Language program questioned

Three classes in department called ineffective by pupils

By Etsuko Moloki
Lantern staff writer

Some East Asian students are questioning the effectiveness of the English department's English as a Second Language program.

The classes in the program being questioned include English 106, 107 and 108.

ESL courses are designed to improve the academic writing ability of international students in order to successfully compete with native speakers, said Robert Kantor, director of the program.

Jung Jing, coordinator of the Federation of Asian Student Associations, said some serious questions have arisen concerning the ESL program.

"First, the placement test is not standardized," he said. "They do not tell the students how to evaluate and what they are looking for in the essay test. This is unfair."

Secondly, what they teach in the courses is redundancy of what they already have learned, Jing said.

Ohio State requires international students to score over 500 on the Test of English as a Foreign Language in order to be admitted into the university.

Also, he said, this program treats all the international students in the same way regardless of their language and background differences. Every student has a different English problem, Jing said.

Three classes in department called ineffective by pupils

Time conflict is also a problem for many international students, he said. Often ESL courses conflict with their major classes. Jing said, he thought it would be helpful to offer courses in the evening.

One international student might be required to take up to 23 credits of English, including 104 and 105, in order to get a master's degree.

"To get a master's degree requires 45 credits and requiring 23 more credits of English is really too much to get a master's degree," he said.

Sheue-Ju Yang, a graduate student from Taiwan majoring in English, teaches English to non-native Americans. He took English 108 in Autumn 1986, and said, "I think the course is helpful. Especially, the tutorials were very helpful because I could work my own problems with the instructor."

However, she said, she thinks to meet in the classroom is not important.

"Because the class time is too short and we do not have time to write compositions, the instructors talk only about grammar. We can learn grammar ourselves reading textbooks," Yang said.

Yang saw a problem in the international students' attitude toward the courses, she said.

"When they first come to the United States, they think speaking skills are more important than writing, so that they do not take the courses seriously."

"But academic writing is very important," she said. "What we have to do is to try to work on how students and instructors can cooperate to make this program work," Yang said.

Chung-Min Chen, adviser of the Federation of Asian Student Associations, head of the Department of Anthropology and director of the East Asian Study Center, who has been at Ohio State for 15 years, said, "there is a miscommunication between students and instructors."

The international students do not understand the intention of this program so they feel penalized taking English courses and have negative attitude toward classes, Chen said.

"They do not like the idea that the university believes that their English proficiency is not adequate to be full-fledged students," he said.

Also many international students, especially from Asian countries, study natural science or applied science and they assume they do not need good English, Chen said. It is very important for all the international students to learn English, he said. It is vital to interact with people and to know the American culture.

However, it is not a very efficient manner to train all the international students in the same way, Chen said. Without knowing students' special problems, the method to teach cannot be considered to be the best, he said.

"A more efficient ESL program should be the one taking students' cultures and languages as well as their major fields into consideration," Chen said.

Kantor said, "These courses are designed to improve students' composition, especially their academic writing and their ultimate goal is to assist students to reach the point that they can successfully compete with native speakers."

He said the courses help students to be aware of how readers respond to their writings.
Culture training

A group of 23 Japanese high school English instructors has been participating in a teaching exercise with the OSU English as a Second Language Department, said Diane Nasman, an instructor with the department.

Nasman said the program, which has run for 13 years, is sponsored and funded by the Japanese Ministry of Education. Nasman said the program lasts four and a half weeks and centers on giving practice with communication skills, sensitivity training of the cultures, and communication methodology.

The groups have conversation partners and a one-weekend host family who familiarize the participants with American culture, Nasman said. The participants stay in the OSU residence halls during the four and a half weeks, and then travel throughout the country for about four more weeks, Nasman said.

The participants are between 30 and 50 years old, with four women and 19 men, Nasman said. The group will host an entertainment night within the next week for their friends and host families.
Budget cuts hurt ESL program

By Yeetshyn Kim
Latern staff writer

"A 15 percent budget cut to the English as a Second Language program closed out about 215 new international students this quarter, including 26 prospective graduate teaching assistants. Ohio State added five ESL composition classes and two spoken English classes before the quarter began to respond to the enrollment demand, said Don M. Dell, OSU assistant provost for academic affairs and administration. The additional sections were insufficient to meet the record number of new international students. F. Even if the number of students were the same, we would still have to close out many new students because we have shut out many sections," said Louis W. Holub, ESL acting director.

