ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN PAKISTAN: A RETROSPECTIVE ANALYSIS USING THE ROAD-MAPPING FRAMEWORK

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Abstract. *Introduction.* EMI (English as a medium of instruction) is increasing far and wide due to spread of English around the world. Internationalisation and globalisation have compelled various counties to adopt EMI. However, the adoption of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan was more a colonial legacy than a thoughtful choice. In fact, EMI has remained the medium of instruction in the higher education in Pakistan for over seventy years.

Aim. The *aim* of the article was to examine the factors that have contributed to implementation and continuation of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan.

Methodology and research methods. The work is based on the retrospective analysis of the available literature on English-medium instruction in the higher education in Pakistan using the ROAD-MAPPING framework. Qualitative text analysis method (concept-driven) was utilised to deductively analyse the data. Thematic analysis of data was conducted employing inductive approach (data-driven).

Results. The analysis revealed that English played (and still plays) the roles of official language and MOI (medium of instruction) at the university level in Pakistan. It was also established that these roles remained controversial yet unbeatable due to unclear policies regarding local languages and the tacit, unflinching support EMI received from the corridors of power. In addition, it was also observed that over the years, EMI had received considerable favour from teachers, parents and students in the higher education. Conversely, the research evidence indicated that EMI posed pedagogical challenges to students and teachers which were evident in students' struggle with academic acculturation. Moreover, it was found out that tensions between international demands and local needs have not only created a socio-economic gap but have also discouraged the development of local languages.

Scientific novelty. The scientific novelty of this work presents a bigger picture of independent yet interconnected dimensions that have influenced EMI in higher education in Pakistan.

Practical significance. The study draws interesting conclusions based on the analysis and discusses practical recommendations for key stakeholders. Thus, the work will be worthy of consideration by educators who are interested in studying this concept in the context of Pakistan where the literature desperately lacks any theoretically-backed substantial work in this research area.

Keywords: EMI, higher education, Pakistan, ROAD-MAPPING, retrospective analysis.

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АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК КАК СРЕДСТВО ОБУЧЕНИЯ В ВЫСШЕМ ОБРАЗОВАНИИ ПАКИСТАНА: РЕТРОСПЕКТИВНЫЙ АНАЛИЗ С ИСПОЛЬЗОВАНИЕМ РОУДМАППИНГА

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Аннотация. *Введение.* Методика EMI (English Medium Instruction – английский как средство обучения) все чаще используется из-за распространения английского языка по всему миру. Интернационализация и глобализация вынудили различные страны принять EMI. Однако внедрение данной методики в системе высшего образования в Пакистане было скорее колониальным наследием, чем продуманным выбором. Фактически EMI остается средством обучения в высших учебных заведениях Пакистана более 70 лет.

Цель. Целью статьи является изучение факторов, которые способствовали внедрению и продолжению использования EMI в высшем образовании в Пакистане.

Методология и методы. Работа основана на ретроспективном анализе доступной литературы по обучению на английском языке в системе высшего образования в Пакистане с использованием роудмаппинга. В рамках дедуктивного подхода применялся метод качественного анализа текста (основанный на концепции), в рамках индуктивного подход – тематический анализ (основанный на данных).

Результаты. Анализ показал, что английский играл (и до сих пор играет) роль официального языка и средства обучения на университетском уровне. Также было установлено, что эти роли оставались спорными, но незыблемыми из-за неясной политики в отношении местных языков и молчаливой, непоколебимой поддержки, которую EMI получала из коридоров власти. Помимо этого, было отмечено, что за прошедшие годы значительно поддержали методику EMI учителя, родители и студенты высших учебных заведений. И наоборот, нельзя отрицать, что EMI создает педагогические проблемы для студентов и преподавателей, что проявляется в их борьбе с академической аккультурацией. Более того, было обнаружено, что противоречие между международными требованиями и потребностями на локальном уровне не только создало социально-экономический разрыв, но и препятствовало развитию местных языков.

