



STUDENTS' PERCEPTION IN USING SOCIAL MEDIA AS LANGUAGE LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Covid-19 pandemic has forced college students to study using online learning platforms. Therefore, this study focuses to examine the preferred media to facilitate e-learning and the students' perception in using e-learning as a means of assessment. This study observes students from two private universities in Central Java namely Universitas Ngudi Waluyo and Universitas AKI, Indonesia, who have all taken English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecture using YouTube and WhatsApp platform. 123 feedbacks were collected, and 17 students were chosen randomly to verify their answers of the questionnaires. The results of this study showed that e-learning using YouTube was preferable for students compared to using WhatsApp Group. The major problem of utilizing YouTube as e-learning was the slow and expensive data plan. The second result pointed out that most of the students or around 63% of the populations were neutral in terms of satisfaction level of online assessment. It could be inferred that this assessment method was acceptable for the students.

Keywords: language learning; social media; students' perception

INTRODUCTION

The Covid-19 has turned the world upside down. Workplaces are closed and universities are shut down. Office workers are doing work-from-home while college students are forced to study using online learning. Work-from-home has its own hurdle and challenges since not all essential jobs are able to be done remotely. However, some other jobs are fit with online scheme since discussion, chats, email, document sharing, publishing, access, resources, questionnaires, assessment, portfolio, and institutional operations, such as secretarial services, are supported by the online technology (Balula & Moreira, 2014). In the field of education, such conduct is called online learning, or it is simply called e-learning. To put into perspective, e-learning is any learning that employs Internet to facilitate the teaching and learning to students separated by time, distance, and both (Dempsey & Eck, 2002).

Some countries have already prepared for the e-learning, such as in United States of America. Schools in New York, for example, are distributing gadgets to their students ensuring the availability of e-learning to their students. Not less than 500.000 laptops and tablets are distributed to facilitate students in online classes (Angdhiri, 2020). Indonesia, on the other side of the spectrum, cannot do the same thing since Indonesia is not as prosperous as advanced countries. Students in Indonesia are counting on their own gadgets to access classroom material and to participate in challenging online learning process. This leaves many college students in a difficult position because if they do not have the appropriate gadgets or internet data plan, they are going to surely be unable to partake in e-learning.

Indonesia tries to enhance its education by applying e-learning since 2011 as it is on the minister's decree (Culture, n.d.) No: 107/U/2001 and the Act of the Minister of Education and Culture No. 109 Year 2013 which aim to provide higher educational services to society who cannot study directly. Indonesian administration through The Directorate General of Higher Education (DIKTI)

believes that by offering e-Learning, the number of Indonesian people studying in universities is going to increase rapidly. In addition, if the use of online technology is accompanied by the institutional changes and society's necessity, it can produce the desired effect in terms of the learning process in formal and informal context (Balula & Moreira, 2014). However, that goodwill is not materialized yet since universities across nation, especially in Central Java Province, still apply face-to-face learning until the arrival of Covid-19 pandemic. The slow implementation of e-learning in universities is due to the lack of infrastructures (slow internet connection) as stated by Mu'in, Fatchul & Amelia, Rizky (Mu'in & Amelia, 2018) who argued that the apparent reasons for e-learning are internet connection problems and impossibility of fast shifting from face-to-face classroom to fully online classroom. That is the reason why the implemented e-learning program is on the ongoing evaluation and development. Therefore, the aim of the study is to evaluate the e-learning process through the eye of the students. Its goal is to provide lecturer with the insight of the students' preferable media for e-learning and students' perception of online assessment.

Online learning is more challenging compared to face-to-face counterpart due to the interference of technology; however, it is much less intimidating to students and can increase students' participation and interaction (Ni, 2012). Moreover, e-learning offers students with interactive, multimedia presentation which provides interesting learning experiences. Videos, animations, and songs are able to make learning activities more interesting as compared to activities in textbook. It is not only facilitating learning but also serves as point that motivates learning activities (Zamari et al., 2012). The aforementioned statement is in line with Sobha's study (Sobha, 2017) which finds that technology stimulates students' curiosity and desire to study. Furthermore, technology is able to make students understand materials easier (Kwary & Fauzie, 2017).

