TEACHING READING SKILLS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

外语阅读技巧教学

Christine Nuttall

TEACHING READING SKILLS
in a Foreign Language

New edition

TEACHING READING SKILLS:

- examines the skills required to read effectively
- focuses on getting the message from the text
- suggests classroom strategies for developing reading skills
- looks at both linguistic and non-linguistic features of texts
- includes a new chapter on testing reading

This classic text has been thoroughly revised for this new edition.

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总　序

　　近年来随着国内和国际形势的发展,我国对外语人才的需求日益增加,有志于学习外语的学生和社会群体的人数急剧上升,从而使我国外语教学事业蓬勃发展。在这种形势下,外语师资培训和自身建设的重要性与日俱增。在这两方面,当务之急是要了解当今国外外语教学的发展情况,要借鉴国外的最新经验,结合我国的具体情况,大力提高外语师资的水平,使我们的外语教学事业更上一层楼。

　　有鉴于此,上海外语教育出版社为广大外语教师提供了一套由国外引进的外语教学法丛书。这套丛书所涉及的方面广、种类多,包括外语教学技巧和原则、语法教学、语音教学、阅读教学、写作教学、教学管理、测试、教材选择、第一语言和第二语言习得、儿童英语教学等等。其中绝大多数专著是上世纪九十年代和本世纪所出版。它们反映了当今国外外语教学法研究及相关学科的现状。

　　这套丛书的最大共同特点,也是与传统教学法类专著的最大不同点在于特别强调理论与实践相结合;更是以实践为主,再以理论去分析评述各种实践活动的优缺点。我们所熟悉的传统教学法类专著,一般都是强调教学原则、教学理论,把各种方法的来龙去脉讲得很详尽;然而如何到课堂上去进行具体教学活动,如何在教学活动中去体现教学原则却不多见。这套丛书则几乎全部是从实践活动着手,以说明对理论和原则的应用。

　　试举两个例证:

　　一、斯克里温纳:《学习教学:英语教师指南》,麦克米伦海涅曼出版社,1994。(Jim Scrivener: *Learning Teaching: A Guidebook for English Language Teachers*. Macmillan Heinemann, 1994)

　　作者前言:"本书旨在帮助你去学习如何更有效地进行教学。它并不给你某一种正确的教学方法。实际上没有任何科学根据可以让

我们去描述一种理想的教学方法。我们只能观察教师和学生进行活动的实际,并注意哪些策略和原则更有利于教学。我们没有必要去照搬那些策略和原则,但是要意识到有哪些可能性。""因此本书并不是告诉你'就用这种方法',而代之以'这几种方法似乎都可行。'主要是由你自己决定用哪一种方法。"

本书共十二章,涉及教与学的关系、教学安排、课堂活动、语言技能等等方面,绝大部分章节都是先介绍该章内容,然后列出各种具体教学活动(tasks),其后是对各项活动的分析评述。例如第六章"说的技能"共有四小节,即 1)为什么要说;2)交际性活动;3)语言交际与流利;4)演戏和角色扮演,每节都提供各种相应的具体活动和作者对各项活动的评述。教师可以根据自己的实际情况选择其中某些活动进行课堂教学。

二、努南:《语言学习研究方法》,剑桥大学出版社,1992。(David Nunan: *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge University Press, 1992)

作者前言:"传统的语言教学研究方法不是教老师怎样去进行教学的。作者主观愿望就是对教学作出种种硬性规定。这种教学科研基于逻辑推理,并要求教学人员接受采纳。上世纪八十年代以来情况有了变化,如今教学人员对自身进行科研。他们用实验方法对教学进行探索。这种科研由于教学背景不同而不同。教学人员不再依赖已有科研成果,而是对自己的课堂教学采取一种科研态度。本书目的在于 1.促使教学人员认识对自身进行科研的必要性。2.帮助教学人员进行教学方面的科研。"

本书共十章,介绍科研方法的历史背景、实验性科研方法、个案研究、课堂现场观察和科研、自省方法、语言交流分析等等。试以第六章"自省方法"为例。所谓"自省",就是不仅仅着眼于课堂上的教学实践,而要更进一步去思考教学步骤。教学人员一方面审视自己的教学,一方面回顾课堂教学的具体辰骤并提出问题进行研究。这种科研的基础就是教学人员本人的日记、教学日记和其他种种有关记录,以这些资料为依据进行分析研究,得出结论。

