Towards a semantics and pragmatics of the Javanese speech level system

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UQÀM

A little background

- A lot of the basic ideas and analysis in today's talk are based on previous work that I presented at the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association (AFLA). Full disclosure: I am recycling some of the slides from that talk.
- That talk/paper is focused on capturing the syntagmatic and paradigmatic properties of the Javanese speech level system, which I will summarize today.
- That talk/paper also proposes a diachronic account of how the system might have evolved, which I will not discuss today.
- Today's talk is instead focused on various issues that have arisen in my attempts to model the semantics and pragmatics of the system in more detail.

Speech levels in Javanese

Javanese sentences can be sorted into one of three levels, called *Ngoko*, *Krama*, and *Madya*, whose choice is conditioned by *status*, *age*, and *intimacy*, with the following canonical contexts of use:

- *Ngoko*: **low status** addressee, **not older** than the speaker, **intimate** relationship
- *Krama*: **high status** addressee, **older** than the speaker, **non-intimate** relationship
- *Madya*: a "halfway house" (Wolff & Poedjosoedarmo 1982) between *Ngoko* and *Krama*, canonically used in situations where the factors determining the choice of speech level are in conflict.

Encoding of speech levels

Javanese sentences can generally be unambiguously assigned to one of the three levels (N, M, K) on a purely formal basis. The following example is from Clynes (1989):

(1) "Bu Siti has already eaten that one."

Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	*sampun*	*nedha*	*ingkang*	*menika.*
Madya	*Bu*	*Siti*	*mpun*	*nedha*	*sing*	*niku.*
Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	*wis*	*mangan*	*sing*	*kuwi.*
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

Speech level is encoded by the choice between otherwise synonymous lexical alternants whose only difference is their (in)compatibility with particular speech levels.

Encoding of speech levels

(1) "Bu Siti has already eaten that one."

Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	*sampun*	*nedha*	*ingkang*	*menika.*
Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	*wis*	*mangan*	*sing*	*kuwi.*
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

- The blue alternants are compatible with **Krama**, but not with Ngoko.
- The red alternants are compatible with **Ngoko**, but not with **Krama**.

Encoding of speech levels

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- **Madya** is characterized by a *mixture* of **Ngoko** and **Krama** forms. . .

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- **Madya** is characterized by a *mixture* of **Ngoko** and **Krama** forms,
- and some forms that are **only** compatible with **Madya**.

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- Similarly, some forms are **only** compatible with **Ngoko**. . .

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	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

- **Madya** is characterized by a *mixture* of **Ngoko** and **Krama** forms,
- and some forms that are **only** compatible with **Madya**.
- Similarly, some forms are **only** compatible with **Ngoko**,
- while others are **only** compatible with **Krama**.

Analysis: Lexical classes and speech levels

(1) "Bu Siti has already eaten that one."

Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	**sampun**	*nedha*	**ingkang**	**menika**.
Madya	*Bu*	*Siti*	**mpun**	*nedha*	*sing*	**niku**.
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Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

- Words like **sampun**: Krama only
- Words like *nedha*: Krama or Madya
- Words like **mpun**: Madya only
- Words like *sing*: Ngoko or Madya
- Words like **wis**: Ngoko only

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Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

- Words like **sampun**: $[-N, +K]$
- Words like *nedha*: $[\quad\quad +K]$
- Words like **mpun**: $[+N, +K]$
- Words like *sing*: $[+N \quad\quad]$
- Words like **wis**: $[+N, -K]$

Linking Lexical classes and speech levels

Speech Levels:

- **Krama** is signaled by $-N, +K$
- **Madya** is signaled by $+N, +K$
- **Ngoko** is signaled by $+N, -K$

Combinatoric (Syntagmatic) Constraint: Feature values must be consistent.

- A single sentence cannot contain both $+N$ and $-N$ items.
- A single sentence cannot contain both $+K$ and $-K$ items.

Linking lexical classes and speech levels

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	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

		Ngoko	Madya	Krama
sampun	$[-N, +K]$	×	×	
nedha	$[\quad +K]$	×		
mpun	$[+N, +K]$	×		×
sing	$[+N \quad]$			×
wis	$[+N, -K]$		×	×

Open issue 1: Semantics / pragmatics of the speech levels

Clynes (1989) uses the features ±INTIMATE and ±STATUS for our $\pm N$ and $\pm K$:

- [+INTIMACY]: I want to speak to you the way people speak to people whom they know well.
- [−INTIMACY]: I want to speak to you the way people DON'T speak to people whom they know well.
- [+STATUS]: I want to speak to you the way people speak to people whom they think of as the kind of people who can do what they want.
- [−STATUS]: I want to speak to you the way people DON'T speak to people whom they think of as the kind of people who can do what they want.