Kwary and Fauzie's study in 2017 (Kwary & Fauzie, 2017) find that 85% of students were satisfied with e-learning. Students think that e-learning makes them understand the materials more, it is fun, and convenient to access. Fedynich, (Fedynich et al., 2015) study result show that students and instructor's interaction had increased significantly when they applied e-learning.

In terms of language learning, e-learning can provide a 'sheltered learning environment' since students can practice at their own pace and demonstrate their newly language skills without experiencing intense feeling of anxiety (Pino, 2008). Ahluwalia and Aggarwal (Ahluwalia & Aggarwal, 2010) report that e-learning became a motivating tool for language learners. Thomson (Thomson, 2010) finds that e-learning is also suitable for gifted students due to its more individualized and more student-centered approach. E-learning can create a new, conducive, and encouraging environment to language learners.

Language learning definitely needs the body language, gestures, intonation and expression to convey successful communication which obviously absent in e-learning, but digital communication has moved beyond the written word to scores of semiotic resources, such as emoticons, punctuation, capitalization, and the like which can indicate students' feeling during online interaction (Kawase, 1989). E-learning usage in language learning is proved to have positive outcomes as stated by Bunts-Anderson (Bunts-Anderson, 2016). They conduct study on the writing outcomes in the e-learning environment and yielded in a positive result. Denekamp (Denekamp, 2017), moreover, states that online exploration (e-learning) also showed the increase in the writing skill proficiency.

Language learning especially in English as Secondary Language (ESL) has never been an easy task since English has a distinct structure and vocabulary not to mention its pronunciation, but e-learning offers a promising opportunities of English mastery as Pino (Pino, 2008) states "the adaptation of traditional language instruction to an online environment provides ESL learners with abundant opportunities for the acquisition and mastery of challenging English patterns". ESL students must have functional, academic, critical, and technological skills since technology is a necessary component to achieve literacy. Technology have to become an integral part of ESL courses, and the Internet would be used as a tool to promote linguistic skills and knowledge construction (Kasper, 2002). In addition,

Mohamad (Mohamad, 2009) in her study of the effectiveness of internet-based grammar instruction in ESL classroom finds that the students who use the internet activities performed better than those who are given the conventional pen and board instruction. Students who use internet-based grammar instruction make less grammatical mistakes in writing as compared to the control group which receives traditional instructions.

One way to conduct e-learning, in terms of language learning, is by using web since it can store large amount of online material and also easy to be accessed as LeLoup and Ponterio (LeLoup & Ponterio, 2000) state that the main advantage of the web as e-learning is access. Chantel (Chantel, 2002) believes that the mastery of web-based language learning materials is as an important step further in acquiring as second language for ESL Learners. It is imperative, according to Chantel (Chantel, 2002), to “understand and embrace the nature of the new, technologically-based literacy”.

In addition to web-based language learning, online chat has been acknowledged as potential media for ESL. This potential is based on the possibilities that online chat allows students to produce, monitor, and modify their written output and to attend to feedback provided on their texts. Therefore, they activate cognitive processes such as hypothesis formation and testing, noticing, metalinguistic reflection, and problem solving, which lead to the consolidation of existing linguistic knowledge or to the development of new knowledge (Williams, 2012).

Drawback has been found in web-based language learning as Zarlina Mohd Zamari et al., (Zamari et al., 2012) state that students who lack of knowledge of the internet and are not previously exposed to online learning would definitely shows some form of apprehension towards it. Lecturers must be more selective in suggesting beneficial and functional web-based language learning materials for the students to encourage maximum participation. Next, the introduction of web-based online learning as an assessment criterion to replace marks allocated for attendance faces numerous challenges and confusion. Feedback from the questionnaire underlines the undeniable obstacle which was the internet connection. Without stable internet connection, students face scores of frustrations instead of developing and enhancing literacy based on the new technology as mentioned by LeLoup and Ponterio (LeLoup & Ponterio, 2000) as well as Chantel (Chantel, 2002) who believe that internet accessibility is the backbone of online learning. Moreover, access to computer labs has to be provided in order to ensure that students could print out their results since students are also asked to print out results of their web-based language learning exercises.