以上两书的内容安排大体上可以概括整套丛书的全貌。换言之,各书的最大特点就是以实践为主,而实践都来自相应的理论并与理论

密切结合;其实用性强,可操作性强。有大量的实践举例,还有不少个案研究(case study),在其后多数有分析评述。这些例证分析、评述给予教师很大的空间去进行思考、探索。各种例证并不是仅仅给教师提供方便,让教师有所参考。更重要的是促使教师结合自己的具体教学情况,通过思考和探索有所发展,制订出切合自己需要并切实可行的教学方法去进行教学。

我相信这套丛书能为促进我国外语教学事业的进一步发展作出巨大的贡献。

李观仪
2002 年 6 月

出版前言

随着我国改革开放的深入和进入世界贸易组织的需要,英语教学在国内有了进一步的发展,对不同层次的英语教师的需求量日益增大。为了培养一大批高素质的英语教师,必须有组织地开展师资培训工作。在职的英语教师也必须继续充电,通过种种途径进一步提高业务水平。然而,许久以来,系统介绍英语教学法的专著极为匮乏。因此,上海外语教育出版社特从国外知名出版社,如牛津大学出版社、剑桥大学出版社和麦克米伦出版社引进一批有关外语教学法和第二语言习得研究的学术专著,出版了外语教学法丛书。《外语阅读技巧教学》(*Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*)就是其中的一本。

《外语阅读技巧教学》是一本关于如何将阅读理论应用于外语教学的专著。作者克里斯汀·纳托尔(Christine Nuttall)为英国教育学家,长期从事外语教育工作,并对第二语言习得进行了深入的研究。

全书分为三个部分。第一部分主要论述了阅读的本质,紧紧扣住"什么是阅读"(what)这一基本问题,从"为什么阅读"(why)、"如何阅读"(how)、"阅读中作者与读者充当的角色"(role)以及"两者的关系"(relation)等方面多角度、多层次地进行了论述,阐述了外语阅读教学应该遵循的原则,探讨了对外语阅读教学产生影响的各种因素。在第二部分,作者转入了对阅读技巧和策略的探讨,介绍了具体的阅读技巧和策略,论述了这些技巧和策略在外语教学中的应用及产生的效果,为第三部分的教学操作做理论辅垫。第三部分计划与教学涉及外语阅读教学理论具体应用于实践的实际操作过程。该部分主要就外语阅读教学中课文的选取、课程的设置、讲解和评价等一系列实际问题做出了阐述,其中重点突出泛读课程的教材、讲解和评价,也介绍了安德森(C. Alderson)的阅读测试理论和实践。

全书脉络清晰,遵循从理论到实践的论证过程,做到理论有实践验证,实践有理论指导,例证充分,文字浅显,深入浅出,在语言学著作中实属难能可贵。全书每一章节后都有补充阅读部分,向读者介绍与本章节内容相关的一些著作,供读者参考阅读,拓展视野。

本书对于我国的外语教育研究,特别是外语阅读教学理论和实践的探索来说是一本不可多得的有价值的参考书,适用于英语教师、英语学习者以及广大从事外语教育研究的工作者。

<div align="right">本社编辑部</div>

Preface to the first edition

NO BOOK of this kind owes its existence to a single writer, and my debt to many others will be immediately obvious. First and foremost is the influence of the students and teachers with whom I have worked. To them, especially those at the Advanced Teacher Training College in Winneba, Ghana, I should like to dedicate the book, as a small return for all they have given to me.

It is impossible to mention here all those who deserve acknowledgement: the books I have read, the universities that have guided me, the colleagues who have shared their experience so generously. Their contribution has been so great that it seems impertinent that my own name should appear on the title page. I hope they will collectively accept this recognition that I am deeply aware of all I owe them and profoundly grateful.

I must, however, specifically mention certain materials produced as a result of the current renewal of interest in foreign language reading. For many insights and ideas for types of reading task, I have drawn freely on *English in Focus* (OUP), *Foundation Reading* (Chulalongkorn University Language Institute), *Reading and Thinking in English* (OUP) and *Skills for Learning* (University of Malaya/Nelson). Without the stimulus of these materials, this book would have been very different and much the poorer.