Usage patterns (Wolff and Poedjosoedarmo)

CHART THREE

The Pragmatics of the Speech Level System

		Receiver							
		priyayi				non-priyayi			
		not older than speaker		older than speaker		not older than speaker		older than speaker	
		intimate	not intimate	intimate	not intimate	intimate	not intimate	intimate	not intimate
Giver	priyayi	M, N	K	K, M	K	N	M	N	M
	non-priyayi	N, (K)*	(K)	(K)	(K)	N	M	N, M	M

* We put parentheses around these symbols because generally non-priyayi do not control Krômô (Sec. 2.2.2, 4.4.1), and in these cases they use the closest to Krômô that they can muster. The symbol (K) represents Krômô or the nearest approximation to Krômô available to the speaker.

Another approach: intervals on an honorific continuum

- A number of researchers (Potts and Kawahara 2004, McCready 2019, Oshima 2019) argue that honorific meanings should be modeled continuously.
- One implementation: "speech level" corresponds to three sub-intervals of [0,1]; for example:
  - Ngoko = [0,.1],
  - Madya = [.1,.9],
  - Krama = [.9, 1]
- The location on this interval is given by SL, a function from ordered pairs of entities to points on this interval.
- The value returned by this function depends (in some nebulous way) on relevant properties holding between these entities; in particular, their level of intimacy, relative status, relative age, etc.

One implementation

This idea could be implemented as follows:

- $[+N]$ requires that $SL(s,h) < 0.9$
- $[+K]$ requires that $SL(s,h) > 0.1$
- $[-N]$ requires that $SL(s,h) \not< 0.9$ (i.e. $SL(s,h) \geq 0.9$)
- $[-K]$ requires that $SL(s,h) \not> 0.1$ (i.e. $SL(s,h) \leq 0.1$)

The features are now understood as making requirements (perhaps presuppositions, perhaps conventional implicatures) on the speech level holding between the speaker and the addressee, which is modeled as a point (or a sub-interval) of the real interval [0,1].

One implementation

Of course, the precise boundaries between levels can be left open:

- $[+N]$ requires that $SL(s,h) < k$
- $[+K]$ requires that $SL(s,h) > n$
- $[-N]$ requires that $SL(s,h) \not< k$ (i.e. $SL(s,h) \geq k$)
- $[-K]$ requires that $SL(s,h) \not> n$ (i.e. $SL(s,h) \leq n$)

The features are now understood as making requirements (perhaps presuppositions, perhaps conventional implicatures) on the speech level holding between the speaker and the addressee, which is modeled as a point (or a sub-interval) of the real interval [0,1].

Some consequences of this approach

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  - Same for $+N$ and $-N$.
- The non-existence of $[-N, -K]$ lexical items is also explained:
  - $-N$ requires $SL(s, h) \geq k$.
  - $-K$ requires $SL(s, h) \leq n$.
  - But $k > n$.
  - So $-N$ and $-K$ cannot be simultaneously satisfied.

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  - But $k > n$.
  - So $-N$ and $-K$ cannot be simultaneously satisfied.
- The SL function returns values on a continuum; the speech level system is a categorical means for signaling a location on this continuum.
- The continuous nature of the SL interval, though, should in principle allow for "fine-tuning" of the signal, beyond the categorical distinctions provided by the three-way speech level system.

Continuous properties of the Madya level

- Clynes (p.45), citing Uhlenbeck (1970:452), W&P:17, and Errington (1985:107):
  "*In the intermediate madya style, the degree of relative "formality" or "distance" is directly dependent on the relative proportions of ngoko and krama (general lexis) items used.*"
- W&P (p.17):
  "*Madyô is not a set of fixed forms, but is rather a cline rising from a level very close to Ngoko up to a level very close to Krômô. The height of the M level depends on the mixture of Ngoko and Krômô... The greater the percentage of N forms ... the lower the M level.*"

Continuous properties of the Madya level

- Speech levels are categorically determined, but Madya level allows for both [+*K*] and [+*N*] lexical items (of which there are many, something like 500 each).
- Madya speech level utterances sit on a "more Krama-like" to "more Ngoko-like" continuum.
- Analytic intuition: The position of a particular Madya-level utterance along this continuum is (partly) a function of the proportion of [+*K*] and [+*N*] lexical items.

