

AUTHENTIC MATERIALS FOR DEVELOPING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the effects of the use of authentic materials in teaching listening to the English Department students of UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh. The purpose was to find out whether students who got authentic materials in their listening class would get a better result compared to those who did not. The population of this study was all the second semester students who took Listening 2; then two classes were selected using random sampling as the samples; the experimental class (EG) with 25 students and control class (CG) with 27 students. Data was collected quantitatively from the results of the pre-tests and the post-tests of listening while qualitative data was obtained from the questionnaire distributed at the end of teaching to identify the EG students' perceptions of the use of authentic materials in listening. The findings showed that the mean post-test score from the EG at 82 was higher than that from the CG at 71, which according to the results from the t-test was significantly higher. This meant that the students who were taught using authentic materials get a significantly better result in listening than those who were taught using the usual course book materials. The responses in the questionnaires showed that the students preferred the authentic listening materials for learning listening skills as these materials were more interesting and more related to their real life context so that it motivated them to pay more attention in the listening class and this also assisted them to improve their listening abilities.

Key words: *Authentic Materials, Listening Abilities.*

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INTRODUCTION

Listening is probably the least explicit of the four language skills, making it the most difficult one to learn. It is evident that children listen and respond to language before they learn to talk. Rezai and Hashim (2013: 2) assert that developing proficiency in listening comprehension is one key to achieve proficiency in speaking.

Vandergrift (1999: 168) points out that while listening comprehension lies at the heart of language learning, it is the least understood and least researched skill. Listening comprehension is not a passive activity. It is a complex active process in which the person eg. the student must discriminate sounds, understand vocabulary and grammatical structure, interpret stress and intonation and associate all of that within its context.

Despite the importance of listening practice in language instruction, English language classes in many countries still put emphasis on the skills of reading and writing. This is especially the case in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) situation in which the English language is taught as a subject at school and used only inside, but not outside, the classroom. Consequently, students from the countries in which English is taught as a foreign language frequently have great difficulty understanding English spoken to them when they come into contact with native speakers of the language (Thanajaro, 2000: 2). For this reason, it is important for teachers to find effective strategies for presenting audio input in order to help students develop listening strategies and take the maximum advantage of language learning opportunities.

Based on the Listening II syllabus of the English Department of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry, the purpose of Listening II is to train their students to be able to understand native spoken language with basic knowledge of pronunciation, stressing, and intonation in English. It then mostly focuses on the application of these skills in real life situations. In a preliminary study done by the researcher at the department, many of the students still find difficulty in catching the native speakers' accents because of their lack of exposure. They are only taught listening as a subject which is only used inside the classroom. As students in a country where English is a foreign language they have very few opportunities to hear the real language. These students, therefore, are not accustomed to hearing the language

as it is produced by native speakers for native speakers. Moreover, the students get low scores in the Listening Comprehension subject.

Furthermore, this problem is also faced by their teachers. The monotonous strategies and materials given in teaching have made the teaching-learning process become ineffective and boring. The teacher comes to the class and plays the audio tape that she has already designed for listening and then asks the students some questions related to the topic. The teaching-learning process has become a one-way interaction between the teacher and her students. Besides, the use of one sole textbook as the only hard material has also made the teaching-learning process dull and uninteresting.

One possible way to overcome this problem is by using native-like listening materials, i.e. using authentic materials. Authentic materials refer to oral and written language materials used in daily situations by native speakers of the language (Erbaggio, et al, 2012: 28). Some examples of authentic materials are newspapers, magazines, television and advertisements. In addition, it is necessary for students who are going to study in an English-speaking environment to learn how to listen to lectures and to take notes; to comprehend native speakers in various kinds of speech situations, as well as to understand radio and television broadcasts (Taher, 2011: 53).

Authentic materials bring reality into the class and have various advantages such as stimulating motivation, raising cultural awareness, giving real exposure, and enhancing creative teaching. In addition, the use of authentic materials has become increasingly popular in language instruction (Martinez, 2002: 1). Lingzhu and Yuanyuan (2010: 3) have said that authentic materials (either written or spoken) are those which were designed for native speakers. They are real materials designed not for language students but for the speakers of that language.