For help specifically with the text of this book, I should like to thank Alan Moore and John Moore for their time and trouble and their excellent suggestions; the publishers for their unfailing helpfulness; and finally, Gill Sturtridge and Marion Geddes for their support, without which the book would not have been written

Preface to the second edition

READERS familiar with the first edition of this book will find many changes in this one, the most obvious being the way the material is organized. It is now divided into three parts. The first presents the principles (about reading, texts and teaching) which underlie the way the book approaches its subject; the second part looks more closely at some of the theoretical issues and how they affect reading teaching; and the third, greatly strengthened by Charles Alderson's chapter on testing, focuses on the importance of extensive reading, the choice of materials and the way courses and lessons are planned, taught and assessed. The sequence of chapters has been altered to fit in with this new division; people used to the first edition may find this initially annoying, but I hope the result will ultimately prove easier to use.

Another obvious change is the addition of activities; they are intended to contribute to the exposition in the text, so I hope readers will make use of them. There is a key to some of them at the end of the book.

There are also changes in the substance of the book. Since the first edition, an enormous amount of relevant material has appeared, some of which I have managed to read. Most of it has strengthened rather than changed my views of reading, but in some instances has led to differences in emphasis in this edition.

I have, for instance, come to recognize that the schema (however much debated in cognitive psychology) offers a convenient framework for dealing with issues of presupposition, prediction, inference and so on; and that the notions of top-down and bottom-up processing are likewise useful in discussing the way we read. These, and

other ideas drawn from discourse analysis and pragmatics, have influenced my thinking, especially since the mid-eighties, when I taught related courses in the University of Edinburgh and learned a great deal from both students and colleagues.

Some changes in this edition result from earlier miscalculations of emphasis; for instance, I had not intended the issues of reading speed and readability measures to figure so prominently in the first edition. The cautions included there were barely noticed; I hope in this edition that the emphases better reflect my thinking. It remains, however, a regret that despite the much enlarged extent of the book, there still seems to be no room for a proper treatment either of literature or of the teaching of literacy in a foreign language.

In spite of the currency of other opinions, I have seen no reason to alter my view that a good reader is one who can interpret the text as the writer intended. This is not to claim that meaning is unproblematic, and certainly not to hold that the reader must accede to the writer's intention. I am all for teaching critical reading (and I agree that I have not given it the prominence it deserves). However, reader response theory in its more extreme forms is not, in my view, a helpful influence in considering the sort of learners for whose teachers this book is intended: principally those whose language proficiency still hinders them from making plain sense of the text. Readers may interpret texts as they choose, but few will share their views if the interpretation is the result of ignorance or incompetence. Ellen Spolsky[1] says, 'understanding doesn't entail accepting'; I agree, and would like to turn the remark on its head, and claim that rejecting entails understanding.

Many reading text books have gone out of print since the first edition, and sadly this includes some excellent materials. I have kept some of them in Appendix B and in the bibliography, because I have found nothing comparable among current titles. Some very good new materials have become available, however, and many are listed and referred to. In response to requests, I have included some sample lesson plans, which I fervently hope will not be treated as 'models'; but this means that we have less room for extracts from published materials. As they are a major source of new ideas for teaching, I hope readers will seek out these materials for themselves.

There is now a section called *Further reading* at the end of each chapter and a much enlarged bibliography to support it. The chart comparing levels of graded readers has been omitted, because it rapidly becomes out of date and does not seem to have been much used. Finally, at last there is an index. I hope it will more than compensate for the much less detailed table of contents.

Many people have helped me with this second edition. I am most grateful for the comments of reviewers and others, and to Neville Grant, Brian Tomlinson and, above all, Norman Whitney for his very thorough comments. I am notably indebted to the colleagues and students who have influenced my thinking over the last twelve years, especially Charles Alderson, Joan Allwright, Liz Hamp-Lyons, Jeremy Henzell-Thomas, David Hill, John Holmes, the late Betty Morrish, Hugh Trappes-Lomax, Elizabeth White and – though they may not remember – Malcolm Coulthard and Michael McCarthy. Charmian Harrison, Joanna Rigg and Edward Ullendorff have patiently allowed me to try out ideas on them and many other friends and relations have been tolerant of my reclusiveness while the book was being re-written. I would like to thank them all.

