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## Training in interaction skills for cultural mediation and language learning



CORDIALIS

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# 1. A first look at this training method

In this manual, readers will discover how to organise training based on the concrete observation of the interactional practices of professionals, volunteers, learners or participants in cultural mediation or language learning activities. This manual complements the CORDIALIS manual for self-assessment of interactional skills in cultural mediation and language learning situations. The main specificity of this method is that it is based on the collection and analysis of videos collected in the field as a preliminary step to the identification of skills. For a list and description of interactional skills, the reader is referred to the CORDIALIS self-assessment manual, which precedes and completes this manual.

The following sections detail the foundations of this method and provide specific examples of video analysis and identification of interactional skills for the fields of cultural mediation and language learning.

## 1.1. Collecting and working with "natural" data

Everything that is social is by definition opposed to what is natural. The term "natural data" is used here as opposed to "experimental data", i.e. data provoked by a researcher or trainer with very specific objectives. Researchers in conversational analysis use the expression "naturally-occurring interaction" to refer to the collection of data during activities that would have occurred routinely, even in the absence of the researcher. One consequence of this approach is that the variety of data collected is far richer than what could be collected in an experimental setting (Sacks 1984).

The distinctive feature of the CORDIALIS training method therefore lies in the fact that it is based on real practices, i.e. not provoked by the researcher or trainer. The interactions taken as examples to present this method, as well as those that the reader wishing to implement this method is invited to collect, would have occurred because the professional, the volunteer, the learner, the participant, would have taken part in these activities as part of their profession, their apprenticeship or their leisure.

## 1.2. How can we develop an awareness of interactional skills?

The method we are proposing in the CORDIALIS project is based on the recording of a session/activity in which one or more of the participants, whatever their category of participation, wishes to look back on the way they acted and draw lessons from it with a view to improving their practices.

## 1.3. Does recording influence participants' behaviour?

The reader may wonder whether recording an interaction can have an influence on that interaction and transform the behaviour of the participants. Conversational analysis researchers have been asking these questions since the 1960s, at a time when recording technologies were not nearly as widespread as they are today. They came to the conclusion that, on the whole, participants' behaviour was not altered by the presence of a recording device (Heath, Hindmarsh & Luff 2010). When they are, which can happen at the start of interactions, the way in which the presence of the recording device is mentioned in the interactions can become an

object of analysis. But once the presence of the device has been mentioned and noted by the participants, they resume their activity as a matter of routine. We might add that if the recording is announced in advance, and made by a member of the group for training reasons, it is all the more easily accepted by the other participants.

#### 1.4. Ask participants for permission to record them

In no case should a group or participant be recorded without their knowledge. It should be announced in advance that a recording is going to be made and the general aims of this process should be explained: to gain a better understanding of how participants interact and how some of their skills can be improved. It must be anticipated that participants might withdraw their consent, i.e. a participant who has given their agreement may change their mind. In this case, the recording will have to be erased. Even if these cases are extremely rare, we must envisage that this could happen. It may happen that a participant refuses to be recorded. In this case, they should be placed outside the camera's field of vision. All these points can be mentioned in a written document signed by all the participants. In addition to these aspects, readers can take a look at the GDPR (2024).

#### 1.5. Why take an interest in social and language interaction?

In everyday situations of cultural mediation, presentation of craft objects or cultural heritage, exchanges about works of art or literature, or in second language teaching and learning situations, the construction of the learning object, the cultural elements, the relevant facts, is achieved in social interaction, i.e. in the alternation of turns at talk during which the participants construct, negotiate and share intersubjectivity and meaning.

Turns at talk are made up of linguistic or non-verbal details that go unnoticed when they are performed (see the CORDIALIS self-assessment method, section 3). Yet these details have a central impact on the construction of meaning between the participants. For example, the interpretation of an instruction, and therefore the type of response that will be given, depends largely on the choices made by the moderator when formulating it, the degree of precision he or she provides, the way he or she defines the expected task, and the examples he or she provides.