Научная новизна. Научная новизна этой работы состоит в представлении более широкой картины независимых, но взаимосвязанных аспектов, которые повлияли на EMI в высшем образовании в Пакистане.

Практическая значимость. В исследовании делаются интересные выводы на основе анализа и обсуждаются практические рекомендации для основных сторон. Таким образом, статья будет достойна рассмотрения преподавателями, заинтересованными в изучении данной концепции в контексте Пакистана, где в литературе не хватает теоретически обоснованной существенной работы в этой области исследований.

Ключевые слова: EMI (английский как средство обучения), высшее образование, Пакистан, роудмаппинг, ретроспективный анализ.

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Introduction

Having taken the role of global lingua franca, English has penetrated in the world of science and technology, arts and architecture, fashion and designing, business and diplomacy, and education and literacy. Its increasing role in academia has led it to be a "medium of instruction at universities in Europe and worldwide" [1]. In the words of Dearden and Macaro [2], English as a medium of instruction (EMI) refers to "providing instruction in English in contexts where English is not the commonly spoken language". Substantial research-based evidence suggests that there is a rapid increase in EMI [2] for higher education all over the world because of its nature as an international means of communication [3]. Soruç and Griffiths [1] highlight in their study the use of EMI in different parts of the world such as in Middle East, Austria, Italy, Poland, Spain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Korea, Japan and Zimbabwe.

While many European and other non-English countries have adopted EMI in higher education due to the emerging needs of the modern world, the choice of EMI for higher education in Pakistan has been a result of "a historical process rather than a deliberate decision" [4]. Thus, EMI has consistently been the medium of instruction (henceforth MOI) in higher education of Pakistan since its independence in 1947 [4]. Although several educational policies have been made over the years and a host of changes have been made regarding medium of instruction on primary, middle and secondary levels of education, EMI has retained its position in higher education for more than seventy years [4]. Although attitudes of university students and teachers towards EMI have been studied, very little attention has been devoted to the factors that triggered adoption of EMI in past, and the issues that have contributed to its continuation in the higher education in Pakistan till now.

Therefore, using the ROAD-MAPPING (Roles of English, Academic discipline, [Language] Management, Agents, Practices and Processes, and Internationalisation and Glocalisation) framework, the present article aims to examine the factors that have contributed to implementation and continuation of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan. Thus, this research article addresses the following question.

Research Question

What factors have contributed to the implementation and continuation of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan?

Theoretical Framework

In order to examine the factors that have contributed to the implementation and continuation of EMI in higher education in Pakistan, ROAD-MAPPING

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framework was used. The framework, which was introduced by Dafouz and Smit [5], provides a systematic and comprehensive picture of EMI in higher education settings. The framework consists of six dimensions, the initials of which develop the acronym ROAD-MAPPING. These dimensions are, Roles of English (RO), Academic Disciplines (AD), (Language) Management (M), Agents (A), Practices and Processes (PP), and Internationalisation and Glocalisation (ING).

RO refers to different roles of English in a multilingual higher education setting such as for teaching, research and administration. But these roles must be investigated in relation to the "complete linguistic repertoire" of a university because English might be "in contact and conflict with other languages and their institutional and societal histories" [6]. Therefore, language roles are best described in relation to its context (societal, institutional, pedagogical and communicational) [6]. AD discusses academic literacy and academic (disciplinary) culture. The former concerns the production of artefacts (written and spoken) whereas the latter relates to "discipline-specific conventions" [6]. It is essential to be familiar with these two factors as each discipline has varied teaching and learning practices, curricular design and assessment methods [7]. (L)M refers to language policy statements and documents which are, in fact, "direct efforts to manipulate the language situation" [8]. These policies may be explicit or implicit and may come from government, local administration or an institution. A denotes agents (key stakeholders) who are engaged with EMI in higher education by playing different roles at different hierarchical levels. These agents can be individuals (teachers, students or administration staff, etc.) or collective groups (government, faculty, student unions, etc.). PP indicates implementation of EMI which means particular ways of thinking about EMI, practicing EMI, or both. This encompasses the classroom (instructional) practices, and teachers' collaboration and professional development. ING refers to the "tensions but also the synergies" [9] that rule universities since many higher education institutes have become "transnational sites" due to the presence of culturally and linguistically varied people. Therefore, this dimension is pertinent to changes universities are making to reach international standards and the effects EMI is having on local languages.

