Semantic Analysis on the Police Lingo in the Narratives of Students of Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration: A Forensic Linguistic Study

Susan B. Pineda [*], **Annie M. Ruiz**, and **Vergel L. Mayo**

Marinduque State College

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

This study looks into the terminologies (police lingo) in the write-ups of Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration fourth-year students to illustrate the categorical and descriptive meanings of the words used in the narratives, identify the errors in the usage, and find out inaccuracies in the application of mechanics of writing like correct spelling, capitalization, abbreviation, and punctuation marks. Twenty-six (26) (BSLEAD) students participated in this study. They were instructed to write a narrative report in one of their experiences in the field. Police lingo identified in the statements such as nouns, verbs, and adjectives, were singled out from the narratives. These words were analyzed to determine whether they clearly stated their intention and described vividly what they meant to say. Semantic analysis was done by giving the dictionary definition of the word in the first level (categorical meaning as to parts of speech) and the illustrative meaning of the word in the second analysis (descriptive meaning), hence, the police lingo in the narratives were explained and described as to their literal meanings and clarity of intention as used in the statements. Results showed that male and female respondents have a similar choice of police lingo in writing the context of utterances in the narrative reports. They also committed errors in writing mechanics such as punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. It is recommended that the BSLEAD students engage in language learning activities like conversation using English, reading forensic texts, and listening/watching investigative programs on the radio or television that use English as a medium.

1 Introduction

Standard English is the most widely accepted form of the English language. It is commonly used in different conversational domains, including academic institutions. In the case of the Law Enforcement Administration, all forms of communication require using the correct language to transmit information clearly and effectively. This can be best described as incorrect usage and appropriate use of spelling, punctuation, and abbreviations in the use of police lingo in their report (Paligat, 2016). Meanwhile, Faraldo-Cabana (2018) emphasizes that English is currently used as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages. Moreover, he said that

English is a global language that is internationally learned and spoken. As regards language learning (Crabbe, 2003) as cited by Genelza (2022), the concept of excellence in language instruction is popular. However, its actual meaning remains unclear. Hence, educational institutions' issue is creating a framework to apply and develop current knowledge of L2 learning and teaching. As English has become the main language of international communication, an increasing number of non-native speakers use it as a lingua franca. Mackevic (2016) analyzed writings to identify linguistic classes that can distinguish between Russian and Polish writers to enable them to explain from the point of view of interlanguage and L1 transfer and found that they have different language preferences on word and phrase levels identified on the corpus from Polish and Russian data.

Language skills are important tools in expressing the students' opinions and getting their ideas across to communicate effectively with other people. Good communication skills make them confident and enrich their abilities to achieve more. English is the medium of communication in school and is widely used in the country. One of the important functions of police officers is to write investigative reports to record their activities and findings. In the study of Ang (2016), after examining the language features, organizational structures, and communicative functions of 30 police reports, revealed that these kinds of reports summarize a sequence of past events by a narrator. The narrative has language features like cohesive devices, descriptive words, police jargon, and various frames and references. Likewise, Gibbons (2003) wrote that miscommunication is caused by poor linguistic construction, by wordings that are clear in principle but are inappropriate to the contexts to the extent that they are difficult or impossible to grasp, or by differences between the knowledge of the speaker/writer and the hearer/reader.

To lead the investigation to its intended purpose, Aher (2016) wrote that discourse semantics come from formalizing conversational content in the Stalnakerian tradition. Formal semantic pragmatic models of conversation and their governing principles were the new and powerful tools for presenting linguistic evidence in a courtroom. According to Saeed (2016), semantics is the study of meaning communicated through language. A person's linguistic abilities are based on knowledge such as pronouncing words, constructing sentences, and the meaning of individual words and sentences. But defining words, according to Hulit et al. (2015), is not just a semantic exercise. It is also a metalinguistic phenomenon. The semantic part of defining a word involves establishing the general category and identifying differentiating characteristics – the basic component of a dictionary definition.