Even if the nature of the response given will be shaped by these choices of wording, it is impossible to define the relevance of an instruction without observing the way in which the other participants respond to it. In this process of constructing meaning, it is as much the way in which the instruction is formulated as the way in which it is responded to that is at stake. For example, learners or participants may ask questions about the instruction to make sure they have understood it before responding. By checking the relevance of their initial interpretation, they increase their chances of providing an appropriate response to the task proposed by the facilitator or teacher. We therefore understand that the quality of a response depends less on the intrinsic characteristic of a learner or participant than on their interactional competence, in the example given here, in their ability to ask a question about an instruction.

It is therefore vital for professionals, volunteers, learners and participants to increase their awareness of the organisational mechanism of social interaction and the different skills that are mobilised when constructing a topic of conversation or a learning object.

The next sections look at how to collect and analyse video recordings.

## 2. Recording online and face-to-face interactions

The collection of video recordings concerns activities organised online or face-to-face. The method we present here can be applied to both types of interaction.

For online activities, the recording method is simple. Once the organisers have obtained the agreement of the participants, simply activate the "recording" mode of the video sharing platform used (Zoom, Teams, etc.) from the start of the activity until the end (see explanation below).

When recording face-to-face interaction, once the organisers have obtained the agreement of the participants, they must ensure that all the participants are in the camera's field of vision, as well as the objects they are using. The use of two cameras, positioned at complementary points, may be desirable to ensure a quality recording. For example, if the group is arranged in a circle or face to face, one of the cameras can film the participants from the front while the other films them from the back, and vice versa. This is typically the case in a classroom. If the group is in a museum, one camera can film the group from the front and the other from the back to observe, for example, the pointing gesture towards the works being observed.

The use of microphones to improve sound quality is also recommended, particularly if the recording is taking place in a noisy place such as a museum. The use of a lapel microphone can be very useful. Bear in mind that the higher the quality of the recording, the more can be learned from it.

In general, you should try to use video to capture what is relevant from the participants' point of view in wide shots that take in the whole situation, the objects, the bodies and the movements of each person. Zooms on details of the setting should be avoided, as they can obscure the overall vision of the situation.

Finally, in the same logic of taking into account the spatial context of the participants' contributions, it is necessary to be able to contextualise the participants' actions over time. To this end, it is advisable to film continuously, from the beginning of the activity to the end. This makes it possible to understand what made a previous action relevant, and what this action makes relevant as a follow-up.

### 2.1. What to do once the recording has been collected?

Once a recording has been made, the first way to use it is to view it, noting the sequences that relate to the training objectives. But you should also reserve the right to select moments which seem interesting to the observer for reasons other than the initial objectives, either because the activity is going particularly well or because a problem has arisen.

Once one or more moments have been selected, we need to be able to analyse the interactional organisation of that moment in detail, as well as the skills linked to that organisation. To do this, we need a way of visualising these moments in the activity so that we can return to them quickly, without depending on the time of the video. The most precise way of making this visualisation possible is to transcribe the moments selected in the video.

## 2.2. Transcribe

For a long time, researchers interested in social interaction have stressed that transcribing recordings (audio or video) is in itself an analysis of the activity (Ochs 1979; Mondada 2018, 2022). To understand how participants produce and interpret actions, it is first necessary to record precisely what they have said. Long-standing studies (Goodwin 1981) have shown that what are usually treated as errors or hesitations by grammarians are in fact adaptations of speech to the ever-changing constraints of the situation. For example, a speaker may modify the grammatical structure of his turn to adapt the theme of his turn to his different interlocutors, who do not all have the same knowledge of the subject being discussed. To reflect the syntax of the spoken word, punctuation, which corresponds to the syntax of the written word, will be used differently. In addition to the transcriptions given as examples in the following sections, you will find transcription conventions at the end of this manual. The recommended way of transcribing is to remain faithful to the participants' speech and gestures as they produced them at the time. The advantage of having accurate transcripts is that you can examine the data by reading it, adding notes in pencil, then going back to the video to check your hypotheses. The analysis and understanding of the moment will become increasingly precise.

Finally, another advantage of transcripts is that they facilitate group work and analysis. This point is explained in the following section.

## 2.3. Observe and analyse videos and transcripts as a group

Although it is possible to apply this method alone, in a training context it is more than likely to be used in a group. Discussing observations and interpretations helps to improve accuracy by forcing participants to return to the recorded action of the participants they are observing. This principle of comparing observations and interpretations is at the heart of the data session (an analytical device at the heart of conversational analysis research). If the observers interpret the same moment differently, they can go back to the video and use the observable elements to decide on the correct interpretation. A central question arises here: what is the angle of analysis of the participants in the data session? What are they observing and what are they trying to understand? The next section addresses this point.