Although these six dimensions are independent yet they intersect with discourse at the centre. Discourse is considered as "a locus of co-construction" [5]. Since Dafouz and Smit [5] do not make it compulsory to describe the dimensions of the framework in a sequence, the dimensions will be discussed as per the need for the clarity for this study.

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Methodology

A retrospective study is the one in which a researcher looks back at the events already occurred for the data collection. Document review is used as a data collection method for such a study. Since the study aims to investigate the factors for implementation and continuation of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan, the data sources for this article were the research studies previously published on the subject of EMI in Pakistan. The inclusion criteria for the studies was defined according to which the studies were 1) published in peer reviewed journals in English, 2) addressed or touched upon any of the six dimensions of the ROAD-MAPPING framework. Apart from the studies, books on the subject were also referred and cited. Qualitative text analysis strategy [10] was used to analyse the data deductively using the ROAD-MAPPING framework (concept-driven). Thematic analysis of data was conducted employing inductive approach (data-driven).

Findings

Roles of English

This dimension deals with the roles English plays in educational institutions [5]. In case of Pakistan, English is not only the official language of Pakistan but also the medium of instruction in universities.

Official language

Soon after the independence of Pakistan, the country experienced severe rifts on matters of national and administrative languages. Urdu was declared the national language disregarding Bengali and other regional languages, whereas English was kept official language in order to keep the system running [11]. Haque [12] defined this continuation of English as an official language as an attempt to serve "operational efficiency".

Medium of Instruction in universities

Apart from official role, English also stretched to education, particularly the higher education as MOI. Sikandar [13] notes that Karachi University Enquiry Committee (1956–1957) recommended that English should be maintained as the MOI in universities because of lack of literature in Urdu or Bengali. Nonetheless, it also suggested expeditious efforts to develop national language to become MOI. Later, Sharif Commission, established in 1959, endorsed Urdu and Bengali as MOI from class six to Matriculation in West and East Pakistan respectively. However, it proposed that English should be used as the second language [14]. Nevertheless, no explicit instructions or recommendations were made against English as MOI in the higher education. Therefore, English continued to maintain its place as MOI in the higher education of Pakistan [15].

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Mansoor [16] remarked that English as MOI in higher education in Pakistan has been an official policy. The key actors involved in the perpetuation of English as MOI in higher education institutes will be discussed in "Agents" section below.

Status of English in three-language structure

The roles of English as the official language and MOI in the higher education are unique given the place of English in country's language structure. Pakistan is a multilingual country with linguistic diversity of 0.802 on Greenberg index [17]. The calculation is made on the basis of "population of each language as a proportion of the total population (which) suggests that a large number of people do not share their first or heritage language" [4]. Therefore, English is sometimes a second or third or even fourth language of a large number of students. According to Mahboob [11], linguistic diversity is not only a unique feature of Pakistani community but has also "been a constant problem of language in education policy in Pakistan". This is one of the reasons Pakistan has adopted three-language structure [18] with vernacular fulfilling the first role; Urdu, the second role and English, the third role [19].

(Language) Management

This dimension in the ROAD-MAPPING framework refers to implicit and/or explicit language policies which direct institutional processes and instructional practices. Language has been a charged issue throughout the history of Pakistan. Therefore, MOI has always been a controversial subject in the country [15], and successive governments have tried to avoid engaging with the issue unless extremely indispensable. However, the few efforts made in the past to deal with the language-in-education issue are discussed below.