According to ESL enrollment records, an average of 418 students were admitted during each Autumn Quarter, but 563 students were admitted this year. Current enrollment in ESL composition classes is 374 students, while 159 students still want to enroll. The number of ESL sections has reduced to 34, compared to 23 last year.

"What really bothers us most is that we had to close out 52 students in English 104, which is the lowest level class, and they are the students who really need English classes," Holub said.

Transfer students are most likely to experience delays in graduation because of delayed ESL registration, he said.

Holub said some of the international students are required to complete the courses to qualify for financial support.

Graduate students not supported by teaching assistantships are also required to complete ESL requirements before graduation.

Yao-Pei Dong, a new doctoral student in math from mainland China, said he couldn't enroll into Spoken English 104 because it was full.

He said he must complete English requirements and get the English proficiency certification before next summer because his department selects TAs only in Autumn Quarter.

Prospective graduate TAs who have contracts with departments would have the most serious problem, said James M. Siddons, assistant dean and college secretary of the OSU Graduate School.

Computer information science, economics and most of the natural science departments take this problem seriously.

"If the situation continues, it will be a major problem," said J. Philip Hunek, vice chairman for graduate studies in the Department of Mathematics. He said the real problem will become visible in several quarters.

The department decided last year who would be teaching assistant this quarter, but the delay of the TA's certificates will cause a teaching shortage soon, he said.

OSU graduate TAs receive tuition waivers by conducting lectures, grading papers, supervising labs and conducting other teaching duties.

A 1986 state law requires that all non-native English-speaking graduate students who wish to become TAs must be certified by the boards of trustees at state-supported universities.

To comply with the state law, prospective TAs at Ohio State are required to certify their English proficiency by passing either the Test of Spoken English administered by the Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., or the Test of Spoken English administered by ESL professionals and faculty members.

International TAs who didn't pass the English proficiency tests are required by OSU to complete the spoken English courses within the first three quarters in order to retain financial support.

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Since 1986, Ohio State has provided English 104 and 105 exclusively for the international TAs who didn't pass the ETS tests and needed to improve English skills.

The spoken English classes, administered by the Spoken English Program, accommodated 108 students in nine sections this quarter, but 26 were closed out, said Susanne Sarwark, program director.

Budget cuts have also delayed administration of the Mock-Teaching test result, she said.

"This is the first time in seven years that we have had such severe budget cuts and closed out so many students," she said.

"It's bad news for everybody," said John Greisberger, director of the Office of International Education.

"Both students and faculty members are very frustrated because the departments want to help students, but the department might have to hire somebody else to teach," he said.

"The problem may cause Ohio State to fail to meet its strong commitment to enroll a larger number of international students, he said.

"There's a very simple logic here," said Ada Demb, vice provost of the Office of International Affairs. "It's a matter of principle. If we are going to accept students, and if we have a requirement, then we have to be able to provide courses."

The provost's office has to understand the connection between foreign graduate students and undergraduate education, she said.

"Larger classes may be a solution, but ESL class sizes at Ohio State at 15 students are at or above the national average for those fields, she said."

"We are providing in-depth language assistance," she said. "It's very much like a clinical class. It has to be small."

A study by her office found that raising the minimum score for the Test of English as a Foreign Language admission requirement to 550, compared with the current requirement of 500, wouldn't make a substantial difference in the number of students who need language assistance, she said.
Foreign students shut out

■ More people and less money have put strains on the English as a Second Language program.

By Alan D. Miller
Dispatch Higher Education Reporter

More than 300 international students at Ohio State University quickly learned eight words of English: "You have been closed out of the class."

The class is English as a Second Language, which is required before many of the 3,612 international students on the OSU campus can complete their degree programs.

"It's incredible," said John E. Greisberger, OSU's director of international education. "We have gone from a situation where there was no backlog to one that is just outrageous."

At the same time the program's budget was slashed by 15 percent in the last round of cuts, international student enrollment jumped higher than anyone at the university expected. About 600 new students were expected, and 725 showed up.