## 2.4. Understanding participants' points of view

The basic principle of the method we are presenting here, largely inspired by conversational analysis, is to examine how participants in the activity construct an intersubjectivity between themselves in order to achieve their objectives at the time (learning an element of a second language, discovering a craft or literary object, etc.).

The way in which intercomprehension is constructed from turn to turn is a public phenomenon. This means that when a participant hears his interlocutor's response, he understands how his interlocutor has understood what he has just said. If this understanding seems adequate, the participant can continue with the activity. On the other hand, if this understanding seems inadequate, he can initiate a correction sequence to re-explain what he really meant. In all cases, the focus of the analysis is to understand how the participants organise their participation in the activity and its objectives in order to learn a new linguistic or cultural element or discover a work of art or craft. Examples of analysis are available in the examples 1 and 2 that follow.

## 2.5. The choice of interaction skills to be observed

In a data session aimed at identifying interaction skills for facilitators, teachers, volunteers or participants in linguistic and/or cultural activities, this choice can be made in two ways.

1-Either the people organising the training want to focus on a particular aspect of the facilitators' or participants' practice (e.g. how the facilitator evaluates the participants' responses, or how the learners express their difficulties). In this case, they will have to watch the video, select, transcribe and analyse extracts according to their prior choices.

2-Or the people organising the training have no prior ideas. In this case, they can watch the video and choose, transcribe and analyse a moment that seems interesting to them, either because the interaction seems to be going particularly well, or because a problem emerges and they want to understand the origins of the problem, how it was (possibly) resolved, what skills were used at that moment by the different participants, or what skills could be improved, etc.

## 2.6. How can transcripts be used to identify interactional skills?

The following sections present step-by-step how transcribing and observing the videos can help to identify the interactional skills mobilised by the participants in the extracts chosen and analysed. These elements are followed by two examples (extracts 1 and 2) of transcription and their analysis.

## 2.7. First step: Describe the general situation

Describe the situation: the participants, their categories, the type of activity in progress, the issues for each participant. The aim is to provide the data session participants with a knowledge of the situation that will enable them to understand the issues and objectives, and the potential problems of the activity for the participants.

## 2.8. Second step: Action sequences

Whatever the degree of prior preparation for an activity, for the participants everything remains to be accomplished in the interaction with partners in the real situation (Suchman 1987). Each of turns at talk can therefore be considered as an action that tends towards a goal, whether that goal is explicit or not. On the other hand, the turns at talk in the following examples enable us to understand how the previous turn was understood by the interlocutor, and how the different participants coordinate to achieve their objectives.

A of turns at talk can also be analysed in itself, for example by examining how the speaker adds extensions that gradually respond to the problems that the absence of other participants may suggest.

## 2.9. Third step: Identifying interaction skills

From a meticulous description of the way in which the participants coordinate their actions, it becomes possible to identify skills, by referring to the list and definitions available in the self-assessment manual. But it is by no means impossible for users of this method to identify other skills.

## 3. Example 1. First step: Exploring the ability to formulate an instruction

The following extract provides an opportunity for reflection and training on the skill of formulating instructions. Formulating an instruction is a central moment in any interaction where a teacher or trainer invites a group to take part in an activity, whether it's learning a language or discovering elements of the cultural or craft heritage. The central issue is when the teacher or trainer initiates the activity with the participants. The first extract shows the skills that a facilitator uses at this point.

### 3.1. General situation

In the following extract, the participants are Masters students in language didactics at a Parisian university. They are testing an activity designed by the CORDIALIS team. They had two aims: 1) to test the CORDIALIS activity and give feedback to the project team, 2) to receive professional training both as a facilitator and as a participant/learner (in particular, to reflect on the use of images or elements of cultural heritage with language learners). This test gave them the opportunity to find themselves in a real teaching/learning situation and was an integral part of their training and assessment as Masters students and future teaching professionals. The meeting took place online via the Zoom application.