Moreover, Jordan (1997: 113) refers to authentic texts as texts that are not written for language teaching purposes. The use of authentic materials offers language instructors the opportunity to expose the learners to materials which are produced for real life contexts. Similarly, Hwang (2005: 56) states that by using authentic materials, students are encouraged to use the vocabulary and expressions in those materials for their own production of English.

Using authentic materials in teaching listening in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom was also investigated by Ghaderpanahi (2012: 149). She revealed that there was a statistically significant improvement in the listening ability of her EFL students.

This was shown by the mean of the post-test (17) which was more than that of the pre-test (6) which proved that the students' listening comprehension progressed as a result of using authentic materials.

Similarly, based on the findings of previous research, it can be concluded that many studies have been done about the use of authentic materials and all the researchers concerned support the use of authentic materials and agree on one idea "exposure", i.e. exposure to "real language and real life" situations. In other words, the students get benefit from being exposed to the language in the authentic materials. A lot of evidence shows that authentic materials bring various advantages into the class, for instance they increase motivation and cultural awareness and they provide real exposure that leads to creative teaching.

Thus, this researcher also believes that using authentic materials in teaching listening can better develop the listening skills of students. Therefore, this study will use authentic materials in teaching listening at the English Department of The State Islamic University (UIN) Ar-Raniry Darussalam, at Banda Aceh. Regarding the importance of the issue above, some research questions have been formulated as follows:

1. Do the students from the English Department at UIN Ar-Raniry who are taught listening EFL using authentic materials achieve a better result in listening comprehension skills compared to those who are taught by using standard tapes and materials from the course book?
2. What are the responses of the students to the use of authentic materials for teaching-learning listening EFL?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Use of Listening Materials

The major problem that lecturers face when teaching listening is the way that the materials are presented to the students. Materials that look nice on paper, for example, often do not work or are not interesting for lecturers and students because some of them cannot be used effectively or are not relevant to the level of the students. Therefore, the materials selected for a particular course should meet the aims of the course itself.

The most common form of listening activity is through the use of a tape recorder, and there are many reasons for this (Brown, 2001):

- (1) taped listening passages can be prepared in advance, thus saving the teacher work in the actual lesson;

- (2) when the teacher's pronunciation is noticeably not authentic, recordings may provide the students with some valuable exposure to native accents;
- (3) it is rather difficult for a single lecturer to present a dialogue effectively in a classroom using only her own voice. A recording can solve this problem.

Authentic Materials

There are some slightly different definitions of authentic materials found in literature. Rogers and Medledy (1998) have defined authentic materials as exposure to real language in its own community. In recent years, the use of authentic materials in an EFL classroom has been discussed and debated by many foreign language teachers (Kilickaya, 2004). At present, their voices have overwhelmingly been insisting that English taught in the classroom should be authentic so that it can benefit the students' learning processes (Kilickaya, 2004: 4).

Nevertheless Nunan (1999, as cited in Oura, 2000: 67) has also defined authentic materials as spoken or written language data that has been produced in the course of genuine communication, and not specifically written for purposes of language teaching. Hence, based on the statement above authentic materials are not produced as teaching materials for teaching language eg EFL.

Even though authentic materials are created for social purposes, they can also be used as materials in a language classroom. Martinez (2002) has suggested that teachers may use authentic materials for the learners to listen for the gist of the information presented and also he adds that by using authentic materials teachers will have the opportunity to encourage students to read for pleasure especially certain topics of their own interest. It is also very useful for students to understand real language in a real context in learning a language.

The Purpose of Using Authentic Materials

Authentic materials and media can reinforce the direct relationship between the language classroom and the outside world for students; for example, when lessons are centered on comprehending a menu or a TV weather report, students tend to focus more on content and meaning rather than on the language itself. This offers students a valuable source of language input, so that they are not just being exposed only to the language presented by the text and the teacher. This example shows the use of authentic material in assisting students' learning processes.

