

Introducing curriculum authenticity

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OUTLINE

- Background
- Issues
- Objectives
- Conceptualizing curriculum authenticity
- Applying the model: The case of the business English licence
- Recommendations
- Limitations

BACKGROUND: AUTHENTICITY IN ELT

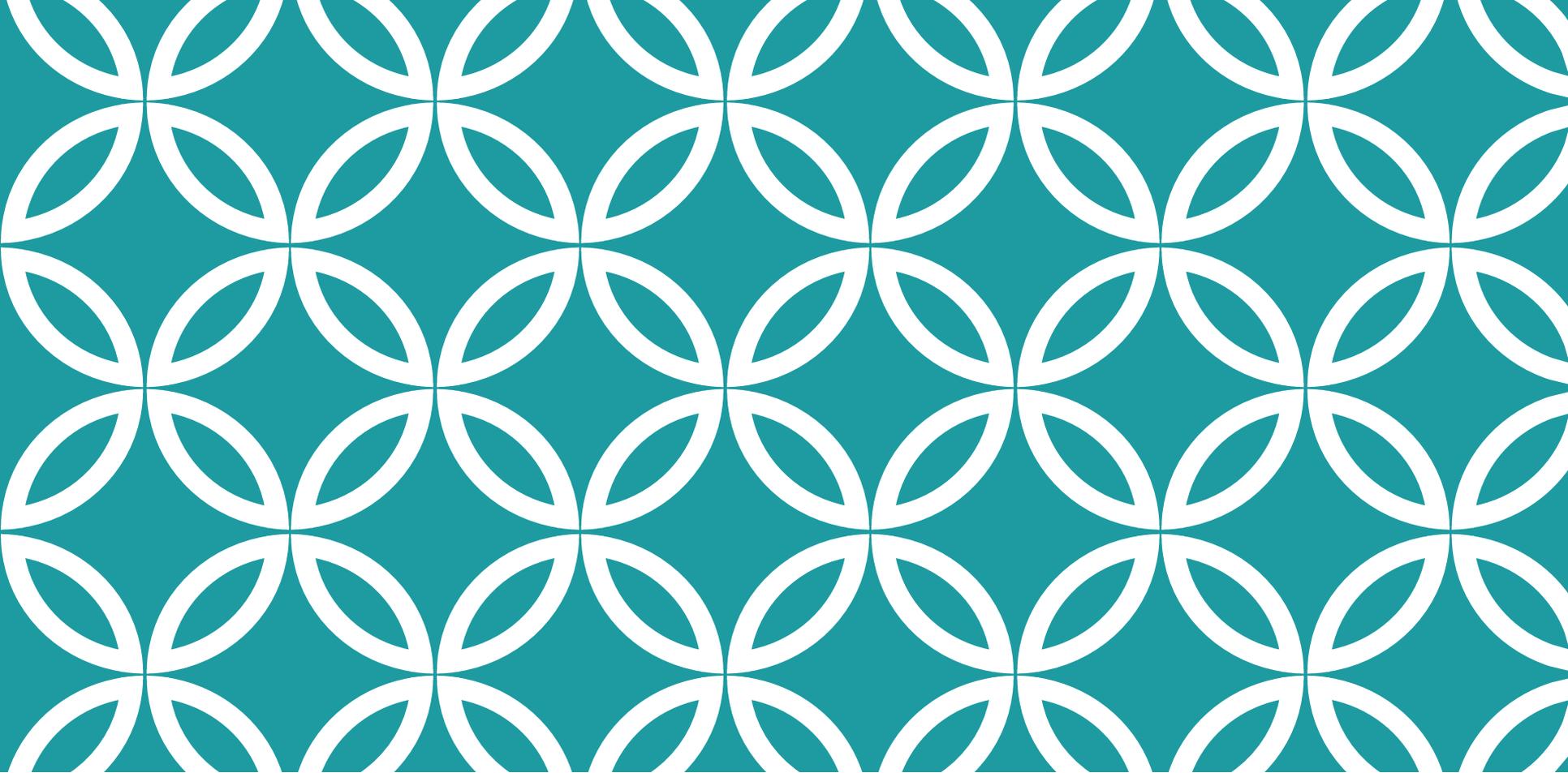
1. A key concept around which language education research and pedagogy revolves.
2. A variety of types: Text, task, classroom, interactional, assessment
3. Authenticity is a multidimensional concept
4. Authenticity is not an independent feature but a locally bound concept (**Widdowson, 1998**)