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[1] in 'I come to bury Caesar, not to praise him: teaching resisted reading,' **ELTJ** 43/3, July 1989: 173-9.

The revision could not have been undertaken without the library facilities made available to me by the Moray House College of Education, the University of Edinburgh (especially the Institute for Applied Language Studies and the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading) and the University of Lancaster (especially the Institute for English Language Education and the Charlotte Mason College of Education). Some of the library staff have been helpful far beyond the call of duty and I am very grateful to them.

Finally, I must acknowledge the excellent advice, hard work and moral support provided by the publishers, particularly Jill Florent of Heinemann and Louise Elkins and Damien Tunnacliffe of Phoenix Publishing Services; also designer Mike Cryer for his skill and patience. They have encouraged me over many a bad patch and, if the book proves to be useful, much of the credit should go to them. For the deficiencies that remain, of which I am probably more aware than anyone, I accept full responsibility.

<div align="right">

CEN
September 1994

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A note on gender

As it is tedious to repeat *he or she* and not always possible to use a neutral plural, I have adopted this policy: a writer or a teacher is referred to as *she*; a reader or a student is referred to as *he.* These are arbitrary decisions and carry no hidden messages.

A note to the reader

If you are daunted by the length of this book try reading Part 1 to introduce yourself to the basic principles and then move straight to Part 3 which is concerned with classroom application of these principles. Later you can return to Part 2 for further details if you wish.

A note about the activities

Answers/explanations for some of the activities are provided in the key (p262). This is signalled by a key symbol ⚭ at the head of the activity.

Abbreviations used in the text

EFL/ELT/ESL/ESP	English as a Foreign Language/English Language Teaching/English as a Second Language /English for Specific Purposes
EPER	Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (see p131 and Appendix D)
FL	foreign language
L1	first language (mother tongue, native language)
L2	second language
MCQ	multiple choice question
OHP	overhead projector
OHT	overhead projector transparency
SPQ	signpost question
SQ3R	study, question, read, recite, review (see p129)
T/F	true/false question
wpm	words per minute

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Contents

Chapter 1
What is reading?

THIS BOOK is about reading a foreign language, and particularly about reading English as a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL). We shall be dealing mainly with the place of reading in a teaching programme; whether it is possible to teach people to read is a vexed question, but I believe we can at least help them to learn.

The book makes practical suggestions for the classroom, but it also reflects the view that, in the reading class, the most important thing is that both the teacher and the student should understand the reading process. It certainly seems to be true that some of the things that happen in classrooms may interfere with reading rather than promote it. So this first part outlines a view of reading which will be more thoroughly explored in Part Two and will underlie the practical suggestions in Part Three.

Defining reading

Different people use the term *reading* in different ways, which can cause much confusion. So we had better start by making sure that we are thinking about the same thing when we use the term. As a first step, it would be useful to find out what your own ideas are about reading, so please do Activity 1.1 before turning the page.

Activity 1.1   *What is reading?*

Take a piece of paper and write down a brief definition of the term *reading.*

Don't take more than five minutes over this.

Don't turn the page until you have written your definition of reading.

What sort of definition did you give? Did you use words from one of these groups?

a decode, decipher, identify, etc
b articulate, speak, pronounce, etc
c understand, respond, meaning, etc

Looking at the ideas reflected in these three groups will help to clarify the view of reading that is central to this book.

Teachers whose definition includes the ideas reflected in group **a** are focusing on the first thing of all about reading: unless we can recognize the written words, we cannot even begin to read. This is certainly important: we know that good readers are able to identify words very rapidly, and helping learners to do this is a key task for teachers of early reading. But it is debatable whether specific training can improve word recognition at later stages – which are our concern in this book – and no suggestions are offered. It is more likely that speed comes from massive amounts of practice, which we discuss in Chapter 8.