Guariento and Morley (2001: 347) describe authentic text as one “created to fulfil some social purpose in the language community in which it was produced”. With the onset of the worldwide communicative movement a greater awareness of the need to develop the skills (of students to make them ready) for the real world has meant that teachers endeavour to simulate this world in the classroom. Both academics claim that the purpose of using authentic materials is to prepare students for their social lives. In other words, the authentic materials are used to close the language gap between classroom knowledge and real life. Spelleri (2002: 16) supports this analysis, which has been accepted by Guariento and Morley. Similarly, Spelleri thinks that the language used in text books is only valid in a classroom environment whereas the requirements of real life English are different and this difference has not yet been closed by the use of text books because, as we all know, learners have to deal with the language of brochures, office work forms, application forms, live lectures and so on.

The Role of Authentic Materials in Teaching Listening

McGregor (2007: 7) affirms that text types make sense if they exist in a cultural context because they are the cultural forms of beliefs and social practices. When we learn a language, the real assumption in that language is culture. For example, English speaking people might believe that bargaining is very difficult whereas in many other countries bargaining is quite acceptable and a part of the social life. Hence, the class activities and materials need to be organized by the teacher according to the needs of the students and their culture.

Little and Singleton (1988: 1) accept that there has been a rapid increase in the use of authenticity in second language learning. Both scholars suggest that the rise of authentic texts is associated with the development of communicative approaches to language teaching. The same authors continue their argument by saying that the chief concern is to provide real input materials from the literary culture.

The Advantages and Disadvantages of Authentic Materials

There are some researchers who point out that more authentic materials are needed in the classroom because of the wide disparity that is often found between materials developed specifically for English language teaching and authentic conversations.

According to Tamo (2009: 75) some advantages of using authentic materials are by using authentic materials, students are exposed to the real language. It is important to give the students information about the real situation that they will be listening to in order to help them become familiar with the language target. Hence authentic materials can provide up-to-date information about what is happening in the real world. Moreover, authentic materials should have a positive effect on a learner's motivation because they will be listening directly to the actual language. They should be more enthusiastic in learning language when the materials are interesting for them. In this case, the teachers have to present a bigger variety of materials and choose appropriate methods for teaching with them. There are even some authentic materials that are also suitable for teaching students at the beginners level.

However, there are some opposing views that state that it is not realistic for teachers to only use authentic materials in the classroom. This is supported by Kilickaya (2004) who mentions some disadvantages of using authentic materials. Firstly, authentic materials may be very culturally specific, so as to be unnecessarily difficult to be understood outside the specific language community. Besides, the vocabulary might not be relevant to the student's immediate needs. Also too many structures can get mixed up, so that at lower levels students will have a hard time decoding the texts. Moreover, special preparation may be necessary which can be time consuming. Also if too many different accents are heard it can lead to confusion. Finally, the materials can easily become outdated, e.g. some news items.

In addition, there are some significant disadvantages of using authentic materials in comparison with textbooks. Guariento and Morley (2001: 348-351) remind us that the use of authentic materials especially can make lower level students confused and demotivated by the complexity of language and performance conditions unless only the simplest authentic texts are carefully selected by the teacher.

Hence, the materials selected should maintain the learner's sense of response and should engage the learner's interest. As mentioned by both authors, this appears to be hard while simplification of any text is justified. It is also believed that while some texts lend themselves to competence training, all textual inputs need to be successfully done by teachers because it may reduce opportunities for students' comprehensible input and cause frustration amongst lower level learners (Guariento and Morley, 2001: 349). Beside, the preparation stage is often demanding and time consuming for instructors.

Listening Comprehension

All language learners face difficulties when listening to the target language. Nevertheless, the types and the extent of difficulty differ, and much listening comprehension research has been conducted to investigate these differences. The research conducted by Goh (2000: 56) for example, shows that listener difficulties may be influenced by a number of factors. Some factors that have been the focus of research include speech rate, phonological features, and background knowledge. Other issues have also been related to listener difficulties. These range from text structure and syntax to personal factors such as insufficient exposure to the target language, and a lack of interest and motivation. Additionally, in teaching-learning a foreign language, listening skills are precisely one of the most difficult to teach and acquire, and that is why proficiency levels tend to be very low. Regarding this fact, Martinez (2002: 21) has said “in order to overcome this difficulty, to improve our students listening skills and prepare them to be real listeners who can cope with real listening situations, using authentic materials in teaching listening is appropriate to be applied”.