### 3.2. Type of activity at the time of the extract

The following extract takes place at the very beginning of a meeting between a group of five students, one of whom (ANI) has the role of facilitator. The others were participants. They were just discovering the activity on offer. Only the facilitator knew about the activity before the meeting. The activity tested consisted of the facilitator showing a series of images to the other participants and inviting them to interact on this basis. The general aim of this activity was to enable participants who were meeting for the first time to get to know each other by discussing elements of architectural heritage.

### 3.3. What is at stake for the participants in this extract

In this extract, the facilitator is responsible for organising the initiation of the activity by showing the participants what they are going to do with the image. At this point, the others are in a listening position. This is a key moment in the interaction, because if the instructions are not understandable, the participants risk proposing inappropriate responses, not understanding the aims of the activity or encountering other problems.



Let's start by reading the extract.

### Formulating instructions at the beginning of the activity (extract 1)

#### Extract 1(bis) -

##### ANI = Facilitator

- 1 ANI ((affiche la première image))  
 ((shows the first image))  
 2 ANI alors première image/(0.)  
 So first image/ (0.)  
 3 tout ce que vous trouvez à dire sur  
 all that you can say about  
 4 cette image vous me le dites/ qu'est-ce que vous voyez/ quelles  
 this image you say it to me/ what do you see/ what  
 5 couleurs vous voyez/ où est-ce que ça pourrait être/ toutes les  
 colour you see/ where could it be/ every  
 6 hypothèses possibles/ (0.)  
 possible hypothesis/ (0.)  
 7 PA2 mais moi ça me fait penser à un pays >chai pas< du maghreb le  
 well to me it reminds me a country >i don't know< of maghreb  
 8 maroc par exemple  
 morroco for example

### 3.4. The organisation of turns at talk in example 1

The facilitator formulates her instruction to initiate the activity between lines 1 and 6.

This formulation shows how the facilitator anticipates possible practical problems for the participants.

It begins by making the image that will serve as a resource visually available to the group by sharing it on all the screens (line 1).

In coordination with this sharing, the facilitator verbally categorises the vision of this image as opening the beginning of the group's interaction activity (line 2).

After a brief pause (line 2), the facilitator explains what the interaction activity should consist of (line 4) by connecting the verb "to say" and the verb "to see", and repeating the verb "to see" twice.

She gives examples of elements that participants could mention in their descriptions: colours, places.

She then extends these examples to all possible interpretations (lines 5-6).

We can see that the way in which the facilitator formulates the instruction has the effect of opening up a space in which the participants can interact by sharing their vision and interpretations of the image.

We can also see that this instruction makes it relevant for one of the participants to select herself to contribute to the activity by proposing a hypothesis about the country in which this image was taken (lines 7-8).

The participant therefore responds to the facilitator's instruction by making a contribution to the activity. This is not always the case, as can be seen in extract 2.

### 3.5. Identifying interaction skills

Given the previous observations in extract 1, we can identify that, at the start of the activity, the presenter is able to mobilise the skills of:

- formulate a detailed instruction,
- use multimodal resources,
- formulate the objectives of the activity.

Before discussing what these skills mean in practice, and explaining how identifying these skills can provide a resource for improving them (see the last section of the manual), it is worth looking at another example of a comparable situation.

Example 2 allows us to explore the same skill of formulating an instruction when initiating the activity in another group, which was testing the same CORDIALIS activity as the group in extract 1.

## 4. Example 2. Exploring the ability to formulate an instruction – continued

The general situation, the type of activity at the time of the extract and what is at stake for the participants in this extract are the same as for example 1.

### Example 2 ANI = Facilitator

((Lancement de l'enregistrement))

((Shares screen and starts recording))

1 ANI ok/ alors je vais vous montrer quelques photos  
**ok/ so i will show you some pictures**

2 (0.)

3 °si ça veut bien marcher maintenant/°  
**°if it works now/°**

4 (0.)

5 ((partage d'écran activé))  
**((shares screen))**

6 ok/ bon ça c'est mes mails ça n'a rien à voir  
**ok/ well these are my emails it's something different**

7 ROS hh:

8 ((affiche logo du projet cordialis))

9 ANI alors/ du coup (0.)  
**so/ then (0.)**

10 hop/ ((affiche une image)) alors je vais vous montrer  
**here you are ((shares picture)) so i will show you**

11 quelques photos et euh: bah vous allez me dire ce que vous en  
**some pictures and u:h well you will tell what you**

12 pensez/ euh: (0.) voilà on va les observer et vous allez les  
**think about/ u:h (0.) so we will observe them and you will**

13 décrire avec moi/ d'accord/  
**describe them with me/ ok/**

14 ROS d'accord  
**ok**

15 ??? ok

16 ANI ok alors on commence par la russie  
**ok so we start with russia**

17 ORA est-ce qu'on doit lever la main pour parler/  
**do we have to raise the hand to speak/**

18 (0.)