Although there are reports on the success of e-learning in the field of language learning, e-learning superiority to face-to-face learning is still questionable. Kwary and Fauzie (Kwary & Fauzie, 2017) conduct a study on the implementation of e-learning in phonetics and find that there is no significant difference between the results of e-learning and those of classroom learning. It goes back to arguments that say that successful uptake of target lexis occurred rarely during online communication task, despite high rates of negotiation between ESL learners, and do not significantly impact their subsequent lexical acquisition.

In terms of language assessment, e-learning provides a blurry result since students who were online active managed to pass the exams, while those with a low level of activity on the platform experiencing problems (Ciuclea et al., 2018). Constant supervision from teachers are needed since students who are left alone in e-learning feel disoriented and lose the drive to learn autonomously which leads to passive attitude toward online learning activities (Ginting et al., 2020).

Numerous studies report positive outcome of e-learning in the area of language learning due to the fact that online learning provides students with ‘friendly’ environment which reduces anxiety or fear in making mistakes in front of teacher or classmates; moreover, students are able to study at their own pace which are suitable to learners’ own abilities. Nevertheless, there are many questions that need to be answered in terms of which media best suit to students and students’ perception towards e-learning.

Based on the literature review, the researchers aware that there are several questions that require to be addressed. Therefore, this study focuses on these questions: 1)What is the preferred media to facilitate e-learning?; 2)What is the students' perception on using e-learning as means of assessment?

METHOD

The subjects of the study were 123 students from two universities in Central Java Province, Indonesia namely Universitas Ngudi Waluyo (Ngudi Waluyo University) and Universitas AKI (AKI University). Distributions of subjects are as follows:

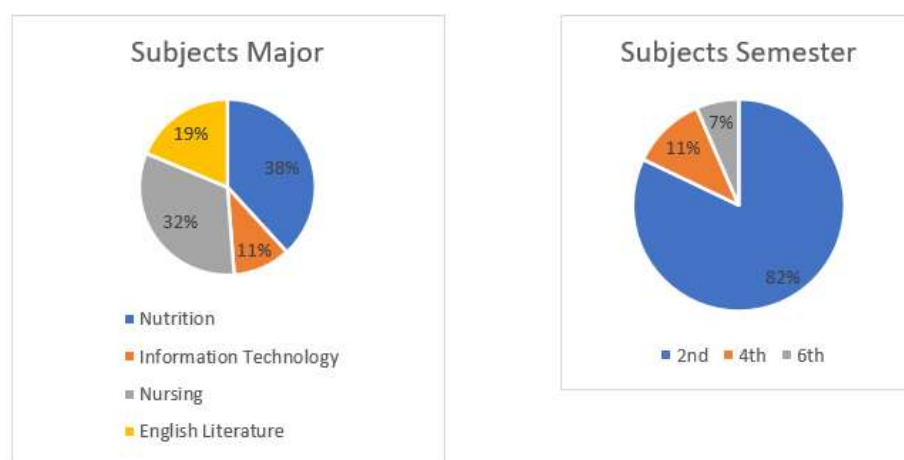


Figure 1. Subjects Major and Subjects Semester

In brief, there were 4 subjects (students) majors in this study namely Nutrition, Information Technology, Nursing, and English Literature. Students from Nutrition were in the biggest proportion which took up to 38% of the population, followed by students from Nursing (32%). Students from English Literature department were under 20% of the population, followed by students from Information Technology which contributed slightly over 10% of the population. Most of the subjects were student from the second semester (82%) whereas students from 4th and 6th semester were only minority with 11% and 7%. One thing that the students shared in common was that they all have taken English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lectures amid Covid-19 pandemic.

Students were started to study in February 3, 2020 as a part of normal study time for even semester of 2020. It was started as a normal face-to-face lecture until before midterm tests was held. Starting from March 16, 2020, universities in Indonesia especially in Central Java have begun to implement the 'Study from Home' format as the impact of Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, students experienced 6 lectures in face-to-face format and 8 lectures in e-learning scheme with midterm tests and final semester test were all held using e-learning.