Therefore, to overcome the problems noted above, learners should realize that listening is an important skill to be mastered in learning a second or foreign language. By doing so, hopefully they will gradually practice it not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

Two classes were observed, the control class (CG) and the experimental class (EG) at two points in time. In this case, authentic materials was the independent variable while the listening proficiency of the students was the dependent variable. The main aim of the experimental study was to determine the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables, to investigate research problems, and to see the causality established between the variables.

Population and Sample

The population of this research was all of the second year students in the English Department of UIN Ar-Raniry who were taking the Listening II course in the second semester. This comprised 105 students divided into four classes. The researcher chose the sample at random by preparing slips of paper, each with the name of one of the classes in the population. After mixing the slips thoroughly, the researcher selected

two slips. The classes selected were the samples for this study after the test of normality and homogeneity had been done. One of them was chosen as the experimental class (EG) while the other one was chosen as the control class (CG). The number of students in each class in the English Department is normally about 25 to 27. So the total sample size was approximately 60 students from the English Department of UIN Ar-Raniry in the 2014/2015 academic year.

Research Instruments

The Tests

Two tests were done the pre-tests and the post-tests. The pre-test was aimed to measure the dependent variable before the treatment began in order to find out whether the pre-test scores of both groups were homogenous or not. This test was given in the first meeting before starting teaching listening using authentic materials. Meanwhile, the post-test was aimed to find out whether the use of Authentic Materials in teaching listening to the students in the EG resulted in a significantly different result to that from the CG. The post-test was given at the end of the teaching-learning processes. The researcher gave the tests to both the CG and the EG. In both tests, the researcher looked at the students' understanding about four aspects of listening (ability to focus, general understanding, listening for details, and accuracy of answers). The test consisted of ten WH questions related to news the students heard on audio. The students listened to some general information, details and inferences about a famous person. In the tests, the students found some questions related to general understanding, details and inferences. They have to be able to answer the questions accurately. The time allocation for the tests was 180 minutes, in which 90 minutes was for the pre-test meeting and 90 minutes was for the post-test meeting. The listening test materials were taken from www.bbcnews.com and YouTube.

Regarding the scoring rubric used to measure the students' listening ability, it concentrated on ability to focus, general understanding, listening for details, and accuracy of answers (see Table 1).

Table 1. The Scoring Guide for the Listening Assignment.

Listening skills				
	Area of concern (1 pt)	Needs work (2 pts)	Good (3 pts)	Very good (4 pts)
Ability to focus.	The student was not able	The student found it	The student was mostly	The student was able to

Table 1 continued...

	to concentrate on the listening task and was easily distracted and inattentive.	difficult to concentrate on the listening task, but was able to attend occasionally.	attentive and usually able to listen with good concentration.	concentrate fully and listen very attentively throughout the assessment.
General understanding.	The student did not understand enough vocabulary or information to answer the questions.	While the student did not understand a lot of the vocabulary and information, she was able to complete some of the questions.	The student showed a good general understanding of the vocabulary and information, with most questions completed.	Showed a very good general understanding of all vocabulary & information, completing all the questions.
Listening for details.	The student was unable to grasp specific details when listening, and did not include them in the answers.	Although the student showed a limited ability to listen for details, specific information was occasionally included.	The student was able to include most specific information and details in her answers.	The student included all the specific information and details in his answers.
Accuracy of answers.	The student's answers were mostly left out or unrelated to the information given.	The student included a small amount of information; however, a lot was left out or was not accurate.	Answers were mostly accurate and related to the information given, with a only a few errors.	The content was always accurate and related to the information given.

(Source: iRubric)

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed in order to answer the second research question. The questionnaire was used in this study to find out the influence of using authentic materials on the attitude of the EG students towards learning listening. The EG students were asked fifteen

questions related to their opinions in learning listening and their interest in the use of authentic materials.

Data Collection Procedures

This research was an experimental study, data was collected using two tests: a pre-test and a post-test.

The Pre-test

Before conducting the treatment, a pre-test was given to both the EG and the CG on Wednesday 25th, March 2015 at different times. The students were assigned to listen to a news report about Michael Jackson's tour. The students in both classes were asked 10 questions related to the assigned listening task. The teaching time allocation for the test was 180 minutes, 90 minutes for the CG and 90 minutes for the EG.