19 ANI eu:::h n: bah euh [j'pense que:  
**u:::h n: well uh [i think tha:t**

20 BON [sinon tu nous interrogés hhh  
**[otherwise you ask questions hhh**

21 (0.)

22 ANI au pire je vous interroge  
**yes if needed i will ask you questions**

## 4.1. The organisation of turns at talk in example 2

Extract 2 can be divided into three sequences, i.e. three moments when the participants perform different actions to progress in their activity.

### ***The first sequence runs from line 1 to line 10: initiate the activity by sharing an image.***

The facilitator initiates the activity by sharing her screen and starting the recording of the session (before line 1).

She initiates the formulation of the instruction (line 1), but has to interrupt it (line 3) to deal with technical problems (delay in screen sharing, then involuntary sharing of the page in her mailbox).

She comments on these hazards as she resolves them (lines 3 and 6).

After sharing the Cordialis logo (line 8), she finally managed to share the first image of the business.

To sum up, in this first sequence, the leader shares the image that will enable the group to complete the activity after dealing with technical problems. Sharing this image can be seen as an initial action that advances the activity for the whole group. The next structuring sequence will be the formulation of the instruction.

### ***The second sequence runs from line 10 to line 16: formulating the instruction and obtaining the agreement of the participants.***

In this part of the extract, the facilitator explains to the participants how the activity will be carried out.

She explains what she is going to do (i.e. show the images, lines 10-11) and what the participants are going to do (i.e. say what the images inspire in them (lines 11-12)). The facilitator extends her turn to reformulate the instruction by also including herself in the activity of describing the images (lines 12-13).

Lines 14 and 15, two participants confirm the instructions proposed by the moderator. The other participants do not speak.

The teacher interprets these answers as meaning that the activity should be launched (line 16 mentions the name of the country where the photo was taken).

Note that unlike the presenter in example 1, she does not ask participants to guess in which country the photo was taken.

To sum up, in this sequence the facilitator formulates the instruction, detailing the actions expected of her and the other participants, and then initiates the activity with the first image.

### ***The third sequence runs from line 16 to line 22: negotiating an aspect of the activity's progress.***

On line 17, one of the participants takes the initiative and asks a question about how the activity should be run (how speaking should be organised during the activity).

Between lines 19 and 22, the facilitator, in collaboration with another participant, suggests a solution for organising the discussion (the facilitator will select the participants if necessary).

This last sequence shows the informal nature of the activity: the facilitator gives the participants the opportunity to negotiate and choose how they want to organise their speaking.

## 4.2. Identifying interaction skills

Given the previous observations in extract 2, we can identify that, at the start of the activity, the presenter is able to mobilise the skills of:

- formulate a precise instruction
- ask for confirmation to ensure that the instruction has been properly understood
- adapting to technical problems
- give participants a degree of freedom to decide how they want to take part in the activity (how to speak).

### Additional comments

After observing examples 1 and 2, it was stated that the facilitators formulated precise instructions. It is important to return to this point in order to clarify what is meant by "being able to formulate a precise instruction". This categorisation is based on observing how the other participants respond to these instructions.

In the case of example 1, the instruction is followed by a participant's response, indicating that the instruction was sufficiently intelligible for her to respond.

In example 2, the intelligibility of the instruction is demonstrated by the host's request for confirmation.

An important conclusion must be drawn from this comparison: the mention of a skill is never sufficient in itself. The attribution of a skill must be justified by the way in which the other participants act in response to what the observed participant has done. It is quite possible for an identical formulation to be relevant in one context and not in another. This is why, in order to properly assess a participant's skills, it is important to observe how that participant adapts to potential problems. It is important to bear in mind that a comprehension problem, for example after an instruction, does not necessarily stem from the wording at the origin of the problem, but may come from the participant interpreting the turn at talk (in the example, an instruction) inappropriately. In all cases, we must avoid limiting ourselves to simply observing the problem and instead explore how the participants manage it during the rest of their interaction. This approach will help to clarify the skills observed.