Ohio State prides itself on its international reputation and has steadily increased enrollment of foreign students. Enrollment is up 73 percent over a decade ago, and students from 115 countries now attend Ohio State.

It is one of the largest foreign-student populations at any campus in the country, OSU officials said. The students bring a lot of money to the university. They pay out-of-state tuition, which is $8,000 more a year than Ohio residents pay.

Because of the budget cut, students are going without classes they need to function in a new land and at a mammoth institution that even native Ohioans find bewildering. It also left many of them in tears, counselors said.

"Not to have this affects your academic achievement," said Sutarto Hadi, 40, a graduate student in educational studies. He arrived in Columbus from Indonesia in September.

Initially closed out of the class, Sutarto put his name on a waiting list. He was the last to make it in when some money was found to add an extra class. Hundreds of others are still waiting.

"The English could affect quite a lot of your academic achievement, such as composition of writing papers," Sutarto said. "It disturbs me because I cannot write easily and quickly. And sometimes I do not understand a word in a question, which leads me to make a wrong answer on tests."

"The university should not limit the number of classes," Sutarto said. "It is quite hard for students because this class is compulsory. To have to wait, it is not good for international students."

Louis W. Holschuh, acting director of the English as a Second Language programs, said he needs about $90,000 and 30 instructors to serve the students now on the waiting list.

"If we don't get additional cash to offer additional sections, the backlog will grow, and we will not be able to whittle it down," Holschuh said.

Provost Richard Sisson said budget cuts create unfortunate problems. He has heard about this one and will look into it, he said.

"We have to have our resources to support students that have needs of that sort."
Japanese teachers seek conversation

By David Tull

The Japanese English Teachers' Program at Ohio State once again is looking for a few good volunteers.

There are two volunteer opportunities: serving as a conversation partner, or hosting a weekend Homestay for a Japanese high school teacher of English.

The program is administered by the English as a Second Language Department. It will bring to Ohio State about 24 Japanese teachers who are attempting to polish their English conversation skills, learn new communication methods, and immerse themselves in the American culture, according to Diana Nasman, campus director of the program. Conversation volunteers will meet with their partners at least once a week during their five-week stay. Get-togethers can be in homes, restaurants or any place that is mutually convenient, and for any length of time, Nasman said. The teachers will have most evenings, some Wednesday afternoons and some weekends free. Conversation partners will be invited to participate in some of the program's activities.

Conversation partners are to act as resources — and perhaps friends — not as teachers. "The Japanese teachers are usually quite good in English," Nasman said.

The teachers will be at Ohio State from July 24-Aug. 26. Homestay weekend — during which volunteers will host teachers in their homes — will be from late Friday, Aug. 5, to Sunday, Aug. 7. One teacher will be assigned to each home and volunteers will receive detailed information on their visitors.

In addition to English conversation, the visiting teachers will have a rich, full experience of Central Ohio while they are here. Special events will include a tour of Ohio Village and a baseball game pitting the Japanese against the Ohio Village Muffins, an early American team; attempts to learn about diversity in America; visits to a seniors center and to the Ohio State Fair; an opportunity to work on houses being built by Habitat for Humanities; and a trip to Cincinnati, complete with a riverboat cruise, shopping, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and a Reds game.

The Japanese teachers generally are in their mid-30s to mid-40s and most will be men. Some have traveled extensively, while others have never before been out of Japan, Nasman said.

For additional information, call Nasman at 292-4823 or 876-8422, or John Shannon, 293-9004.
International students to lose central office to restructuring

By Tracy Gallina and Beth Weeks
Lantern staff writers

The Office of International Affairs will be eliminated by Autumn Quarter because OSU officials believe the university can serve international students without a central office, and save money in the process.

In the office's place, a Provost's Council on International Affairs, composed of international studies faculty, will oversee international components of academic colleges, according to a restructuring report from the Office of Academic Affairs.

For the most part, all the functions of the office will remain unchanged, but under different jurisdictions, and with less money. The international affairs office has undergone other budget cuts for the past several years.

"This does not in any way diminish our commitment to international affairs," said Robert Arnold, vice provost for academic affairs. "It is to provide better support for its services."

"We have been looking at this particular office for approximately a year now," Arnold said. "The most important thing is that the programs be maintained," said Ada Demb, vice provost of international affairs.