Experimental Teaching Treatment

In this study, the treatment was given to the students in the EG after the pre-test. Treatments are efforts to find out whether or not the experimental procedure can cause a significant difference between the results from the EG and the CG. The treatments were conducted over four meetings.

On the other hand, for the CG, the researcher did not teach them by herself and the materials used were not authentic materials; the CG were taught by their own lecturer using the materials provided in the textbook.

The Post-test

The post test was held in the last meeting for both classes. The aim of this test was to find out whether or not the EG students' ability in listening comprehension had increased significantly after being given the treatment. The test given in the post-test was the same type as that in the pre-test. In this case, the students were asked to listen to a news report about the death of North Korea's Kim Jong-II with the topic taken from www.bbcnews.com.

The Questionnaire

In the last meeting, after the post-test, a questionnaire was also given to the EG to find out their answers to the second research question which investigated the perceptions of the EG students toward

the use of authentic materials in the listening comprehension class. Before the students began answering the questionnaire the teacher/researcher went over the questions to ensure the students had no misunderstandings and to give any needed clarifications.

Validity and Reliability of the Data

Related to the study conducted, the tests given to the students were valid and reliable. The validity of the test is proven by the degree to which the test measured what the researcher intended. In this case, the researcher measured four aspects of the listening task; they were (1) ability to focus, (2) general understanding, (3) listening for details, and (4) accuracy of answers. Meanwhile, to test the reliability of the test, the researcher tried out this test with other listening students in a different unit, and the results were consistent.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 2 shows the results from the post-tests of the EG and the CG.

Table 2. Results from the Post-tests of the EG and the CG.

	Experimental Class	s_{gab}	$t-test$	df	@	$t-table$	Control Class
N	25	10.47	5.01	50	0.05	2.02	27
\bar{x}	82						71
s^2	98.5						123.3
s	9.9						11.1

The means of the post-test scores for each class are presented in Table 2 above. The mean of the post-test scores of the EG was 82 while the mean from the CG was 71. Furthermore, the two means were compared through an independent sample t-test as shown in the table above with the degree of significance of $(\alpha) = 0.05$.

According to the level of significance with $(\alpha) = 0.05$ and $df = (n$ the result from the t-table with the level of significance 0.05 was 1.68 (t) and the result from the t-test was 4.1. Based on the criteria for the test of two means that if $t-test < t-table$, H_0 should be accepted. On the other hand, if $t-test > t-table$, H_a should be accepted. By comparing the results from the t-test and the t-table, it was found that the $t-test > t-table$ in which $4.1 > 2.02$. Therefore, H_a should be accepted since the value of the t-table exceeded the t-test score. This finding indicates that there

was a significant difference between the results of the post-tests from the EG with the results from the CG.

The Students' Response toward the Implementation of Authentic Materials in their Listening Classes

Table 3 presents the responses of the students in the EG toward the questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to the 25 students to find out their opinions and/or attitudes, whether they feel positive or not towards the use of authentic materials in their listening class. The students were asked to choose the offered options on the questionnaire that represented their opinion.

Table 3. The Responses of the EG Students to the Questionnaire.

No	Questionnaire	Options	F	Percentage
1	I prefer to listen to Authentic Materials rather than to listen to those in the course book	a. strongly agree	13	52
		b. Agree	12	48
		c. Disagree	0	0
		d. Strongly Disagree	0	0
2	I prefer to listen to the simplified listening materials provided in the course book	a. strongly agree	5	20
		b. Agree	4	16
		c. Disagree	8	32
		d. Strongly Disagree	8	32
3	I prefer to listen to a combination of English authentic Materials	a. strongly agree	9	36
		b. Agree	12	48
		c. Disagree	4	16
		d. Strongly Disagree	0	0
4	I prefer not to listen to authentic listening materials	a. strongly agree	3	12
		b. Agree	5	20
		c. Disagree	11	44
		d. Strongly Disagree	6	24
5	I prefer not to listen to the simplified listening materials provided in the course book	a. strongly agree	8	32
		b. Agree	10	40
		c. Disagree	5	20
		d. Strongly Disagree	2	8
6	Authentic Listening materials help me improve my listening skills	a. strongly agree	12	48
		b. Agree	10	40
		c. Disagree	3	12
		d. Strongly Disagree	0	0
7	Authentic listening materials enable me to comprehend other materials outside the class	a. strongly agree	14	56
		b. Agree	6	24
		c. Disagree	0	0
		d. Strongly Disagree	5	20

Table 3 continued...