At the end of the semester, researchers designed and distributed questionnaires to all students from 4 majors who have taken English for Academic Purposes lecture. 123 feedbacks from students were collected and 17 students were chosen randomly to verify their answers of the questionnaires. The student's responses were then analyzed in order to improve e-learning in the upcoming semester.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The preferred media to facilitate e-learning

In the period of March 16, 2020 until June 28, 2020 (the end of final tests), researchers were mainly using two social media as means of e-learning namely YouTube and WhatsApp Group. YouTube is an American online video-platform which allows users to upload, view, rate, share, and

comment on videos. Researcher uses YouTube as means of e-learning media since it is the most accessible video-sharing platform to students of Ngudi Waluyo University and Aki University. In line with the reason of choosing YouTube, researchers used WhatsApp as means of e-learning media as it is the most accessible messaging and multimedia platform for subjects.

In order to choose the preferable media for e-learning, researcher asked several questions on the usage of those media. The first question was whether those media eased learning process. The second question was to ask the subjects responses whether they liked e-learning using those media or prefer doing face-to-face learning. The third question was to ask what problems that students encountered during using those social media. The result of the questionnaires was presented on the following pie chart:

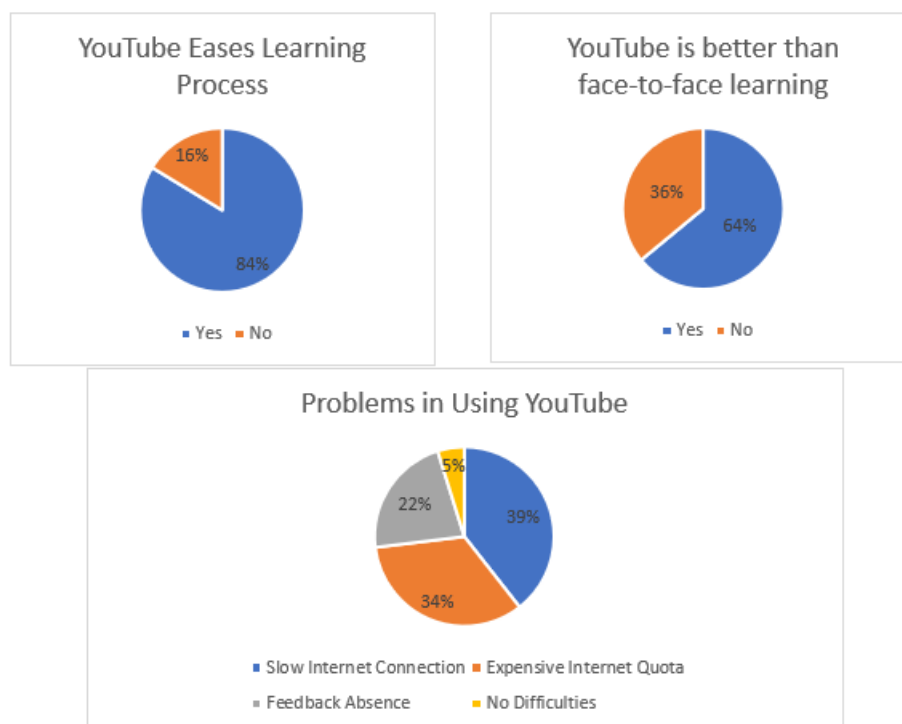


Figure 2. Problems in Using YouTube

In brief, students believed that YouTube eased learning process since 84% of them answered 'yes' when they were asked whether YouTube eased learning process and only a fraction of them (16%) believed the other way around. In accordance with the first pie chart, most students (64%) thought that language learning was better than face-to-face learning and only 36% of them believed that study inside the real classroom was better than using YouTube.

Despite the impressive satisfaction for YouTube as e-learning media, there were some hurdles that needed to be addressed. Slow internet connection was the major problem for students in doing e-learning. Almost 40% of the students stated that the biggest problem of YouTube usage was the slow internet connection. This problem seemed logical since YouTube is a video-sharing platform and streaming in its site required steady internet connection. In line with the first problem, the second problem still had some correlation with the Internet which was the expensive price of internet quota as more than a third of the population (33%) stated that problem. Feedback absence from teachers, on the other hand, only played a small proportion of the problem as it only stated by 22% of the students. Another 5% of the population stated that e-learning using YouTube had no significant problems towards learning process.

The result underlined very interesting fact that the major problem in using YouTube as e-learning media was related to slow and expensive internet connection. Those two problems were responsible for more than 70% of the problems occurred during learning activities using YouTube as the media. This result was somewhat predictable since YouTube is video-streaming platform which requires its user to have an adequate and reliable internet connection.