ISSUES

- A fragmented view of authenticity
- Tendency to highlight an aspect over another (Trabelsi, 2006)
 - Materials may be « authentic » but above learners' proficiency level (Alshumaimeri and Alzaydi, 2015)
 - Materials may be « authentic » but do not meet learners' needs
- English as a subject versus. English as an academic program
- Specificities of the higher education context → Authenticity of materials is perhaps less at stake here

OBJECTIVES

- To propose a holistic view of authenticity in ELT based on the notion of “curriculum authenticity”
- To conceptualize and model curriculum authenticity
- To apply the model to the business English curriculum in Tunisia
- To suggest actions to enhance curriculum authenticity
- To point to the challenges this notion and its application present

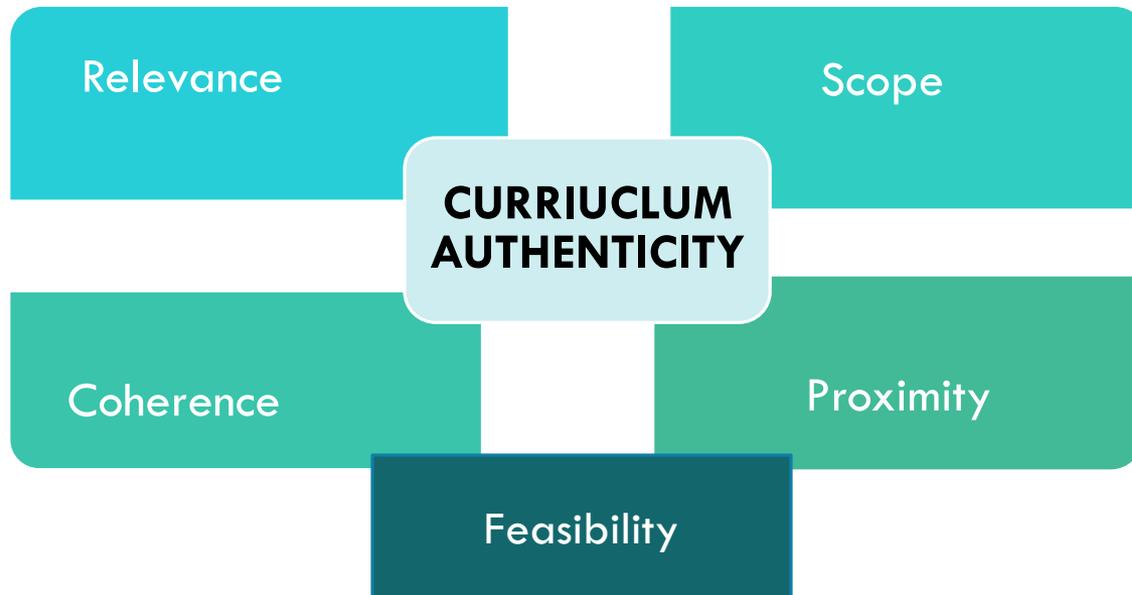


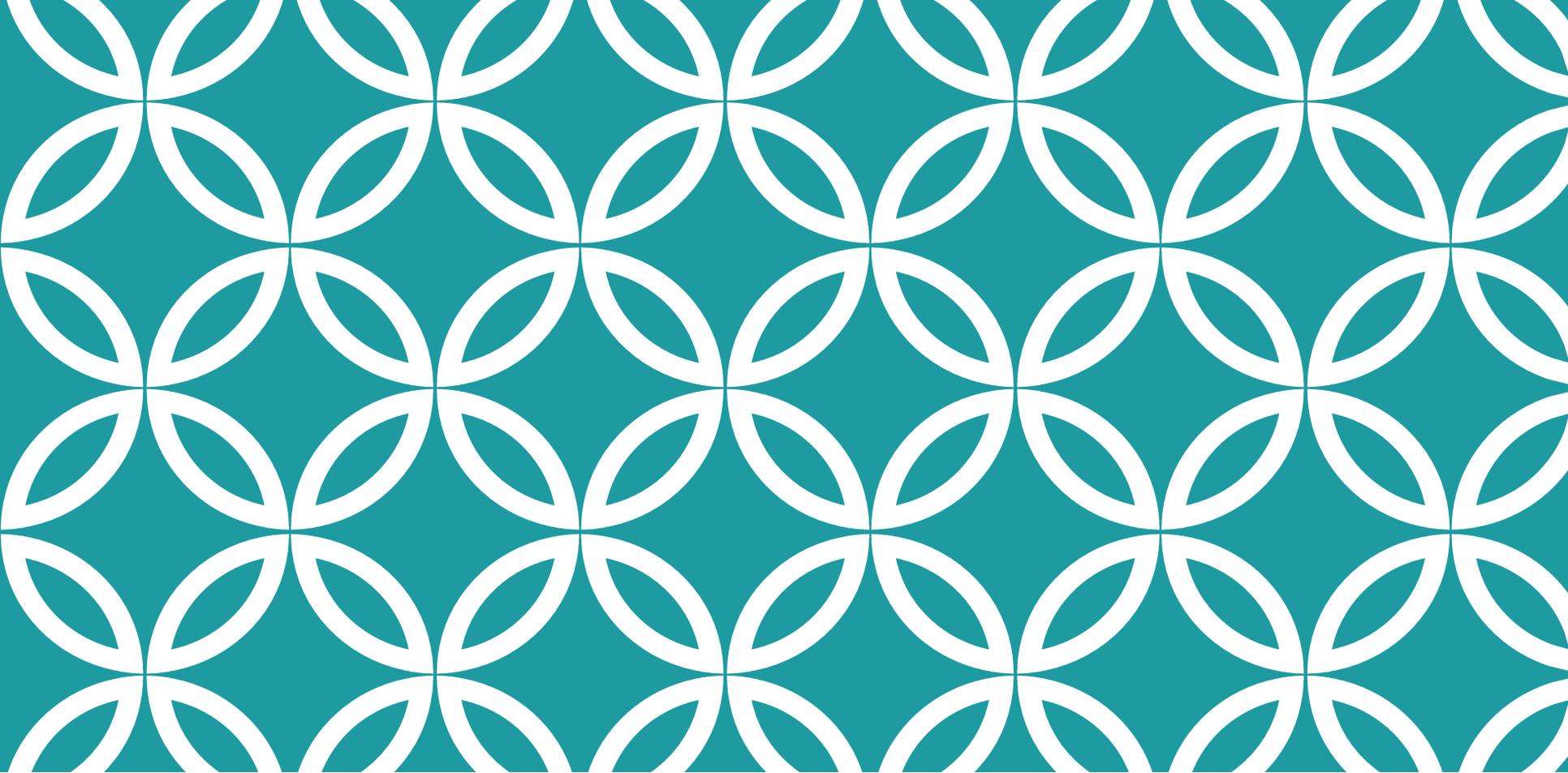
CONCEPTUALIZING CURRICULUM AUTHENTICITY

CURRICULUM DESIGN

- Curriculum: Course design (**micro perspective**) and academic program design (**macro perspective**)
(Nation & Macalister, 2011)
- Processes of curriculum design: 1) needs analysis (wants/lacks/necessities), 2) environment analysis (learner and teacher profiles and the situation), 3) principles for content and materials selection, sequencing, and assessment, and 4) evaluation (Nation & Macalister, 2011)
- These processes are guided by a set of underlying principles of **relevance, scope, coherence, proximity, and feasibility** → Indicators of curriculum authenticity

THE PROPOSED MODEL





APPLYING THE MODEL



RESEARCH CONTEXT

- Higher education reform in 2006 → Licence/Masters/Doctorate (LMD) Reform
 - Top down reform (Bettaieb et al., 2015)
 - Compliance with the European system of higher education (Bologna reform)
 - Quality and relevance of higher education
 - ICT at the center of the curriculum and learning
- Two tracks: academic and professional degrees

THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

- A three year undergraduate vocational degree designed to train students for the workplace.
- Formative assessment
- Language, skill, and content courses
- Examples: Translation (General and specialized); Business English; commercial English, English for finance, enterprise culture, e-commerce, marketing, etc.