Examples

(2)

Kula	*saged*	*mendhet*	*pinten*	*saniki?*
[+*K*]	[+*K*]	[+*K*]	[+*K*]	[+*N*, +*K*]
1SG	can	buy	how.many	now

'How many can I take now?' (Madya speech level)

(3)

Mung	*Mas*	*Poino*	*niki*	*sing*	*teka*	*dhèk*	*wingi.*
[+*N*]			[+*N*, +*K*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]
only	older.male	Poino	here	REL	come	time	yesterday

'Only Mas Poino here came yesterday.' (Madya speech level)

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- Analytic intuition: The position of a particular Madya-level utterance along this continuum is (partly) a function of the proportion of [+*K*] and [+*N*] lexical items.
- **Problem: Some paradigms of alternants force the speaker to use a** [+*N*] **or a** [+*K*] **form in the Madya level.**

Paradigm type 1

(1)

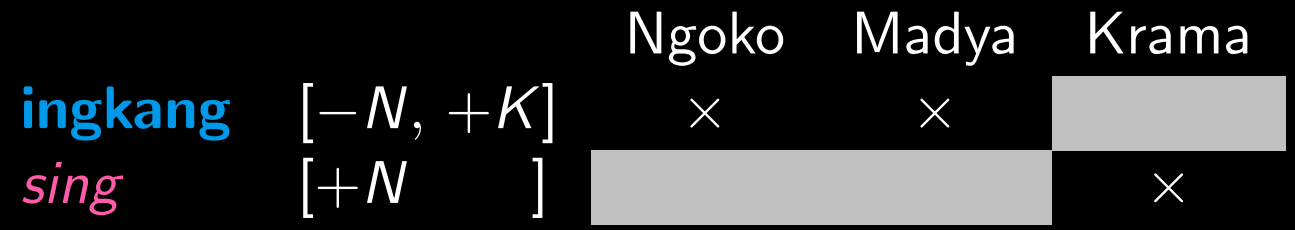
				P1		
Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	**sampun**	*nedha*	**ingkang**	**menika**.
Madya	*Bu*	*Siti*	**mpun**	*nedha*	*sing*	**niku**.
Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

		Ngoko	Madya	Krama
nedha	$[\quad +K]$	×		
mangan	$[+N, -K]$		×	×

Paradigm type 2

(1)

				P1	**P2**	
Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	**sampun**	*nedha*	**ingkang**	**menika**.
Madya	*Bu*	*Siti*	**mpun**	*nedha*	*sing*	**niku**.
Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that



Paradigm type 3

(1)

			P3	P1	P2	
Krama	*Bu*	*Siti*	**sampun**	*nedha*	**ingkang**	**menika**.
Madya	*Bu*	*Siti*	**mpun**	*nedha*	*sing*	**niku**.
Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

		Ngoko	Madya	Krama
sampun	$[-N, +K]$	×	×	
mpun	$[+N, +K]$	×		×
wis	$[+N, -K]$		×	×

Paradigm type 3

(1)

			P3	P1	P2	P3
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Ngoko	*Bu*	*Siti*	**wis**	**mangan**	*sing*	**kuwi**.
	Ms.	Siti	already	eat	REL	that

		Ngoko	Madya	Krama
menika	$[-N, +K]$	×	×	
niku	$[+N, +K]$	×		×
kuwi	$[+N, -K]$		×	×

Overview of data

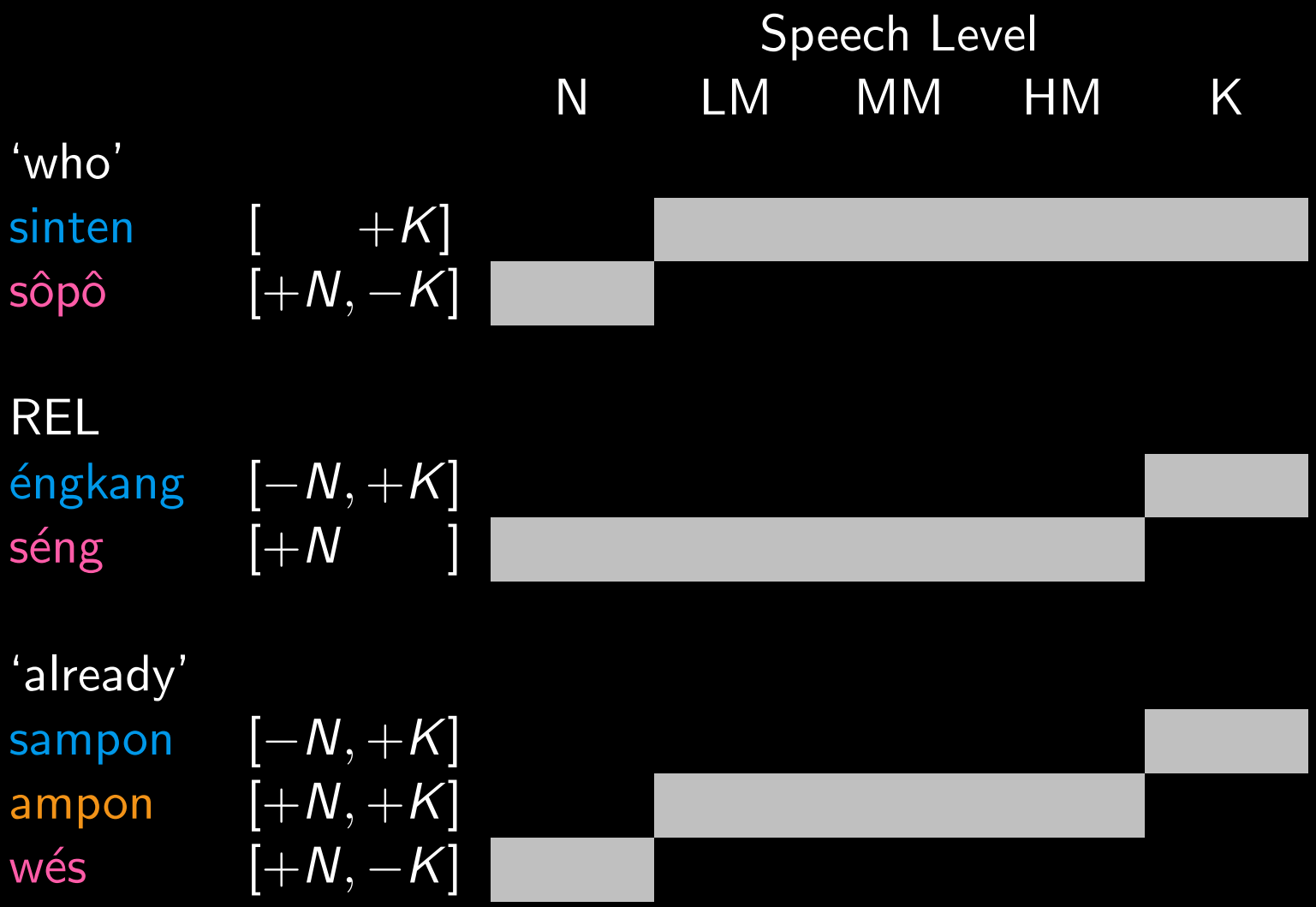
The rest of this talk will be based on data from Wolff and Poedjosoedarmo (1982) (henceforth W&P) which were created as follows:

- A large natural corpus of Javanese dialogs was recorded.
- Native speakers then assigned utterances from the corpus into speech levels (Ngoko, Madya, Krama).
- They assigned Madya-level utterances to one of three sub-levels: Low Madya (LM), Mid Madya (MM), and High Madya (HM).
- The occurrence or non-occurrence of particular lexical items across these levels was determined, and is presented in a series of tables (pp. 30–35).
- The data from these tables form the basis for the rest of this talk.

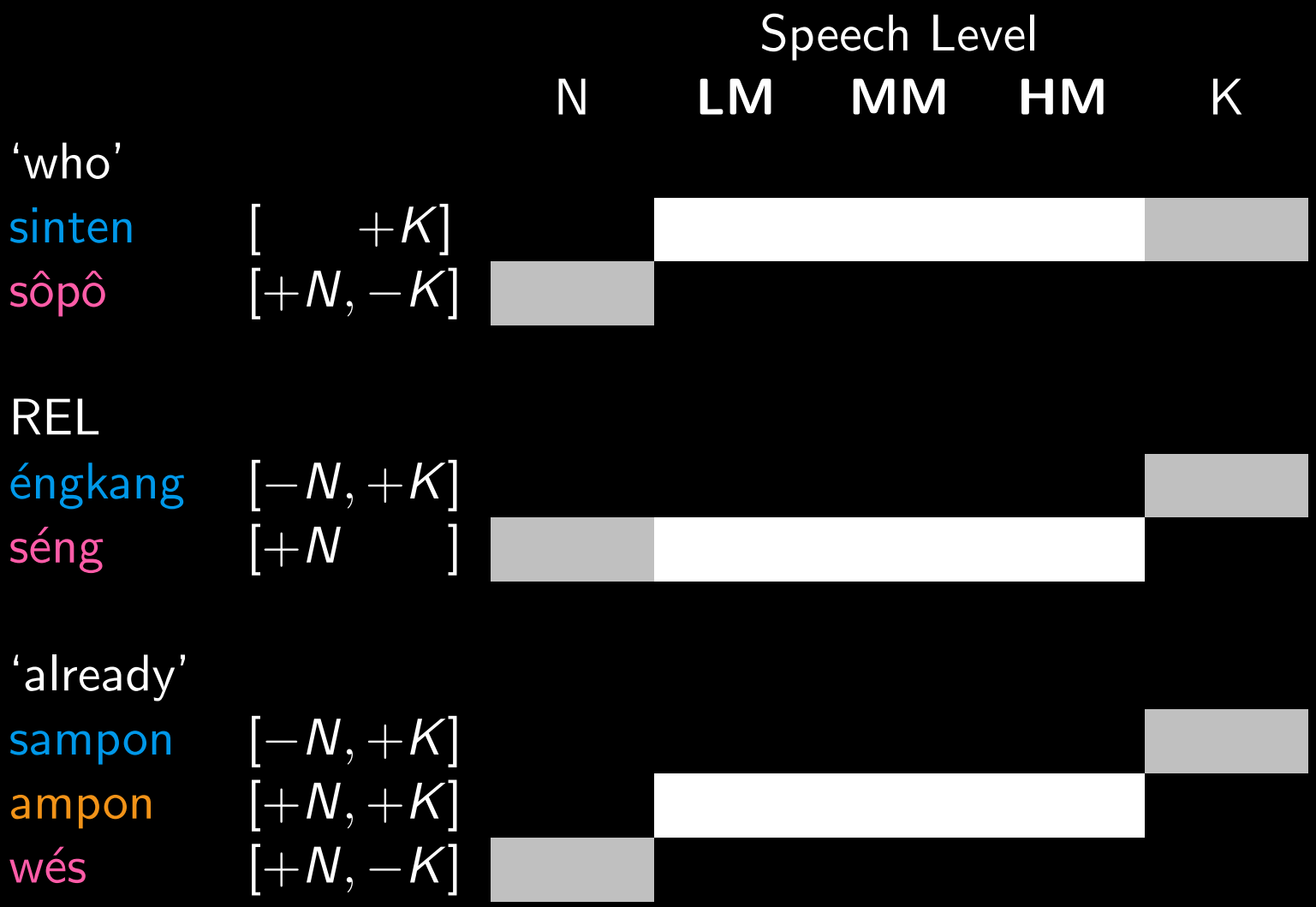
Overview of data: Categorical vs continuous distinctions