The words in group **b** reflect a common experience: in a great many classrooms, the reading lesson is used as an opportunity to teach pronunciation, practise fluent and expressive speaking, and so on. For early readers, again, reading aloud is important: they have to discover how writing is associated with the spoken words they already use. But this stage does not last long. What is the function of reading aloud after that? We shall return to this question later.

Before we deal with the words in group **c**, it would be helpful to do Activity 1.2.

Activity 1.2 *What have you been reading?*

Take five minutes to list all the different kinds of things you have read in the last few days, in any language. Remember to include things like these:

● telephone directory
● statistics
● label on medicine bottle
● engagement diary
● street map
● letter
● timetable
● instruction leaflet
● notice
● application form

Finally, categorize the items on your list according to the language they were written in. How many were written in English (or whatever foreign language you are interested in)? And how many of these were directly concerned with your teaching?

Reasons for reading

Reading in different ways for different purposes

Think about the things you listed in Activity 1.2. Why did you read each one? What did you want to get from it? Was it only information? What about the letter from home?

The detective novel? You will find that you had a variety of reasons for reading, and if you compared notes with other people, you would find different reasons again.

Now think about the way you read each item. How did the various reasons influence this? Do you read a telephone directory the same way as a poem? How about a street map or a diagram? Reading these is very unlike reading a book.

The way you tackled each text was strongly influenced by your purpose in reading. Quickly scanning a page to find someone's telephone number is very different from perusing a legal document. You probably noticed big differences in the speed you used. Did you also find that in some cases you read silently while in others you read aloud? What were the reasons that led you to articulate what you read? For most of us, reading aloud is uncommon outside the classroom.

Reading for meaning

Whatever your reasons for reading (excluding any reading for language learning), it is not very likely that you were interested in the pronunciation of what you read, and even less likely that you were interested in the grammatical structures used. You read because you wanted to get something from the writing. We will call this the *message*: it might have been facts, but could just as well have been enjoyment, ideas, feelings (from a family letter, for instance).

Whatever it was, you probably wanted to get the message that the writer intended. You were interested in what the writing meant; hence the sort of words found in group **c** on p2 turn out to be the important ones if we are trying to make a definition that covers most authentic reasons for reading. (By *authentic* I mean reasons that are concerned not with language learning but with the uses of reading in our daily lives outside the classroom.)

The view of reading offered in this book is essentially concerned with meaning, specifically with the transfer of meaning from mind to mind: the transfer of a message from writer to reader. As we shall see, it is not quite as simple as that, but we exclude any interpretation of the word *reading* in which meaning is not central. We shall explore how we get meaning by reading, and how the reader, the writer and the text each contribute to the process.

Why do people read foreign languages?

Perhaps the advantages of knowing a foreign language are clear to your students – better jobs, access to literature or whatever. Reading is usually recognized as a necessary part of these activities. However, if the only foreign language items you have read recently (your list in Activity 1.2) were directly concerned with your teaching, it may be that you, and your students too, do not really need to read that language except for classroom purposes.

If this is the case, we must not be surprised if student motivation is low. This is a major problem for many language teachers: the motivation of *needing* to read is powerful. However, you can also motivate students by making their foreign language reading interesting in itself. The language is alive – its users have the same variety of purposes for reading as anybody has when reading their mother tongue – and this fact can be used by teachers to increase motivation.

I contend that by treating reading as a purposeful activity, we can make teaching more purposeful and classes livelier, even in the difficult circumstances just outlined. If you teach in such circumstances, please suspend your disbelief for the moment; we

are going to discuss the way reading works when it is used for real life purposes, and this should give you a better understanding of it. Later (mainly in Part Three) we shall explore ways of using this understanding to help students read better, whether this is a matter of real necessity or just an examination requirement.

Getting a message from a text

We shall assume, therefore, that reading has one overriding purpose: to get meaning from a text. Other ways of looking at reading will not concern us. Our business is with the way a reader gets a message from a text. So we will begin by establishing what we mean by a message.