APPROACH

1. Official document analysis

Ministry of Higher Education, Administration of University Reform (2006). The LMD Reform in Tunisia : Guidelines (2006). Retrieved from [http://www.isetkr.rnu.tn/new/pdfs/note de cadrage LMD Version-Francaise.pdf](http://www.isetkr.rnu.tn/new/pdfs/note_de_cadrage_LMD_Version-Francaise.pdf)

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2. Analysis of course descriptions

3. Professional experience

NEEDS ANALYSIS → RELEVANCE

- A curriculum is authentic when it is relevant to **the immediate and long term needs** of students (Product oriented)
- A curriculum is authentic when it is relevant to **the learning needs** of students (Process oriented)

RELEVANCE IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

- Absence of a statement of objectives in the LMD document for English
- General goal in the LMD policy document

“Creating flexible and effective programs of study that can be academic or vocational in order to offer to students at all levels possibilities to integrate the professional world”

- Needs left out for instructors to determine

→ Courses within the curriculum have been designed on existing materials and individual perception of needs

→ Relevance is compromised

CONTENT SELECTION → SCOPE

Scope: “the breadth and depth of coverage of items” (Richards, 2001, p. 149)

Covers knowledge and skills

Limited scope skills applicable to one context/ situation. E. writing the minutes of a meeting

Broad scope skills to cope with new, unexpected and unplanned situations. E.g. problem solving tasks

SCOPE IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

■ Overemphasis on skills

- 31 language and skill courses vs. 18 content courses
- Number of specialized content courses (10) vs. specialized skills courses (12*)
- Content courses with low coefficient (A total of 5 vs. 16 for skill courses) + not all are tested

→ It is essential to build a knowledge base before moving to applications and development of advanced skills (Valcke, 2016; Wang, 2014)

CONTENT SEQUENCING → COHERENCE

- A curriculum is authentic if it reflects the **logical progression and unity** of its content
- Two dimensions:
 - Internal Coherence: within the syllabus of a course delivered during a study term
 - External Coherence: for one course stretching over a study term or for different but overlapping courses

COHERENCE IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

Typical courses displaying issues of coherence: “Secretarial English” “Business English”- “ESP”- “Communication strategies” –”Corporate Culture”

Overlap: Dealing with content more than once across the curriculum

Gradation: Dealing with content at one level that is less advanced than the previous level.

Redundancy: Having courses stretching over 3 years with no tangible and sometimes counterproductive effects on students.

BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE : COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

Course	Year	Semester	Theme/Skill
Business and Commercial English	3rd year	2	Money
Secretarial English	3rd year	1	General finance vocabulary
Secretarial English	3rd year	1	Telephoning skills
ESP	2nd year	1	Telephoning skills
Reading/Writing	2nd year	1	Cover letter for a job application
ESP	2nd year	1	Business ads and letters of application

ENVIRONMENT/NEEDS ANALYSIS

→ PROXIMITY

- **External Proximity:** Closeness to context of use

“Proximity in time to exposure to authentic models is crucial. Teaching business writing to high school, or even to college, students years before a likely exposure to the relevant contexts constitutes far too long a gap” (Freedman, 1993)

→ Learning experiences should not be remotely authentic from their context of use

- **Internal Proximity:** Appropriateness to learners’ cognitive level (Pienemann, 1985)

PROXIMITY IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

- Telephoning and social skills during first or second years → No opportunity to practice and develop those skills in contexts of use (Remotely authentic skills)
- Low English proficiency level upon entry vs. First year translation course

ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS → FEASIBILITY

- The need “to distinguish policy, as a statement of aims and objectives, from planning, the attempt to turn a policy statement into action and implementation” (Kennedy, 2001, p. 34).
 - The availability of the infrastructure, equipment and materials, the specification of teaching and learning guidelines, their development through teacher training and learners’ support centers, etc.
- A curriculum is authentic when it is feasible given the resources that can be deployed for its implementation.

FEASIBILITY IN THE BUSINESS ENGLISH LICENCE

- Formative evaluation **VS.** absence of regulations on absenteeism
- Requirements of independent learning **VS.** Course hour volume (17 hours over 5/6 days per week) and an inadequate infrastructure for the use of ICT in education
- Lack of content specialist instructors:
 - Two courses are not implemented
 - Only 4 out of 10 specialized content courses are taught in English

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Policies need to be thought together with teachers and administrators of higher education
- Creating data based professional profiles (Huhta, Vogt, Johnson and Tulkki, 2013) → long term needs of students
- Need to develop a knowledge base among students: Combining content and task based approaches for vocational courses
- Coordination ACROSS the curriculum

LIMITATIONS

- Difficulty to authenticate learning experiences in EFL contexts.
→ Difficulty to identify “local English-using situations in which a task can be authentically contextualized” (Chan, 2013)
- Possibility for a conflict between two indicators of curriculum authenticity
- Developing evaluation instruments to assess the criteria (Tomlinson, 2012)
- Other indicators?