## 5. To conclude the presentation of this training method based on the collection and analysis of video data

The method we have just proposed is based on detailed observation of practices in real-life situations. It is always surprising to see the extent to which individuals who apply this method discover details of their own ways of doing things, or those of their partners, of which they had not been aware. The main reason is that when an individual is engaged in any kind of social activity, their attention is focused on coordinating with their partners and acting rationally. It is impossible to achieve this coordination while observing oneself acting. It is only possible after the event, thanks to video recording. The simple fact of going back over the actions that were coordinated with partners, with the reconstruction of intersubjectivity as the prism of analysis (i.e. the way in which the participants co-constructed meaning and the specific elements of their activity) is an extremely formative approach. This approach also has the advantage of using the practices and skills already available to the participant being observed as a basis. By drawing on this know-how that can be observed in a situation, it is possible to discuss certain details that can be implemented in future situations.

It is recommended that this method be applied regularly to provide ongoing training and a time for exchange between members of an educational team, a group of professionals or learners. The adaptive nature of this method means that individuals and organisations can configure it to their specific needs.

### Discuss how these skills can be improved

This aspect of training is largely dependent on each education or training organisation, or the team that will implement this training method. For example, a team working in a formal context will not draw the same conclusions from the observation of an interaction as an organisation or team working in an informal context. The same applies to the type of participants.

However, in all cases, identifying the skills that have been mobilised is an opportunity to look back at what has been done and to reflect with the team members on the relevance of what was done at the time observed, and whether other skills could have been mobilised at that time.

More generally, implementing this training method is an opportunity to set up continuous training within a team of professionals, volunteers or learners.

### Conventions for transcription

The aim of the transcription conventions presented here is twofold. Firstly, to provide users of this method with transcription tools that are sufficiently precise to enable them to reflect rigorously on the videos they have collected. On the other hand, we need to provide users of this method with easily accessible and readable transcription tools. Readers and users who wish to discover the version of these conventions used by researchers, as well as the theoretical issues attached to them, can refer to Mondada (2018, 2022). The conventions presented in what follows are inspired by this work.

- 1) To avoid projecting the structures of written language onto the structures of spoken language, standard punctuation is not used. This means that there are no capital letters, full stops, commas, question marks, etc., including for proper nouns. Some punctuation marks are used with a different function (see below).
- 2) For each participant, the first three letters of the first name will be chosen (which will be anonymised if necessary, for example if the transcripts are examined with outside members of the teaching team). These three letters will be placed at the beginning of each participant's turn at talk, even if this turn is very brief.
- 3) The lines of the transcript are numbered for easy reference during group work.
- 4) Rising and falling intonations are marked by "/" and "\" respectively. In spoken language, intonations are one of the elements that segment speech, which is why it is important to note them. The following elements also structure speech:
- 5) Syllable lengthening is noted by ":" (e.g. "no::n").
- 6) Pauses within a turn at talk, or between two turns, are noted by (0.). In scientific research, these pauses are measured by software in tenths of a second. In this method, we propose to note them without measuring them. A long pause can indicate a problem in the activity (no one is speaking) or indicate that a participant is trying to work out what to say, etc.
- 7) It is important to be able to note when two participants are speaking at the same time. In this case, their speech is noted as in the example below. The moment of overlap is noted with square brackets [

19 ANI eu:::h n: bah euh [j'pense que:  
                   u:::h n: well uh [i think tha:t  
 20 BON [sinon tu nous interrogues hhh  
                   [otherwise you ask questions hh

- 8) When we want to note non-verbal actions, we suggest noting them in double brackets and in italics at the time of their accomplishment in the turn at talk, e.g.:

3 °si ça veut bien marcher maintenant/°  
   °if it works now/°  
 4 (0.)  
 5 ((partage d'écran activé))  
   ((shares screen))

- 9) A low voice volume can be noted between °°, for example:

3 °si ça veut bien marcher maintenant/°  
   °if it works now/°

- 10) A high voice volume can be noted in capitals (the whole segment in a high voice), for example:

IF IT WORKS NOW/

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