W&P (p.29): "How did we determine these speech levels? First, we took a portion of our materials and had native speakers assign a speech level to each utterance: K (Krômô), MT (for Madyô Tinggi, High Madyô), M (Madyô, not high or low), MR (for Madyô Rendah, Low Madyô), and N (Ngoko). We tested these identifications and received nearly 100 percent agreement on assignment into three categories, K, M, and N; but the MT, M, MR distinction was impossible to make consistently, as we ourselves had been unable to specify what the differences were. Thus, the informants distinguished the various kinds of Madyô impressionistically."

Paradigm types 1, 2, and 3: Observed distributions



Paradigm types 1, 2, and 3: No effect on Madya sublevel



Paradigm type 4: Overlap and competition

Table: Paradigm type 1

‘who’		Speech Level				
		N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
sinten	$[\quad +K]$					
sôpô	$[+N, -K]$					

Paradigm type 4: Overlap and competition

Table: Paradigm type 1

‘who’		Speech Level N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
sinten	$[\quad +K]$					
sôpô	$[+N, -K]$					

Table: Paradigm type 4

‘how’		Speech Level N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
kadôs pundi	$[\quad +K]$		×	×		
(ke)pripon	$[+N, +K]$				×	
(ke)priyé	$[+N, -K]$					

Paradigm type 4: Variation in patterns

Pattern 1

‘how’	
kadôs pundi	$[\quad\quad + K]$
(ke)pripon	$[+N, + K]$
(ke)priyé	$[+N, - K]$

Pattern 2

‘from’	
sakéng	$[\quad\quad + K]$
(se)kéng	$[+N, + K]$
sekô/sôkô	$[+N, - K]$

Paradigm type 5: Same thing, other direction

Table: Paradigm type 2

		Speech Level				
REL		N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
éngkang	$[-N, +K]$					
séng	$[+N \quad]$					

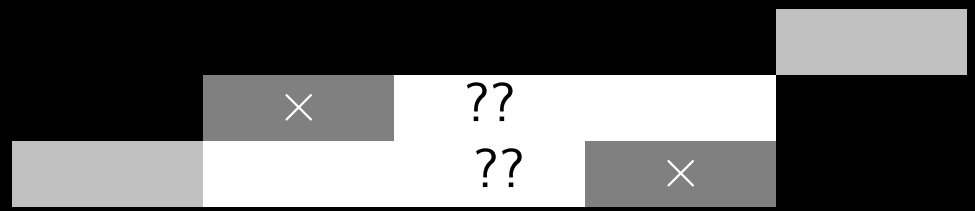
Paradigm type 5: Same thing, other direction

Table: Paradigm type 2

REL		Speech Level N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
éngkang	$[-N, +K]$					
séng	$[+N \quad]$					