Further, Walsh et al. (2016) claim that linguistics is a discipline that involves the description of texts and linguistic interactions and involves the description and explanation of the nature of communication at a variety of levels, including at lower levels, word choice, and syntax, and, at a higher level, issues of context and the functional intent of the interactants. Meanwhile, they wrote that Forensic Linguistics takes linguistics' methods and insights and applies them to forensic texts and contexts. On the other hand, Olsson (2008) stressed that forensic linguistics is the application of linguistics to legal questions and issues – the interface between language, crime, and law.

Interestingly, there is little or no study within the region focusing on the narratives of police reports as a description of the vocabulary words in utterances and paragraphs. In Marinduque State College, for example, students taking Law Enforcement Administration have the course Technical Writing which studies and distinguishes types and purposes of technical reports in criminology and the use of appropriate terms and phraseologies to meet the needs of the readers. Standard English is prescribed in the appropriate use of words, phrases, and police lingo in sentence structures and paragraph construction. Olsson (2008) wrote that a word does not have a universal meaning within a speech community. It depends upon authorship attribution and speaker concept. Meanwhile, Paligat (2016) claimed that the transmission of information between persons, particularly in narrative reports, should be clear and effective; hence, the need to use standard language and observe mechanics in writing.

For study purposes, semantics, according to Hurford, Heasley, and Smith (2007), is the study of meaning in language. English teachers as Friginal (2018) stressed that they might need better

reasons to introduce learners to the privileged standard forms of academic writing. They focus on the spoken and written registers and genres appropriate to different communities or academic needs. As defined by Van Valin Jr (2001), quoted by Pidlaski and Tenenbaum (2015), syntax is how sentences are constructed, and users of human languages employ a striking variety of possible arrangements of the elements in sentences. Moreover, they claimed that vocabulary is the use of words in relation to how we see the world, context, and participants in speech acts.

Jackson (1998) stressed on the different kinds of semantics like pragmatic semantics (studies the meaning of utterances in context), for instance, in terms of speech acts, lexical semantics (the sense relations) of synonymy and antonymy – a branch of linguistic semantics, (the external relation of denotation), philosophical semantics (the logical properties of language and with the nature of formal theories and the language of logic), linguistic semantics (concerned with all aspects of meaning in natural languages, from the meaning of utterances in context to the meanings of sounds in syllables). Specifically, nouns and noun phrases also perform or fulfill roles within a given situation or context. These roles are agent, themes, patent, experience, instrument, force, source, goal, path, location, and possessor.

Meanwhile, Saeed (2016) claimed that in word meaning and sentence meaning, one central issue is the relationship between word meaning and sentence meaning. Phrases and sentences have their meanings too. Chomsky (1965), as cited by Saeed (2016), said that generative grammar's most important insight is that a relatively small number of combinatory rules may allow speakers to use a finite set of words to create a number of sentences. Jackson (1998) emphasized that the study of ways in which language means is called semantics. There is a sense in which the researchers cannot study any part of languages like sounds, grammar, words, or discourse – without being conscious that language is meaningful and that all its parts communicate meaningfully. The researchers could thus look at the semantics of grammar, the semantics of discourse, and the semantics of sounds, but this study is restricted to the study of meaning of words.

In addition, Wilkins (1976), as cited by McDonough, Shaw, and Masukana (2013), proposed two categories of communication which are notional or semantic – grammatical and functional. Notions are abstract concepts like frequency, duration, dimension, location, quantification, etc., closely related to grammatical categories in English. Functions, conversely, refer to the practical uses of language in interaction with people.

In relation to the purpose of the study, Hudson (2004), as stated in Spolsky and Hult's (2010) description, comprises the details of vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation of a particular language. For example, how speakers of a given language use the word caveat, which means corpse or dead body, is a matter of description. It became helpful to apply the so-called Language Across the curriculum, considering students' language, especially their informal talk and writing, as the key learning resource in the classroom (Cotton, 1994) again stated by Spolsky and Hult (2010). This study is about giving the categorical and descriptive meaning of police lingo classified as nouns, verbs, and adjectives identified in the narratives of Law Enforcement students in Marinduque State College. The students take the course Technical Writing in the program curriculum, which allows them to write narratives and police reports. Since these write-ups are composed of words labeled as police lingo, it becomes interesting to analyze whether these words were used correctly and effectively in the sample narratives.