On the other side of the spectrum, e-learning which utilizing WhatsApp seemed less consuming of internet connection since this media is a messaging platform which requires less data than YouTube does. Moreover, WhatsApp provide its user with 'group' which allows teachers to make a virtual class for their students. Therefore, this research was interested in the students' perception towards the usage of WhatsApp Group as virtual classroom. The perception of students in using WhatsApp as e-learning media could be seen from the following figures:

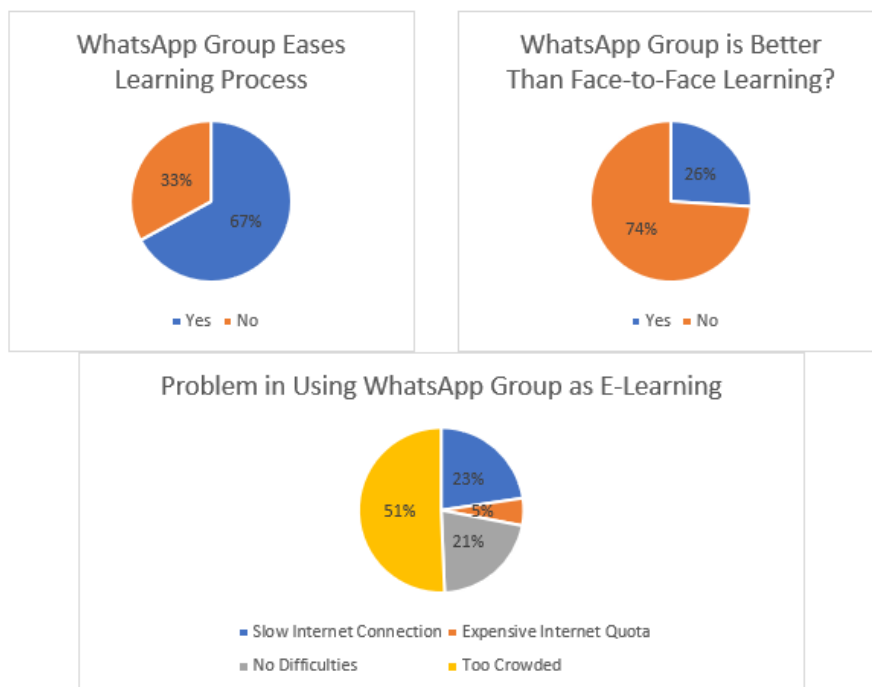


Figure 3. Problem in Using WhatsApp Group

In short, more than two third (67%) of the population agreed that WhatsApp Group eased them in conducting e-learning whereas only 33% of them disagreed with the notion that WhatsApp Group eased them in e-learning activities. In contrast, almost three fourth (74%) of the students disagreed that virtual classroom in WhatsApp Group were better than face-to-face learning. This result was certainly shocking since it was the direct opposite of the result in YouTube since most of the students agreed that YouTube were better than face-to-face learning, but most students were disagreed that WhatsApp Group was better than face-to-face learning.

The result of the problems encountered by students also differed in result as the major problem in using YouTube as e-learning media was the slow and expensive internet connection but in terms of WhatsApp Group, the main problem was the crowdedness of the virtual class in WhatsApp Group. This problem was expressed by more than half (51%) of the population whereas the slow internet connection only contributed 23% and expensive internet data plan was only stated by 21% of the population. The combination of slow and expensive data plans only made up 44% of the population which means that this problem was not the major problem in using WhatsApp as e-learning media. The rest of the population (5%) stated that they had no problem regarding of the usage of WhatsApp as e-learning media.

From the data above the researchers had the ability to decide that e-learning using YouTube was preferable compared to using WhatsApp Group. The first reason was that 84% students agreed that YouTube eased e-learning compared to 67% students who agreed on the same question. The obvious winning point for YouTube was that 64% of the population agreed that e-learning using YouTube was better than face-to-face learning compared to 26% of the population who agreed in the same matter. Moreover, the major problems of using YouTube as e-learning had nothing to do with the class itself as its major problems was the slow and expensive data plan. These problems were related to the external factors of the class and it could only be solved by the authority or in this case is the government.