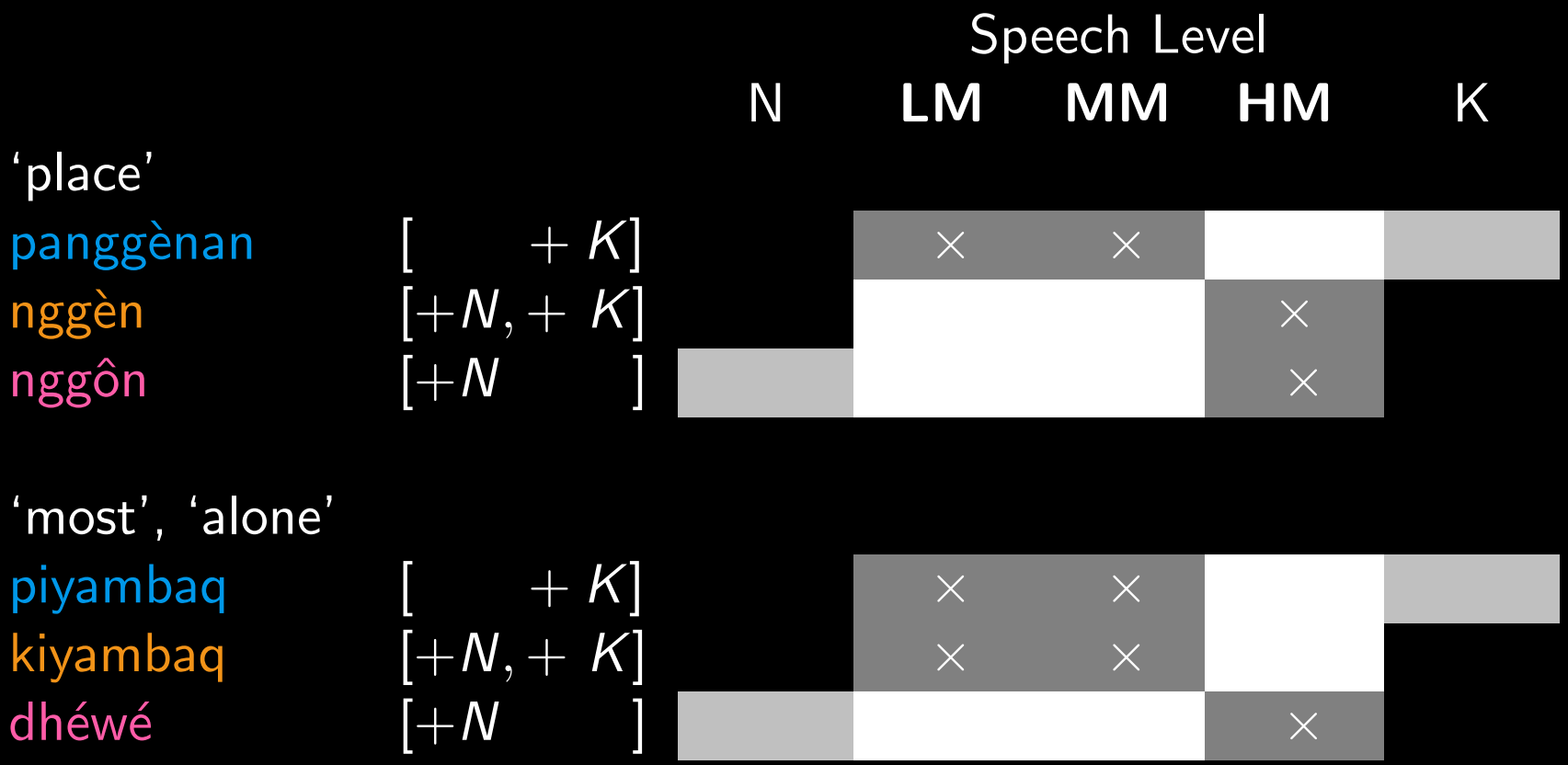
Table: Paradigm type 5

‘don’t’		Speech Level N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
sampon	$[-N, +K]$					
ampon	$[+N, +K]$		×	??		
ôjô	$[+N \quad]$			??	×	



Paradigm type 6: Three-way competition

Table: Paradigm type 6



Lexical Classes by Number

Table: Lexemes by class (From Clynes)

	number (approx.)	% of lexicon
ngoko	580	3
krama	580	3
madya	30	$< 0.2\%$
deferential	210	1
neutral	c.20,000	93

- About 30 each of the *krama* and *ngoko* lexemes are "style-markers", that is, either $[+K, -N]$ or $[-K, +N]$.
- The rest are "general lexis", that is, either $[+K]$ or $[+N]$.
- The great majority of lexical alternant sets thus involve a two-way alternation between a $[+K]$ and $[+N]$ forms.
- I call this "Paradigm type 0".