This study then attempted to single out the nouns, verbs, and adjectives labeled as police lingo in the students' Bachelor of Science in Law Administration narratives to describe the meaning of these words as to their categorical and descriptive meanings. It also aimed to identify the errors committed by the students in capitalization forms, spelling, and abbreviation which are very important mechanics to achieve clarity and accuracy in writing.

2 Methodology

The study uses descriptive analytical design to single out words from utterances and classify them into nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Analyzing the students' semantic knowledge, the researchers adopted the "Definitions Theory" to simply give the meaning of linguistic expressions to establish

definitions of the meaning of words (Saeed, 2016). Here, when a student combines words to form sentences according to the grammatical rules of the English language, the word definitions are combined to form phrases and then sentence definitions, giving the meaning of sentences. In addition, the researchers also used Hulit et al. (2015) Process of Word Definition. He meant that when a word is defined, its meaning is identified, but we also limit its meaning so that it will be understood. Using this, the general category of the word to be defined and the characteristics that differentiate it from other things in the general category are identified.

The researchers first did the categorical meaning of the terminologies labeled as police terminologies by using Merriam-Webster's Dictionary. The second form of definition applied to the present study is descriptive meaning to refine the understanding of word meanings of the police lingo identified in the students' narratives. Here, the meaning of the word as used in sentences found in the text was described as to what the students mean in using such words. The students were then instructed to develop narratives on scenes caught in locations that concern issues. These scenes were caught during their fieldwork as one of the practicum activities on Technical Writing. Since they had witnessed and experienced the incidents, they were able to express their observations and describe the actions involved in the situation.

The point here is to enable the students to apply their linguistic knowledge using police lingo prescribed in their discipline. Semantic analysis, a very broad component of studying the meaning of a language, is focused to a smaller extent in this study. This is to look only at the accuracy of using police lingo that described the meaning of utterances clearly and correctly. We could thus look at the semantics of grammar, the semantics of discourse, and the semantics of sounds, but this study is restricted to the study of the meaning of the police lingo used in the narratives.
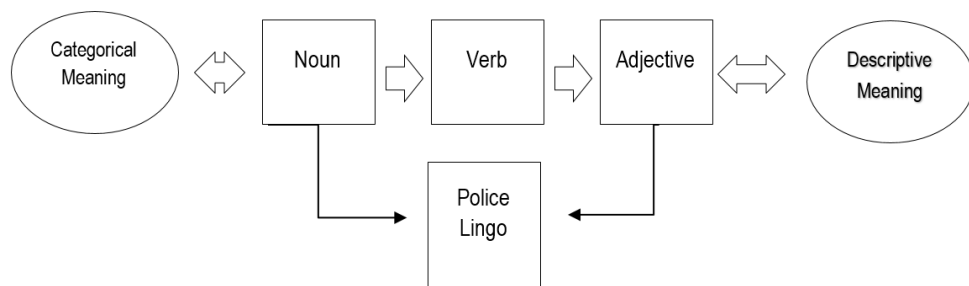
Figure 1. Police Lingo in the Narratives of the Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration

The flow of the study is depicted in Figure 1. The student use different police lingo in the narratives. These terminologies were categorized/classified as major parts of speech in the English language, like nouns, verbs, and adjectives. The first step done was giving the dictionary meaning of the terminologies referred to as categorical meaning. Second is by stating the implicated meaning of the terminologies in the context of utterances referred to as descriptive meaning. This means that word meaning as used in this study is the meaning taken from the dictionary and descriptive meaning is the meaning attached to the terminology used in the context.

The students were asked to write short narratives to elicit data. The sample narratives were read separately to single out police lingo. The police lingo was classified as nouns, verbs, and adjectives. These were presented in tabular forms to give the categorical and descriptive meanings in two columns. As to writing mechanics, this study focused on capitalization forms, spelling, and abbreviations.

A total of 26 Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration (BSLEAD) students participated in this study. They were all third-year students and had taken the subject Technical Writing. They wrote reports on their experiences in the field during their practicum. Most are in the age bracket of 18-19 and 20-21. Male respondents dominate in number over females as more males generally go to this line of profession.

3 Result and Discussions

After reading the sample narratives, sentences identified with police lingo were singled out from the context, and the terminologies were presented by category as nouns, verbs, and adjectives.