Experiment with language-in-education policy

Referring to a few key policies (Sharif Commission, Hamood Ur Rehman Commission, Nur Khan Report, National Educational Policy 1979), Sikandar [13] stressed that all policies proposed change of MOI from English to Urdu; however, no such proposal has ever been implemented. In this regard, Mahboob [11] discussed that during General Zia's time (1979–1987), a language-in-education policy was given. Khan [18] asserted that this was done in the interest of Islamisation and Urduaisation. Resultantly, Urdu was made MOI in all government schools with future planning to implement it in colleges and universities whereas English was introduced from grade six onwards [20]. However, this never happened as many of General Zia's Urdu-favouring policies were revoked after his death.

Tacit approval for EMI

Likewise, Mahboob [11] noted that the language in education policy was not given due attention in the educational policies of 1992 and 1998–2010 mainly because language was a charged issue. So, neither the governments of Benazir

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Bhutto nor Mian Nawaz Shariff in 1990s addressed the issue. As a matter of fact, however, all policies and committees (1957–1998) made regarding MOI indicate that continuation of English as MOI in higher education has been a [tacit] official policy [16]. This is explicitly reflected in President Musharaf's time (1999–2007) when English medium institutes flourished and increased by number across the country due to his policy of expansion of private institutions [11].

Explicit support for EMI

However, one of the most important things to note here is that "Pakistan does not have a documented language policy or a language-in-education policy" in place now [21]. Even the latest National Educational Policy 2017 does not explicitly mention anything about the MOI in the higher education of Pakistan. In the words of Habib [22], this "lack of a clear language policy has probably had a detrimental effect on learning".

Agents

This dimension of the ROAD-MAPPING framework relates to the key stakeholders (social actors), who are engaged with EMI in varied roles while working on different levels. In the context of Pakistan, politicians, bureaucrats, and military have been the main players when it comes to EMI.

Reluctant politicians

As discussed earlier, EMI continued to operate because the policies and recommendations for Urdu as MOI could not be implemented in letter and spirit. Although English was under some threat during the tenure of General Zia (1979–1987) because of the pro-Urdu policies, some elite English schools operated without any trouble [20]. Khan [18] argues that keeping in view linguistic diversity of Pakistan (mentioned in RO section above), a linguistic pluralism policy could have been adopted; however, it was not done because the Pakistani politicians did not want to compromise regional autonomy and provincial integration.

Powerful elite

More importantly, even the elite wanted English to retain its position in the corridors of power because of the prestige and high social status [23]. That is why, as Rahman [24] noted in his study, English 'is a medium of instruction in elitist, highly expensive, private schools as well as cadet colleges indirectly controlled and partly subsidised by the state'. In plain words, English has been supported to retain its place as medium of instruction in civil (elite) and defense institutions so far [25].

Practices and Processes

The PP dimension concerns the particular ways of thinking about EMI, practicing EMI, or both. EMI has been perceived positively at the macro and micro level in Pakistan.

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Perceptions about EMI on macro and micro level

An analytical look at the macro level reveals that English never lost its place as MOI in various institutions because of the status and prestige associated to it in the domains of power: military and bureaucracy [24]. This can be inferred from the roles English plays in Pakistan, implicit policies that favour EMI, particularly in higher education, and the interests of the Agents at the macro level.

Apart from those at the helm of affairs, EMI has been perceived very positively by parents, teachers and students. For instance, in the study of Mahboob [11], the survey data showed that 94.4% of the participants (including teachers and students) favoured English to be the MOI in high schools and at the university level. Likewise, results of an extensive survey by Mansoor [26] across public and private sector higher education institutions in capital cities of all the four provinces of Pakistan showed that teachers, students and parents prefer EMI for higher education in Pakistan. Similarly, Khan [18] conducted a mixed method study on post-graduate students and teachers in two public universities in Lahore. The results showed that a significant majority of 92.5% of the participants supported EMI in higher education. Hence, it is evident that the concerned key stakeholders, i.e. higher authorities, teachers as well as students favour EMI in higher education. Most recently, Siddiqui and Syed [27] conducted a qualitative study on undergraduates' perceptions about EMI. The study revealed that EMI is taken extremely essential for career prospects and higher education abroad.