8	The Authentic Listening materials I listened to in class are more interesting than the non-authentic materials	a. strongly agree	15	60
		b. Agree	10	40
		c. Disagree	0	0
		d. Strongly Disagree	0	0
9	Authentic Listening materials introduce me to how language is used in the real world	a. strongly agree	13	52
		b. Agree	10	40
		c. Disagree	2	8
		d. Strongly Disagree	0	0

Adapted from Sabet and Mahsefat (2012)

Discussion

The first discussion is about the results of the quantitative analysis. From the data, the mean of the pre-test scores of the EG was 59 while that of the CG was 57. The t-test indicated there was no significance difference between the pretest results from the two groups. In other words, the EG and the CG were similar in terms of their initial ability in listening to the pre-tests.

The same procedure was followed for the results from the post-tests. From Table 2, the mean of the post-test scores from the EG was 82 while that from the CG was 71. When the two means were compared using the t-test it showed that the difference between two means was significant. This means that the students who were taught by using authentic materials got a significantly better result in listening compared to those who were taught by using the standard materials and the tape from the course book.

Then, the qualitative data results obtained from the questionnaire given to the EG students at the end of the treatment showed that their responses were quite positive towards the use of authentic materials in their listening classes. This indicates that the EG students were interested in listening to authentic materials such as those from the internet. This finding supports Tamo (2009) who has said that authentic materials have a positive effect on the motivation of learners because they can listen directly to actual, authentic language. Students will be more enthusiastic in learning listening when the materials are interesting.

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that 90% of the respondents strongly agreed that authentic materials helped them improve their listening ability. This was because the materials given were related to up-to-date topics or issues that enable them to understand the materials. The results from the students improved day

by day at every treatment meeting. This finding supports that of Kilickaya (2004) who has stated that authentic materials are more likely to connect to students' needs. This is because authentic materials expose them to the real language and are more closely related to everyday life activities. Hence, students find the materials more useful since they can be applied in their social life and more importantly improve their communication and listening skills in the target language. Most students also felt that by using authentic materials they were more motivated in learning listening comprehension. Kilickaya (2004) also mentioned that because authentic materials give a positive impact to the motivation of students, the materials will naturally boost the student's listening abilities. Normally people are more excited when they are exposed to things that are connected to their preferences and interests.

Besides, the media which were used to get the authentic materials came from different sources: TV, film and the internet. From the students' answers almost all of them chose the internet as the media which they used when searching for authentic materials. As mentioned by Wilfred (2010: 178) learning English through TV news can be a very enjoyable process for students as they can read and listen to English in a comfortable and authentic atmosphere. Tamo (2009: 75) also lists other resources for authentic materials: newspapers, TV programs, menus, magazines, the internet, movies, songs, brochures, comics, and literature. These resources are familiar to the students in their daily life as they often have contact with these sources, almost every day.

CONCLUSION

From the results and the discussion above, two main conclusions can be drawn about what has been found concerning the use of authentic materials for teaching listening skills.

First, according to the findings the students who were taught using authentic materials got better results in listening compared to those who were taught by using materials from the course book. This can be seen from the results of the post-tests from each group.

Second, the findings reveal the EG students' positive attitude and high like of authentic materials. A high percentage of the EG students stated that they could improve their listening ability through listening to authentic materials. Since the authentic listening materials used were more interesting and related to the use of real language, they positively

affected the students' achievements in developing their listening comprehension skills. Besides, the uses of authentic materials also motivated the students to learn better listening skills. They become more excited in learning listening because they were exposed to things that were connected to their preferences and interests. Therefore, the perception of the EG students toward authentic materials, was that the use of authentic materials in listening comprehension played a great role in improving their listening abilities.

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