Table 1 shows the police lingo (noun categories) in the first column. These were identified from the utterances in the narratives written by the Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration students. The words in blackened presentations were given their correct equivalent in the correct lingo terms in the second column. The categorical meanings of the words are their dictionary meaning and are used in customary conditions or the course of things. These are found in the third column of the table. The descriptive meanings are designed for police writing and operate on the factual and legal functions of the terminologies presented in the fourth column. These two classifications of meanings are the semantic focus of the study to find the accuracy and clarity in the utterances in the simple reports. As identified in the narratives, the intended purpose of the sentences becomes uncertain if the police terminology used is not verified or appropriately used in the context.

Table 1. Describing the Categorical Meaning and Descriptive Meaning of the Words and (Nouns, Verbs, and Adjectives) Singled Out from the Narratives

Nouns	Categorical Meaning As part of the Speech	Descriptive Meaning As to Police Lingo Context
Witness	eyewitness, bystander	A person who attests and testifies to a crime committed by a suspect
Suspect	culprit	A person who remains innocent unless proven guilty
crime situation	the incident, an illegal action	An activity that is against the law and is prohibited by the law
monitor	surveillance	The act of carefully watching someone under observation.
statement	a document, a testimony	Something that is written formally for a legal purpose.
Register	record, roll, catalog, directory	The official list of persons, properties, and details as proof.
Jail	custody, captivity	A place for detaining persons being trialed and persons proven guilty.
security footage	a device, a safety tool	An object/ gadget safeguards the security of personnel and buildings.
fingerprints	marks of fingers left on a surface	Prints identifying individuals subject to litigation.
inspection	examination, investigation	Clear scrutiny to run the rule over a certain incident
driver's license	an official identity of one person	An identity of a person had he been involved in an accident, crime, etc.
tolerance	forbearing, forgiving	The highest degree of restraint that the police observe
On-the-spot report	a scene, an incident	An initial investigative or an incident report at the time being.
Injuries	damage, bruise on the body, arms, legs, etc.	Physical harm such as breakage, wounds, lacerations, scar, and bruises as evidence.

The point of order is broken because the meaning is changed, and the purpose is lost. For instance, the use of the word injuries referring to a woman's swollen knees and ankles due to sliding in a muddy place makes the description an ordinary situation. Still, the real intention is to state that a woman was beaten by her husband because she had a swollen knee and ankle, and this is to

intensify her complaint. This is one instance in the narrative that the functional description of the word does not directly illustrate the real purpose of using the word injuries in the woman's complaint.

Table 2 illustrates the verbs used in the narratives. Out of the 56 verbs singled out from the utterances/corpuses (plural noun) (corpora plural), only seventeen are presented in the table. There were verbs, however, similar to verbs that were picked for presentation but were not presented anymore here. Primary errors were noted on the appropriate label of the police lingo that should be used. These verbs were highlighted, as shown in the first column. These words are used to make the meaning of the utterances and the entire narrative misleading the readers. Secondary errors were observed in using tense forms like simple past and past perfect forms. Finally, it is a verb-preposition combination that becomes an idiomatic expression.

Table 2. Verbs Singled Out from the Narratives and their Correct Equivalent Form in Law Enforcement Education

Verbs	Categorical Meaning	Descriptive Meaning
Shot	to hunt over, to dart with a piercing sensation	To strike with a missile is a person trying to escape his offense.
Disclosed	opened up, exposed to view	To expose a crime with available evidence and proof at hand.
Missing	failed to reach, lost an opportunity to appear	To look for a person who is at large, hence, difficult to trace,
Spotted	seen, singled out	To search for a person detected or noticed in a certain location or hideout
signaled	sign, indication, something that incites action	A given sound is a movement of instruction that gives information or tells someone to do something.
identified	showed who someone is or what something is	Conceived and established the identity of an individual being accused.
Denied	To prevent someone or neglect someone	Declare untrue as in denying an allegation.
threatening	having an uncertain chance of continued survival	Someone whose life has become endangered, like a witness or whistleblower
Grab	to seize or take by sudden motion or grasp	Took the attention or interest of someone or something for an intentional purpose.
captured	act of getting control of something	Took and held someone as a prisoner or being taken as a prisoner.
crashed	make a loud noise by falling, hitting something, etc.	Broke violently and noisily purposely for the unprecedented incident.
Robbed	keep someone from getting something expected or wanted	Took money or property from a person or a place illegally.
brought	Cause to fall or as if by shooting	Won the enthusiastic approval of concerned officials.
reviewed	examined the quality or condition	A report that gives someone's opinion about the veracity of a document or an oral statement.