Paradigm type 0, Pattern 1

Table: Pattern 1a (partial list of 47 sets in W&P)

‘house’		Speech Level				
		N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
griyô	[+ *K*]		×			
omah	[+*N*]			×	×	

Table: Pattern 1b (12 sets in W&P)

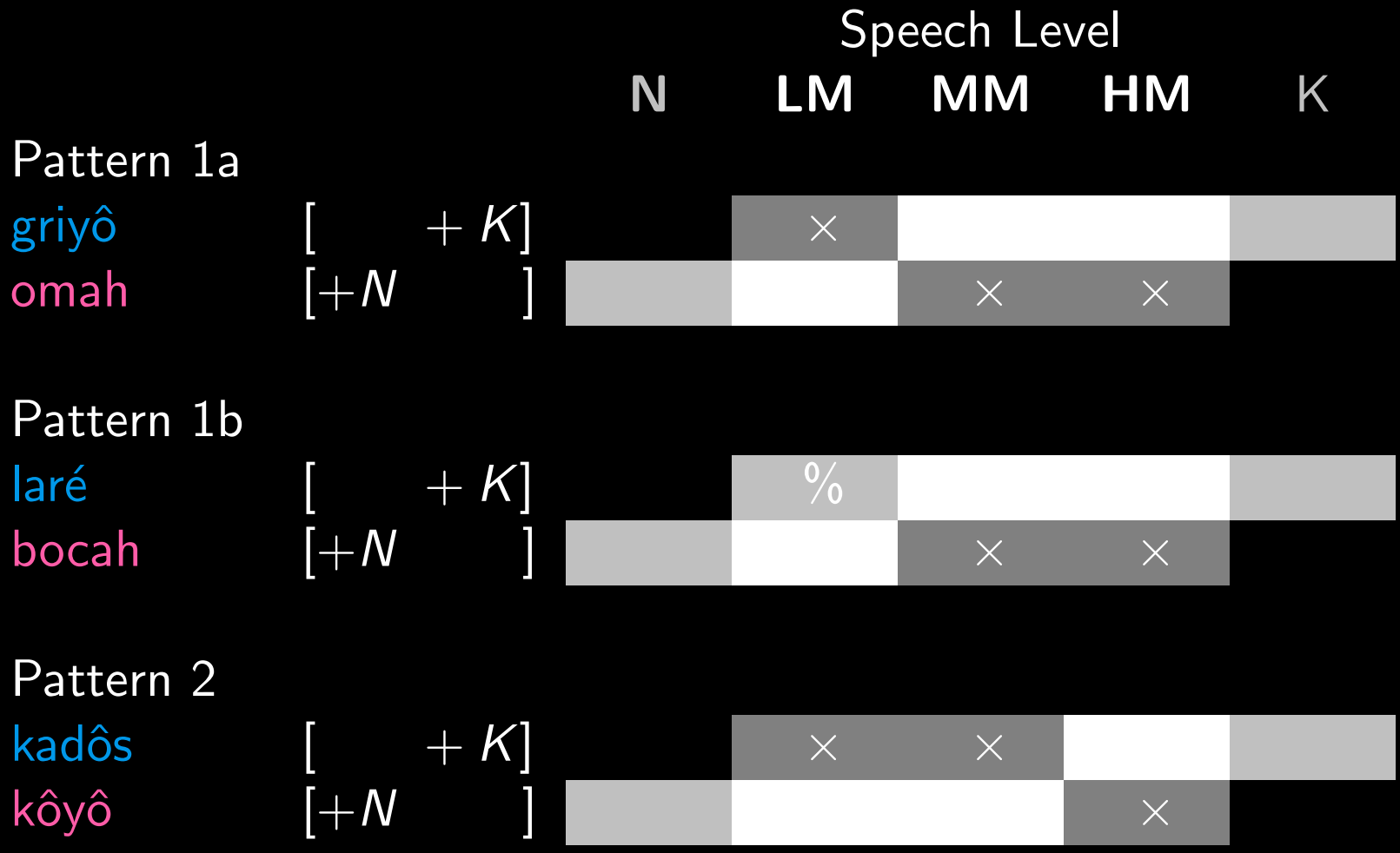
‘child’		Speech Level				
		N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
laré	[+ *K*]		%			
bocah	[+*N*]			×	×	

Paradigm type 0, Pattern 2

Table: Pattern 2 (11 sets in W&P)

		Speech Level				
‘as’		N	**LM**	**MM**	**HM**	K
kadôs	[+ *K*]		×	×		
kôyô	[+*N*]				×	

Comparison of Paradigm type 0 Patterns



Open issue 2: How to formalize the competition

- Different regions within the Madya sub-interval can be signaled by the choice (within particular paradigms) among competing alternants that are compatible with Madya.
- But how should this intuition be cashed out formally?
- It's not obvious! Recall that the Madya level is signaled by a sentence whose lexical items collectively specify $+N$, $+K$.
- Once we have one $+N$ item, every additional item's semantic contribution will be trivial.
- Similarly for every additional $+K$ item.
- In general, there will be no semantic differences between alternant sentences on which the pragmatic competition can be grounded.