Challenges in classroom practices

Although the perceptions of stakeholders at micro level are in favour of EMI, the practices show a different picture. For instance, Khan [18] reports that some teachers were willing to use Urdu in classrooms for lecturing, apparently to hide their inefficiency in English. This is probably because the teacher education programmes have been sporadic and inefficient in Pakistan, thus not fulfilling the modern day requirements for teachers [28, 29]. Likewise, few studies related to students' production skills (writing and speaking) [30–32] portray a dismal picture of their basic language skills which are required to study EMI courses. So, it can be said that EMI is perceived favourably yet it creates challenges for students and teachers in particular.

Academic Disciplines

The dimension of Academic Disciplines includes academic literacies and academic (disciplinary) culture. The former concerns the production of artefacts (written and spoken) whereas the latter relates to 'discipline-specific conventions'.

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Scientific and technical subjects

In the higher education in Pakistan, all degree programmes are offered in English except a few [4]. Historically, Urdu proto-elite moved heaven and earth in 1960s and 1970s to get Urdu declared MOI in higher education in Pakistan. Despite their strenuous efforts, the higher education particularly 'in scientific and technical subjects were continued to be given in English' [15]. This was the case because English was considerably supported by elite, military and few factions of politicians too, as discussed in Agents section. Apart from that, Khan [18] highlighted another valid reason for consistent use of EMI in higher education that was convenient availability of reading material in English.

Challenges of writing and speaking in EMI courses

Nevertheless, the research suggests that despite having English as MOI for nearly seven decades, undergraduates in different Pakistani universities face serious problems related to production of written documents even in ESL classrooms. For instance, Siddiqui [30] studied the paragraph organisation problems in foundation semester students. The findings revealed that students were unable to produce coherent paragraphs. Fareed, Ashraf [32] also reported language and organisation issues with students' essay writing at undergraduate level. Likewise, latest research findings [31, 33] report that undergraduates in Pakistani universities have issues related to anxiety in speaking and WTC (willingness to communicate). Contrarily, Khan [18] reported on the basis of her findings from a mixed-method study that students of Masters in Education faced problems in comprehension of content subjects as they had studied content subjects in Urdu at college level. Thus, the undergraduates were found to be (mostly) stressed about their writing and diffident in the speaking skills which hindered their participation in class activities [18].

These findings are indicative of the fact that undergraduates experience issues with academic acculturation even in ESL classrooms; thus, it can safely be inferred that they would surely be experiencing problems in other content related (hard/soft) disciplines as depicted in Khan's [18] study. Moreover, no extra support from the institutions in form of academic writing courses or presentation workshops make academic acculturation next to impossible.

Internationalisation and Glocalisation

This dimension of the framework relates to "the tensions and the synergies" [9] internationalisation and globalisation bring with them. On the one hand, universities are making curricular changes to meet international standards so that they could improve their international rankings. On the other hand, due to presence of EMI, the curriculum becomes inaccessible to a diverse student body with very different expectations and language abilities' [6]. This increases the risk of "curricular homogenisation and the imposition of Westernised approaches and paradigms on local academic cultures" [34].

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Adverse effect on local languages

Moreover, Dafouz and Smit [6] apprehensively state that use of EMI at university may lead to students' inability to demonstrate disciplinary knowledge in the first language or other languages. This may hint at the adverse effect EMI may have on development of (literature in) other languages. Perhaps, this is the reason for lack of reading material in local languages of Pakistan. For instance, Khan [18] pointed out that lack of reading material was one of the reasons for continuation of EMI in universities. One of her research participants remarked that in General Zia's time (1979–1987), a few institutions such as Wafaqi Urdu University and Urdu science board were tasked to translate and produce (science and humanities) literature in Urdu but the job was not done as planned. Thus, there has been no reliable work in Urdu for graduate and postgraduate studies.

Language gap for students

In addition, EMI at university level and use of local/regional language (vernacular) as MOI in schools created a language gap for students because English was taught as a subject from grade six onwards [24]. Although English was made MOI from grade 01 in National Education Policy of 2009, Punjab Education and English Language Initiative Project (PEELI) report stated that "94% of teachers lack minimum standards for provision of quality English medium education" [35]. Ineffective English medium education at school or education in Urdu even at Bachelor's level, thus, could not produce students who could deal with EMI at university properly. Given the gap between the school and university education, the tensions between global and local forces have remained tense in Pakistan.