Tense is a significant consideration in writing a narrative or a police report. Since it is an account of incidents that transpired each time, as stated by (Paligat, 2016), the tense of the verb should be in the past form because the action involved was already done or had started and continued to an indefinite period. Narratives could be official documents; although the samples used in this

study were only used for the study, verbs should be used correctly. It is a good practice to use them accurately and correctly for future correspondence work should they practice their law enforcement education on the battlefield.

An example, taken from the narrative, is noted like this 'The victim was shocked by the incident she saw on the dark side of the street.' It could be noted that the use of "was shocked" in the first clause is correct because it emphasizes an action that has happened already. Since the sentence is complex, there is the second clause; the tense of the second verb, saw, should be indicated in the past perfect tense because the first verb states the completed action (was shocked). Hence, the utterance/corpus should be "The victim was shocked by the incident she had seen on the dark side of the street."

The student illustrates a verb-preposition combination: "The case was brought out up to the court a month after doing a series of hearing in the barangay court" instead of saying, "The case was brought up to the court after doing a series of hearings in the barangay court." In this case, there is a double use of prepositions out up combined with the verb brought. The student narrator intends to say that the barangay court made no decisions. Hence, it was submitted to the higher court. In this utterance, the meaning portrayed indirectly hits the purpose.

Table 3 presents the adjectives that were singled out from the corpus. These words were used to describe, explain, and present their narrations and arguments in the narratives/reports. The common inaccuracies committed were in the use of adverbs instead of adjectives. In grammar, adjectives modify nouns like persons, locations, and incidents, whereas adverbs modify verbs or actions. In addition, adjectives are words belonging to one of the major form classes, typically serving as a modifier of a noun, but in narrative or police writing, adjectives specify the legal description of the incident, activity, or person involved in an account subject to an investigation.

Table 3. Adjectives Singled Out from the Narratives and Their Correct Equivalent Forms in Law Enforcement Education

Adjectives	Descriptive Meaning	Functional Meaning
Guilty	have committed an offense	A person is chargeable with or responsible for a usually grave breach of conduct or a crime.
innocent	free from guild	Not guilty of a crime or other wrong act
tolerable	good enough to be accepted but not very good	Capable of being borne or endured until such time proven with liability.
valuable items		
suspicious	showing a feeling that something is wrong	Disposed to suspect, suspicious of strangers, but still has to prove innocent or guilty.
approximately	located close together	Time, shape, identity, etc., can be more or less.
unidentified	not known or have no identity	A person who does not have any indication of being the one involved in something
middle-aged	about age 40 to 60 years old	A forty- to sixty-year-old person as a witness, suspect, etc.
unarmed suspect	not having a weapon	Not armed or armored in committing a malicious act.
high speed	going or moving very fast	Operated or adapted for operation at high speed, like running, jumping, or driving a car.

wrong side	not morally good or correct	An injurious, unfair, or unjust action committed by one person or group.
one-sided	led or controlled by one person	Occurring on one side and showing only one opinion or point of view.
Small	few in number or amount	Of less privilege or opportunity to become null and void.
Serious	Alarming, critical	Having important or dangerous possible results.

This one case of inaccuracy is noted in using an adverb to describe an incident instead of an adjective which automatically alters the meaning of the corpus or utterance. "The police officer ordered a short meeting instead of saying a short meeting." The misuse, however, the use of adverbs instead of adjectives could be attributed to non-standard usage, and this is a serious case. No inaccuracies were noted out of the 11 adverbs used instead of adjectives. Since the narratives were written after the lecture and were considered short and composed of only one hundred to one hundred words, students could not use other adjectives while writing the reports. Other types of adjectives include numerical adjectives, special adjectives, and intensifiers could also be sources of inaccuracies because there are rules in the order of using these words. However, only descriptive adjectives were identified in the sample narratives.