Example

(4)

Mung	*Mas*	*Poino*	*niki*	*sing*	*teka*	*dhèk*	*wingi.*
[+*N*]			[+*N*, +*K*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]	[+*N*]
only	older.male	Poino	here	REL	come	time	yesterday

'Only Mas Poino here came yesterday.' (Madya speech level)

- [+*N*] *mung* 'most' competes with [+*K*] *damung*.
- [+*N*] *sing* only alternates with the incompatible [−*N*, +*K*] *ingkang*.
- So *mung* should signal a "lower" Madya sublevel, while *sing* should not.
- But substituting *mung* for *damung* doesn't change the semantics of the sentence (the choice between +*N* and +*K* is redundant).
- How to formalize and ground the competition?

Deferential alternants

(5)

Bu	*Marta*	**sampun**	**dahar**	**ingkang**	**menika**.	**Krama**
		$[-N,+K]$	*DFR*	$[-N,+K]$	$[-N,+K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	**mpun**	**dahar**	*sing*	**niku**.	**Madya**
		$[+N,+K]$	*DFR*	$[+N]$	$[+N,+K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	**wis**	**dahar**	*sing*	**kuwi**.	**Ngoko**
		$[+N,-K]$	*DFR*	$[+N]$	$[+N,-K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	*already*	*eat*	*REL*	*that*	

'Bu Marta already ate that one.'
(+ the speaker honors Bu Marta)

- The subject-oriented honorific (deferential) alternant dahar 'eat' is compatible with all three speech levels.
- Argument honorifics (deferentials) are thus orthogonal to calculation of speech level.

Open issue 3: Semantics of deferentials

- Speech-level contrasts signal something about (or, have appropriateness conditions determined by) the relationship between the speaker and the addressee.
- Deferentials signal something about (or, have appropriateness conditions determined by) the relationship between the speaker and some grammatically or lexically determined referent.
- A simple theory: Deferentials rely on the same SL function that speech level features do. The difference is how they are "anchored":
  - Speech level distinctions are anchored to the contextual addressee. $SL(s, \underline{h}) > d$
  - Deferentials are anchored to some grammatically or lexically determined referent. $\underline{\lambda x}.SL(s, \underline{x}) > d$

Open issue 4: Interaction between speech level and addressee-oriented deferentials

- I showed above that deferential forms like dahar 'eat' are not restricted in speech level.
- They instead show "deference" toward a grammatically determined referent (here, the agent/subject).
- Simple theory (again): Deferentials rely on the same *SL* function that speech level features do. The difference is how they are "anchored"
- Question: What happens when the grammatically determined referent is the addressee?

Question: What happens if this sentence is addressed to Bu Marta herself?

(6)

Bu	*Marta*	**sampun**	*dahar*	**ingkang**	**menika**.	**Krama**
		$[-N,+K]$	*DFR*	$[-N,+K]$	$[-N,+K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	**mpun**	*dahar*	*sing*	**niku**.	**Madya**
		$[+N,+K]$	*DFR*	$[+N]$	$[+N,+K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	**wis**	*dahar*	*sing*	**kuwi**.	**Ngoko**
		$[+N,-K]$	*DFR*	$[+N]$	$[+N,-K]$	
Bu	*Marta*	*already*	*eat*	*REL*	*that*	

'Bu Marta (=the addressee) already ate that one.'
(+ the speaker honors Bu Marta)

Open issue 4: Interaction between speech level and addressee-oriented deferentials

According to Uhlenbeck (1970), the Ngoko and Krama speech levels can be further subdivided by into two sublevels, determined by whether deferentials are used for the addressee.

- Ngoko 1: Ngoko speech level, no use of deferentials targeting the addressee (can be used for third person referents).
- Ngoko 2: Ngoko speech level, regular use of deferentials targeting the addressee.
- Krama 1: Krama speech level, no use of deferentials targeting the addressee.
- Krama 2: Krama speech level, regular use of deferentials targeting the addressee.

A puzzle

If deferentials rely on the same "honorific function" that speech level features do (SL in this talk), it isn't clear how (or whether) the pattern described by Uhlenbeck can be modeled!

- The use of addressee-targeting deferentials, under this simple view, should raise the speech level above what it would be without addressee-targeting deferentials.
- For this to work at the Krama speech level, *dahar* should require that $SL(s, x) > k'$, with x resolved to the addressee, and $k' > k$ (where k is the 'floor' for Krama speech level).
- But Ngoko speech level requires $SL(s, h) < n$. Since $n < k$, this should make Ngoko speech level incompatible with addressee-targeting deferentials, contrary to fact.

Some ideas

- Maybe speech level features and deferentials rely on different honorific "dimensions"; their use might be at least to some extent orthogonal. $\Rightarrow$ multiple dimensions of "honorification" picked out by different items.
- Or maybe we need a more dynamic theory, with contextually supplied honorific indices being "bumped up" by the use of particular items.
- The problem here (and its solution) might relate to the problem discussed earlier; namely, that our semantic theory thus far provides no obvious way to ground the effects of paradigmatic competition (since no extra information is conveyed by the use of "redundant" speech level features).

Any other ideas?

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