"There is no single best way to organize anything, and even though this would not be my first preference, the administration has indicated a very strong commitment to these programs, and that is my main concern," Demb said.

Demb's position has been cut because of the changes. She will move to a faculty position in the College of Education. The assistant to the vice provost, a position usually held by a student, will be cut as well.

Four other staff positions were already cut this year, Demb said. Employees whose positions were eliminated moved to other areas of the university, Demb added.

In order to keep the programs going, faculty who are involved in international affairs must remain in contact with each other, Demb said.

Arnold said restructuring will make the administration more accessible to students, faculty and staff.

"The change does several things. It first moves the responsibility for academic components into colleges. Second, it eliminates a layer of administration, and any time you can do that, you get closer to the people who are directly involved," he said.

Arnold noted the success of moving two programs out of the international affairs office. The English as a Second Language Program was moved to the College of Education, and the Mershon Center for International Studies is now managed by the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

"We really felt that English as a Second Language would be better placed in a teaching college," Arnold said.

Nancy Zimpher, dean of the College of Education, said

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Teachers learn language, labor on trip

By Beth Whitmore
Lantern staff writer

Twenty-one Japanese teachers learned about the American concept of volunteerism Saturday when they participated in the building of three Columbus homes.

The teachers, who are all visiting Ohio State through the English as a Second Language Program, were given “a chance to see community service in action,” said Mary O’Conner, Volunteer Coordinator for Habitat.

The homes were being built through the Greater Columbus Division of Habitat for Humanity, a Christian housing ministry dedicated to building homes for the poor, said Susi Havens-Bezaire, Resource Chairperson for Habitat.

“It was a fun day as well as an exhausting day,” said Havens-Bezaire.

“It helped establish another aspect of U.S. culture for them (the teachers),” she said.

The teachers are all junior and senior high school teachers in Japan, said Diana Nasman, Campus Director of the Japanese Teachers of English Program.

The Ministry of Education in Japan and the Council of International Educational Exchange sponsor the teachers trip to the United States, Nasman said.

“For 50 percent of them (the teachers) it was their first visit to the United States,” she said.

“The purpose of the program is three-fold,” Nasman said. “To increase their (the teachers’) competence and their ability to use English, to get a better sense of American culture, and to learn about different teaching techniques,” she said.

Nasman said that the teachers are visiting the United States for a period of five weeks. Each week contains a different theme as well as a different field trip, she said. The field trip for week four was building the homes in order to illustrate the theme of “Work and Volunteerism.”

“It was a very good experience. It gave us a good sense of what volunteerism is all about,” she said. “There was a lot of good fellowship involved,” Nasman said.

Recipients of the homes that were worked on were selected by Habitat to have homes selected for them, O’Conner said.

The recipients must apply and complete between 375 and 500 hours of “sweat equity” for Habitat, which is volunteer labor to help reduce the cost of the house and keep down the cost of the down payment, she said.

O’Conner said Habitat employees meet with applicants and their families and do a credit check on them.

“Most of these families come from drug-infested neighborhoods and are first-time home buyers,” she said.

There are many jobs that needed to be taken care of at the different building sites, Nasman said.

Nasman said that the teachers were split up into three groups at the housing sites. One group worked on siding the homes, the second drywalled and sanded and the third painted, she said.

Other weeks focused on Diversity and American Culture, Family Values, and Issues of Education, she said.

The teachers’ other field trips included a trip to Ohio Village, German Village, The Upper Arlington Senior Center, Niagara Falls, the Ohio State Fair, and Union Terminal Museum in Cincinnati, Nasman said.

Each teacher also spends a weekend with a designated “homestay family” in which they live at their home to get a better feel for the American lifestyle, Nasman said.
DIY (DO IT YOURSELF) is not a everyday activity in Japan, but 21 Japanese teachers of English took on building a house for Habitat for Humanity Aug. 20 in Columbus. Michiyo Takai of Sanjo Commercial High School in Sanjo City tries her hand at applying joint compound to drywall. She and the other volunteers were finishing a month-long program to improve their English language skills, which is conducted each summer by the English as a Second Language Program at Ohio State.
AGE-DISCRIMINATION LAWSUIT

Questioning of OSU officials allowed

By Earl Rinehart The Columbus Dispatch

An age-discrimination lawsuit against Ohio State is moving forward, after a federal magistrate refused to prevent the plaintiff’s lawyer from questioning university officials, including President Michael V. Drake.