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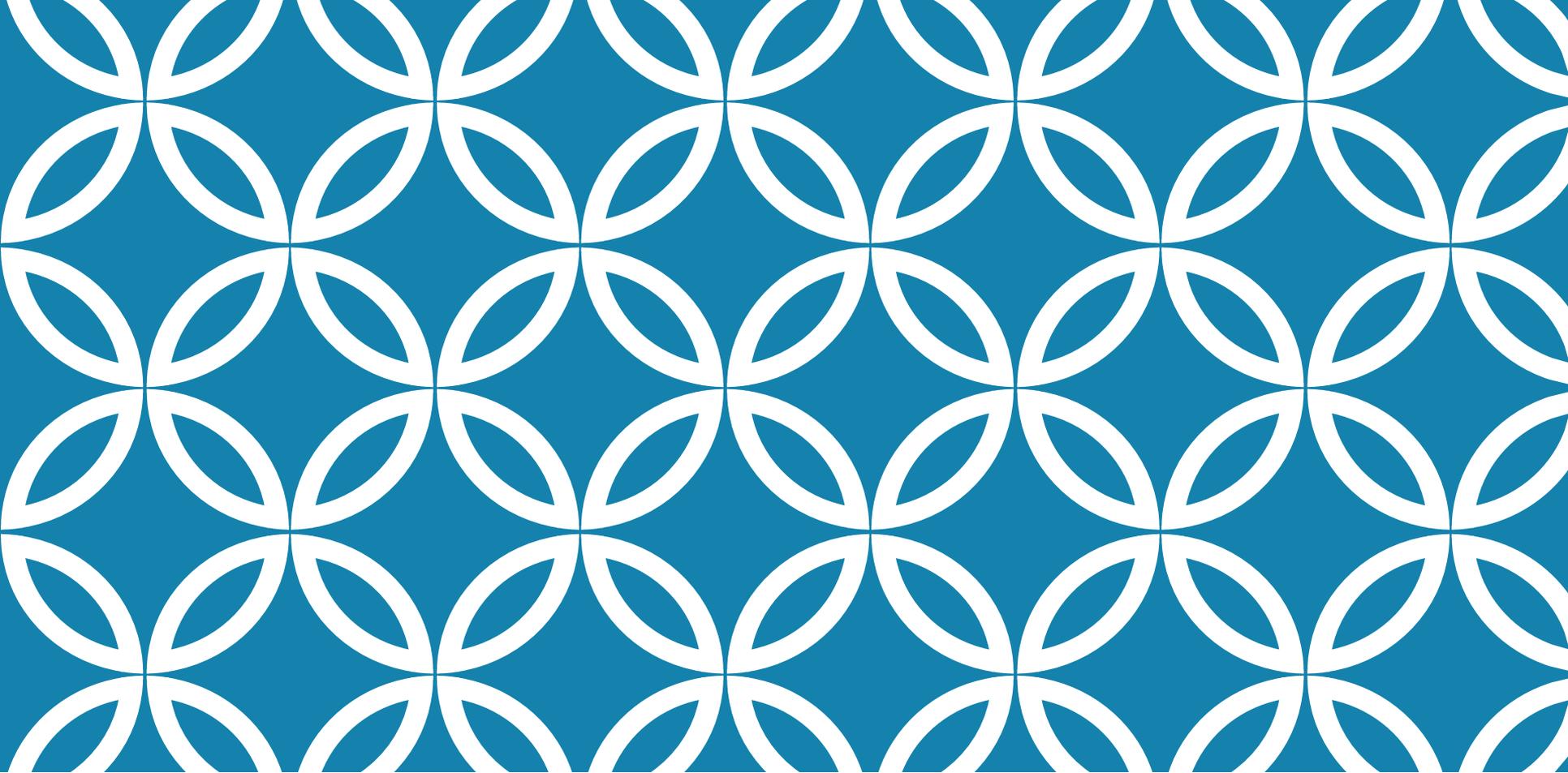
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THANK YOU |