Discussion and Conclusion

Conclusively, the retrospection of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan reveals some very important areas for discussion and improvement. It is reiterated that English plays multiple roles in the higher education in Pakistan. Its status as official language and medium of instruction despite being third or fourth language of majority of population speak volumes of positive perceptions about EMI. Such varied roles of English, particularly as MOI, can be seen in the context of Kazakhstan [36].

Although several policies were framed and suggestions were made to make Urdu as MOI in the higher education, EMI managed to keep its place due to unflinching support from the corridors of power. Additionally, it can also be deduced from the findings that EMI in the higher education in Pakistan was a pragmatic option keeping in view the factors such as linguistic diversity and regional integration. So, it was a matter of "the only option" available to avoid complex

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scenarios rather than a deliberate choice for the sake of socio-economic or scientific development. Maybe therefore the universities do not receive such support from the government bodies which they should. Hence, EMI exists without "systematic and institutionally supported implementation measures and guidelines" [5].

However, the presence of EMI at university level is still controversial. EMI poses challenges to students and teachers which renders academic acculturation difficult for a majority of students across disciplines. This is in line with the challenges students and instructors face in EMI classes in Japan. Bradford and Brown [37] state that students face problems because they may not receive the required guidance for academic acculturation.

These challenges keep creating tensions between local needs and international and global demands. In the words of Nguyen and Tran [38], such tensions are due to "flawed and ill-planned adaptation of Western values and practices" that cause harmful effects on learning through EMI.

Recommendations

On the basis of the retrospective analysis of EMI in the higher education in Pakistan, the present study puts forward a few suggestions following the pattern of the ROAD-MAPPING framework. Beginning with the roles of English, it must be made clear that English is supposed to continue as ESL or ELF (English as lingua franca) given the internationalisation and domestic changes in the curriculum. Besides, a large majority of people get deprived of jobs and educational opportunities due to these varied roles of English. Since the literature lacks substantial data in this regard, it must be investigated empirically.

Regarding (language) management, a comprehensive, feasible, and widely acceptable language policy should be made particularly for the higher education. More importantly, the MOI issue must be dealt with great deliberation as studies, although a few, report students' problems with EMI in the higher education setting. Therefore, prospects of a multi/bilingual policy must be seen as a replacement of the monolingual policy.

As for Agents, policymakers, on the one hand, must subside political interests, bureaucratic and military pressures while framing a language policy. On the other hand, they must be careful in adopting a completely westernised policy. Instead, the most important stakeholders such as teachers and students must be taken on board, and the local needs must be kept in view. Such a policy would improve teacher training, better (language) teaching, and enhance students' experience [39].

Practices and processes need rigorous investigation because no policy can work unless it is well-informed about classroom instructional practices and teachers' needs for teaching EMI courses. With respect to classroom instructional

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practices, "trans-languaging" can prove to be helpful as it can encourage additive bilingualism and improve student achievement [40]. Moreover, identifying teachers' needs is also of significant importance because every discipline has its own norms and values. Academic literacy and academic acculturation are rather conveniently possible when course instructors are able to communicate disciplinary nuances.

Lastly, implementation of EMI discouraged production of literature in local languages. Therefore, a shift to multi/bilingual education at university level may not only promote other languages in the country but also provide opportunities to students who lag behind due to language barrier. Striking a balance between international/global demands and local needs may diffuse tensions between them and could make horizontal and vertical mobility possible.

The ROAD-MAPPING framework renders it possible to see the overall retrospective picture of EMI in the high education in Pakistan. The analysis shows that although the dimensions are independent yet interconnected. Besides, this is beyond a single study to investigate each dimension in (great) detail. However, this study will foster the use of this framework for thorough exploration of these dimensions in the context of Pakistan.

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