U.S. Magistrate Chelsey M. Vascura in Columbus wrote in a Dec. 1 opinion that Julianne Taaffe and Kathryn Moon, who worked in the university’s English as a Second Language program, are entitled to search for evidence of ongoing discriminatory policies and practices.

The 2-year-old lawsuit alleges that OSU officials had violated the federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act since 2010, by not stopping efforts to get rid of older workers without cause.

Taaffe, now 62, and Moon, now 66, contend they were forced to retire in 2014 by Robert Eckhart, then the ESL department’s executive director, who launched “an aggressive campaign to drive out the older staff.” He called them “millstones” around his neck and “dead wood,” according to the suit.

University attorneys had sought a court order preventing attorney Fred Gittes from taking the depositions of Drake and other university officials, whom Ohio State contended would be subjected to “annoyance, embarrassment, oppression or undue burden of expense.”

Vascura found the university’s concerns “unsubstantiated.”
"That decision has really upped the stakes in the case," said Patricia G. Barnes, a Tucson, Arizona, lawyer and author of "Overcoming Age Discrimination in Employment."

"That puts the CEO (Drake) in a difficult position, because being on the stand can be a very uncertain place to be as to what questions are asked," Barnes said. "I’m sure the university is not happy about that."

Ohio State spokesman Chris Davey said the university would not discuss pending litigation.

"The Ohio State University is committed to hiring a diverse and inclusive workforce and providing equal opportunities for all. The university does not tolerate or engage in discrimination in any form," Davey said in a statement. "We are studying the judge’s order and considering all of our options."

Gittes contends that correspondence between Eckhart and the human-resources administrator for the ESL department, Jacqulyn Severance, is evidence of an attempt to get rid of older workers.

Eckhart is quoted in the suit as wanting to modernize the program by bringing in younger talent and equates working with the older teachers, who taught English to foreign-born university employees, to "herding hippos." He allegedly referred to an older staff member with a mobility issue as "just an old lady who can’t walk" and another who used a cane and wore a religious head scarf as "the Grim Reaper."

Eckhart refused to interview older applicants, Taaffe said, and he was ordered by superiors to rework her evaluation by a previous executive director because it was "artificially high."

Barnes, who has been following the case, called the alleged behavior of Eckhart "shocking."

In a May 5, 2014, email to Eckhart, Severance wrote, "Let's take our time and make subtle changes and it would push the ones out that we needed to go."

Moon had worked as an ESL instructor for 31 years at the university, and Taaffe for more than 20 years. Moon said she and Taaffe, not the younger instructors, were the innovators, attending seminars on developing online courses.

Taaffe complained of discriminatory practices to Keith Calloway, who was in charge of investigating potential discrimination at Ohio State. Calloway, she said, sided with the university. The women said their letters about age discrimination sent to Drake and former Ohio State President E. Gordon Gee went unanswered.

In October 2014, Taaffe, Moon and other older full-time instructors were told that as of Jan. 1, 2015, they would be classified as lecturers and cut to four-month contracts. Whether their contracts were renewed would depend on the department’s needs.

The next month, with no job security, pending pension deductions and "no hope of OSU’s protection from the ongoing pattern of age discrimination," both women retired.

In September 2015, they sued Drake, Eckhart and other university officials.

Two months ago, the women received a letter from Ohio State — out of the blue, they said — offering them jobs with the ESL department. They took the jobs for the salary and benefits — and out of curiosity.

Less than a month later, university attorneys argued in their motion for a protective order that the rehiring negated the need for Gittes to question Drake and company.
Vascura didn’t see it that way.

“Unless Defendants want the Court to construe the rehiring as an admission of ADEA (Age Discrimination in Employment Act) violations, the rehiring does not relieve Plaintiffs of proving that those violations occurred and that they are ongoing,” Vascura wrote.

Being rehired by a university that didn’t want you and that you sued is awkward, Moon said, especially because the new environment is over-the-top friendly.

“They are so nice to us that it is scary,” Moon said. She and Taaffe talked with The Dispatch at Gittes’ office on Thursday.

