declaratives

In First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah's TalkShow, it was found that raising intonations on declarative which will be described below:

Data # 3

Context: The conversation below is Michelle's answer to Oprah's question asking what Michelle felt when she discovered that she would become the wife of a president, which meant she would become a first lady.

(1)Oprah: “But when you came in, there were the world’s expectations, there were other expectations. What did you really expect ?”

(2)Michelle: “It was interesting, I really tried not to limit myself by expectations.”

(3)Oprah: “ Because nobody grows up thinking I'm going to be a First Lady?”

(4)Michelle: “ Absolutely not. And you all know, when Barack was talking about running, I was like, are you crazy? I mean, would you just, like, chill out and do something else with your life ?”

(05: 12-05: 33)

The sentence (4) above shows the use of raising intonations on declaratives. Speakers convey or declare their feelings and opinions in doubt with rising intonation of speech. Here it appears that the opinion of the speaker confirms his disagreement and is not sure.

The speakers mentioned above included the speech hedges device feature because the speaker explicitly felt unsure of what she said so she added a few words that showed the function of weakening the power of her speech.

Feature Analysis of Male Speeches

Minimal Responses

In First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah's TalkShow, a number of minimal responses are found which will be described below:

Data # 8

Context: in the conversation below, Oprah asks if it's true if Michelle invites her daughter while doing a job interview. All people know this. Michelle also admitted. Oprah, again asked if Michelle had managed to get her job and Michelle answered yes.

(1) Oprah: “How do you figure it out? I’ve read the story - I am sure many of you have heard the story of you being interviewed and you took Sasha with you to interview. ”

(2) Michelle: "Oh, yeah."

(3) Oprah: "We never heard, did you get that job?"

(4) Michelle: "I did. I did. "

(08: 02-08: 16)

In utterance (3) Michelle gives a brief response to the speech given to her by the speech partner. This shows that Michelle has used a type of male speech feature that is a minimum response. Michelle pointed out this through her response which said *yeah* to respond to what her speech partner asked.

Command and Directives

In First Lady Michelle Obama and Oprah's TalkShow, several command and directives were found which will be described below:

Data # 9

Context: Michelle gives advice to guests how to struggle to know themselves. There are so many supporting factors in this regard, one of which is parents, then

people and the surrounding environment and others. Many things must also be considered in an effort to understand yourself or understand ourself.

(1) Michelle: “ I think it's different for everyone. And I can say that I have loved myself for a long time, but there was a journey to get there. And when you confront your first bully, the first time somebody calls you out - your name, as we would say. The first disappointments and failures that you have, how do you deal with that? What supports systems do you set up for yourself?”

I always tell young girls, surround yourself with goodness. I learned how to get the haters out of my life. (Applause.) You've got to just sort of surround yourself with people who support you, who hold you up. And for whatever reason - well, I was lucky I had parents who held me up. I had a father that valued me. “

(2) Oprah: “I think people have good parents - they come into the world with a strength, yes, and an advantage?”

(3) Michelle: “ And that is an advantage. But if you don't have that parent - mother, that father - then you have got to find it. You've got to find those people. Because they are out there. I tell you who is there, who is there who loves you and who is waiting for you, and you just have to find them. And that means you have to make room for them. And if you are surrounded by a bunch of low-life people who aren't supporting you, then there is no room for the people who do love you. (Applause.) “

(12: 17-13: 40)

In utterance (3) there are many words found in the male speech feature, namely command and directives. In this speech the speaker often gives direct orders by telling the sentence *you've got to* which is part of the male language. This shows that Michelle as a woman does not hesitate to use male language.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the analysis, the authors found that Michelle used 7 (seven) types of female speech features as well as their two functions: hedges device and booster device. In addition, the author also found that Michelle used two types of male speech features in some of her speeches.

Some types of female speech features found are the first, namely empty adjective, the authors found 2 pieces of data which are included in the empty adjective and each of them serves to strengthen the speech of speakers or also called booster devices. Then the second, the author found there was one data that showed the tag question feature of female speech and served to weaken the speech of the speaker.

Third, the present researcher found the types of female speech features, namely raising intonations on declaratives. In this section the authors find there are 2 pieces of data that are included and functioned as hedges devices and booster devices. Fourth, there is one piece of data that is included in the type of female language speech feature, namely avoidance of strong swear words and has a function as a weaker speech speaker or hedges device. Fifth, it is found that a lot of data consisting of 6 pieces of data which included empathic stress and all of them functioned as reinforcement for the speaker's speech or booster devices.

Sixth, the present researcher found 3 data belonging to the Lexical Hedges which of course all functioned as hedges of devices or weakened the speakers' speech because speakers felt unsure about their speech. Seventh, the type of female speech feature, which was identified by the author in the analysis in the previous chapter. The author found 3 pieces of data and all of them functioned as booster devices. The author cannot find the types of female

speech features, namely the precise color terms, hypercorrect grammar, and superpolite forms. Michelle Obama did not use the feature in this talk show.

Furthermore, the male speech feature used by Michelle in the analysis above will be presented by the present researcher. There are two types of male speech features found in this analysis, namely minimal responses and command and directives. In the male speech feature, namely minimal responses, the present author found 3 pieces of data that were told by Michelle Obama. Then the present researcher found one piece of male speech feature data namely command and directives at Michelle's speech. This proves that Michelle Obama is not reluctant to use male language characteristics in these formal activities.

The results of the entire analysis above show that women can also use male language characteristics rather than just using their own language characteristics. This study also shows that the use of female speech features is more dominant than male speech features. Although Michelle as a speaker does not hesitate to use male speech features, Michelle still maintains her language by using female speech features and functions.

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