Students' perception on using e-learning as means of assessment

Amid Covid-19 pandemic, Indonesian college students were forced to be assessed using online tools. It meant that students could not do their midterm and final semester test in the classroom. Furthermore, they could not be supervised by their lecturer on their tests. They had to rely on online media as means of obtaining tests' question sheet and also answer the tests questions.

Universities in Indonesia especially in Central Java were not yet ready to facilitate online tests due to the sudden nature of Covid-19 pandemic. They were not ready to provide online tests media for students. Therefore, lectures used numerous online media to facilitate their students. The preferable media used for online assessment in Ngudi Waluyo University and AKI University was WhatsApp since lectures could send tests questions easily. Moreover, students could easily send their answer sheet via WhatsApp as well.

In this study, researchers tried to know the perception of students toward online assessment. The results of the questionnaires were as follows:

Table 1.
 Students' perception on using e-learning as means of assessment

Questions	Responses		
	Yes	No	No Response
1. Online assessment is more interesting than face-to-face assessment	51 (41,5 %)	72 (58,5 %)	0
2. Online assessment is more objective than face-to-face assessment	48 (39 %)	75 (61 %)	0
3. Online assessment is more time-effective than face-to-face assessment	62 (50,8 %)	60 (49,2 %)	2
4. Online assessment gives more experience than face-to-face assessment	109 (90,1 %)	12 (9,9 %)	2

In brief, students agreed that online assessment offered more experience than face-to-face assessment since more than 90% or 109 students responded 'yes' compared to 12 students or under 10% who responded 'no'. This response seemed logical as it was the first time for students to be assessed using online media. In contrast, the majority of students (72 students or 72% of the population) stated that they were not interested in online assessment compared to 51 students (41,5%) who stated that online assessment was more interesting than face-to-face assessment. In terms of time-effectiveness, students' opinion was balanced as 50,8% (62 students) stated that online assessment was more time-effective compared to face-to-face assessment which 60 students (49,2% of the population) stated the otherwise. From the table, it could be derived that most of the students (75 students or 61% of the population) did not believe that online assessment was more objective than face-to-face assessment compared to 39% of the students who argued that online assessment was more objective than its counterpart.

Next point that researchers addressed was the satisfaction level of the Online assessment for midterm and final semester tests. Five-point Likert scale was used to identify students' satisfaction level of online assessment. The results are as follows:

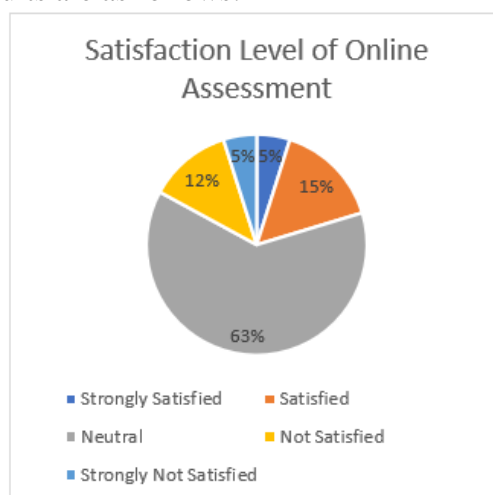


Figure 4. Satisfaction Level of Online Assessment

It could be seen that most of the students (77 students or around 63% of the population) were neutral in terms of satisfaction level of online assessment followed by satisfied criteria which comprised from 15% of the population (19 students). Students who were not satisfied only contributed 12% of the population (15 students) with 5% of them (6 students) stated that they were strongly not satisfied. On the other hand, there were only 5% of the students thought that they were very satisfied with the implementation of online assessment.

CONCLUSION

This study provides two key results that are the preferable media for future e-learning and students' satisfaction level of online assessment through the perception of the students' itself. The first result points out that the students prefer YouTube rather than WhatsApp as a mean of e-learning media. The major problem in using YouTube as e-learning media is the slow and expensive internet connection. If this problem can be solved by the authority, it goes without saying that YouTube is going to become a highly preferable e-learning media in the eye of the students. The second results points out that student's satisfaction level towards e-learning assessment is neutral which can be infer that this assessment method is acceptable for students. Therefore, this similar method can be applied to students in the next semester with few improvements such as reassuring the objectiveness of the assessment.

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