Previously, she said, computers were taken away from older workers, who also lost offices and work spaces to younger workers.

“Now, Julie and I have computers with dual screens,” Moon said. “Every once in a while, we wonder what is going on here.”

Taaffe and Moon estimated they have lost a total of $500,000 in wages and benefits since they retired and were rehired.

Their lawsuit cannot seek monetary damages from the state university because of what is called “sovereign immunity.” A win would be a court ordering the university to stop age discrimination.

However, they can seek damages through the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which has found “reasonable cause” to believe Taaffe and Moon were victims of discrimination.

Gittes said the commission could try to mediate a settlement between the two parties, join Taaffe and Moon’s lawsuit, or file its own suit against Ohio State. erinehart@dispatch.com @esrinehart
OSU settles age-bias case

By Jennifer Smola

The Columbus Dispatch

Ohio State University has agreed to pay $765,000 and review its policies for preventing and investigating discrimination to settle an age-discrimination lawsuit in which two former employees said they were forced to retire and that their supervisor launched an effort to drive out older staff members.

Julianne Taaffe and Kathryn Moon, who worked for Ohio State’s English as a Second Language (ESL) program within the College of Education and Human Ecology, sued the university in 2015 in U.S. District Court in Columbus. The women said that they were forced to retire in 2014, and that Ohio State officials had violated the federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act by not stopping efforts to get rid of older workers without cause.

The settlement agreement has been signed by each party, though the case has not yet been formally dismissed by a judge in federal court.

Attorney Fred Gittes, who represented the two women, called the case “remarkable” for numerous reasons — from the “shocking” nature of the harassment and discrimination to the back pay the women will receive. He said that’s a rarity in age-discrimination cases against state institutions or agencies.

It’s also remarkable because Ohio State is using the case to change its policies, Gittes said.

“The university is using the resolution of this case as an opportunity to try to fix a system that’s really clearly broken,” he said. “One of the main reasons (Taaffe and Moon) persisted is so that something be done about the process itself.”

Moon, who was 64 when the complaint was filed, had worked as an ESL instructor for 31 years at the university. Taaffe, who was 59 at the time, had worked for more than 20 years.

An ESL director was quoted in the lawsuit as saying he wanted to modernize the ESL program by bringing in younger talent and equated working with older teachers to “herding hippos,” among other insults.

Taaffe complained of discriminatory practices to university officials, and the women said letters they sent to university leaders about the discrimination went unanswered.

After Taaffe, Moon and other older, full-time instructors were told they would be classified as lecturers and cut to four-month contracts, the two women retired in late 2014. Ohio State offered the women their jobs back last fall amid the lawsuit, and later argued that the rehiring negated the need for Gittes to take depositions from Ohio State President Michael V. Drake and other university leaders. U.S. Magistrate Chelsey M. Vascura disagreed and the case continued, leading to the settlement.

Under the settlement agreement, Ohio State has agreed to pay each woman back pay plus lump-sum payments, totaling about $440,000 between the two. Ohio State will pay another $325,000 to Gittes’ law firm to cover legal fees.
Within a year of the settlement, Ohio State must initiate a review of its policies for preventing and investigating discrimination to determine whether changes are required.

The settlement also stipulates that Ohio State conduct two training sessions for certain human-resources staff members and managers in the College of Education and Human Ecology: one on recognizing and preventing age discrimination, and the other on critical thinking in workplace investigations and decision-making.

Ohio State also agreed to create a “second-look process” for age-bias complaints in the College of Education and Human Ecology. Under the process, an employee of the college alleging age-discrimination retaliation will have an opportunity to review an investigation and raise issues with factual errors, omitted evidence or investigative misconduct, for example.

The university also must add “age” to its categories of prohibited discrimination on its various human-resources and careers websites.

Ohio State officials do not believe the university acted unlawfully in the case and settled in the interest of resolving the matter, spokesman Chris Davey said in an emailed statement.

“The Ohio State University is committed to hiring a diverse and inclusive workforce and providing equal opportunities for all. The university does not tolerate discrimination in any form,” he said.

Davey added that the training and changes laid out in the settlement reflect the College of Education and Human Ecology’s “commitment to effectively addressing and preventing discrimination in all forms.”

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