Table 4. Errors Committed in the Use of Police Lingo by the Male and Female BSLEAD Students along Now

Noun				
	Average	**p-Value**	**Decision**	**Remarks**
Male	5.11	0.455	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	Not significant
Female	4.75			
Verb				
Male	6.11	0.467	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	Not significant
Female				
Adjective				
Male	4.44	0.037	Reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Female	3.13			

In analyzing the data, Mann-Whitney U was utilized since the data is not normal and has an equal variance. The results for the errors committed to using nouns, verbs, and adjectives were found to be significant in using adjectives. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. This averages 4.44 for males and 3.33 for females and a p-Value of 0.037. Results were shown in Table 4.

The Table 5 illustrates the errors in the mechanics of writing found in the respondents' narratives. Welsch's t-test was utilized for capitalization since the data is not normal and has an equal variance. The results for the errors committed in capitalization and abbreviation were significant, with p-Value 0.003 and 0.001. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. In abbreviation, Mann- Whitney U test was utilized, resulting in a p-Value equivalent to 0.200; hence, it failed to reject the null hypothesis.

Table 5. Errors Committed in the Use of Police Lingo by the Male and Female BSLEAD Students along Now

Capitalization				
	Average	p-Value	Decision	Remarks
Male	4.33	0.003	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Female	2.0			
Spelling				
Male	4.61	0.001	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	Significant
Female	2.25			
Abbreviation				
Male	4.78	0.200	Failed to reject the null hypothesis	Not Significant
Female	3.63			

Table 6 shows the errors in spelling, use of capitalization, and abbreviations called mechanics of writing. In the first column were misspelled words, in the second column were nouns not indicated in capital letters at the beginning of the proper noun, and in the third column were abbreviated words. Opposite the inaccurately used words are their correct forms in police writing. These three-writing mechanics are important requirements to achieve clarity in doing narratives. Though the errors committed were not significant, these should be avoided to ensure the credibility of the narrations.

Table 6. Errors Committed in the Application of the Mechanics of Writing a Narrative Report

Spelling	Capitalization	Abbreviation
mystirious/mysterious	prof. Edwin Cruz/p	w/ /with
recieve/receive	gen.Juancho Ramirez	15 y/o/15 years old
thru/through	monday/Monday	3/24/20/March 24, 2020
proffessional/professional	english/English	
embaras/embarrass	ilocano food/Ilocano food	Eo/ Executive Order
exagerated/exaggerated		Napolcom/NAPOL COM
wether/whether		National Police
noticeble/noticeable		Commission

4 Conclusions

The findings revealed that the Bachelor of Science in Law Enforcement Administration (BSLEAD) students committed errors in using nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Specifically, this was found in denoting actions in the past and sometime in the past in describing incidents for who (persons involved) and when (time of actions). These results could be attributed to a lack of verb formation and tense structure mastery. In the case of using adjectives in their laymen's terms, most students were at good assumptions and descriptions and fair at describing incidents and characters involved in the narratives. The respondents also committed mistakes in applying the rules in capitalization, spelling, and abbreviation. Hence, inaccuracies were found in the sample narratives. As to semantic analysis focused on the categorical and descriptive meaning of the police lingo, students were found to be fair in using nouns, weak in using verbs, and average on the of adjectives since only descriptive words were identified on the corpus/utterances, and no other types of adjectives were found in the narratives.

5 Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusion of the study, it is recommended that English teaching at the lower year level could be intensified so that when the BSLEAD students take Technical

Writing in their fourth year, they are already equipped with the use of the major parts of speech. The School of Governance may intensify its Language Program or coordinate with the unit with an existing program for a possible language enhancement program. That the BSLEAD students engage themselves in language learning activities like conversation using English, a close reading of forensic texts, and listening/watching investigative programs on the radio or television that use English as a medium of broadcast. The teachers of non-English courses, except Filipino classes, should use English as a medium of teaching-learning in the classroom to inhabit the student's use as a medium of conversation. That a related study be conducted in the future using police lingo lines again in instances of police interviewing.

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