Reading and the communication process

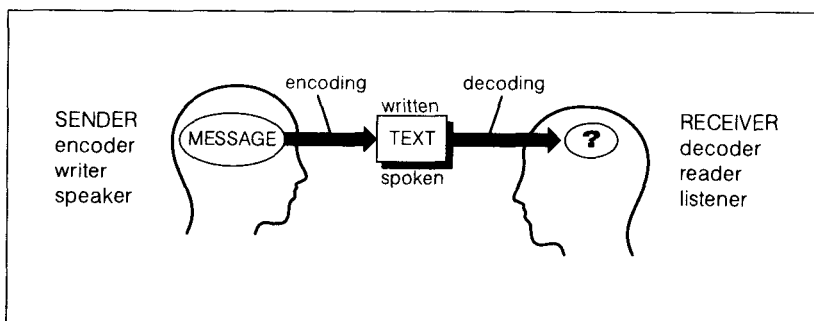Figure 1 gives a very simple model of the process of communication.

Figure 1   The communication process

On the left is the writer; but since she (we will make her a woman) could equally well speak her message, we will use the more general term *encoder* for her role. The encoder has a message in mind (it may be an idea, a fact, a feeling, etc) which she wants somebody else to share. To make this possible, she must first put it into words: that is, she must encode it. Once encoded, it is available outside her mind as a written or spoken text. The text is accessible to the mind of another person who reads or hears it, and who may then decode the message it contains. After being decoded, the message enters the mind of the decoder and communication is achieved.

Obviously this model is too simple, for things can go wrong at any stage. That is why there is a question mark in the decoder's mind, for we cannot be sure he (we will make him a man) has received the message intended. However, the process is clear enough for us to say that reading means getting out of the text as nearly as possible the message the writer put into it. (How we respond to this meaning – whether, for instance, we accept it, reject it or transform it by using our own imagination – is another matter.) We need to consider further the parts played by the writer, the reader and the text; and we will start with the reader.

Is the reader's role passive?

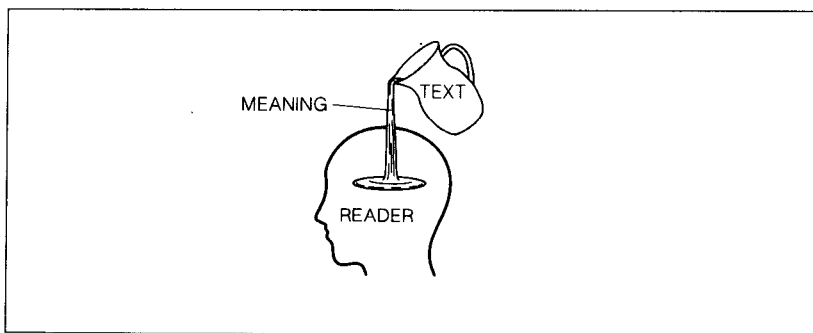Figure 2 illustrates one fairly widely held view of reading.

Figure 2   One view of reading

The text is full of meaning like a jug full of water; the reader's mind soaks it up like a sponge. In this view, the reader's role is passive; all the work has been done by the writer and the reader has only to open his mind and let the meaning pour in.

Why do we reject this? One reason is that it seldom happens like this. Not all the meaning in the text actually gets into the reader's mind. The figure should show at least some of the water trickling down the reader's face. The fact that the meaning is in the text is unfortunately no guarantee that the reader will get it out, for we know from experience that a text that seems easy to one person may seem difficult to another.

What makes a text difficult?

To throw some light on this question, we will examine in Activity 1.3 some texts that many people would find difficult. Do this before reading the comments that follow.

Activity 1.3   *Difficult texts*

Here are four texts that you may find difficult to read. They are difficult in different ways; study each in turn and decide in each case what makes the text difficult.

a   Istuin eräänä tammikuun loppupäiväna Tiitin kanssa Kokkolasta Jyväskylään kulkevassa linja-autossa. Oli kirpeä pakkasilma, taivas oli kirkas, ja aurinko heitti lumihangille ja tien poikki puiden pitkeä sinisiä varjoja.

From Kokko, Y. 1954 *Ne Tulevat Takaisin* (Werner Söderström OY)

b   In the first example, a carbon anion is formed that is stabilized by resonance (electrons delocalized over the carbonyl group and the α carbon atom). In the second case, a carbon anion is formed that is stabilized by the electron withdrawing inductive effect of the three chlorines.

From University of Malaya Language Centre 1979 *Reading Projects: Science* (University of Malaya Press/Nelson)

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