



Deconstruction of Gendered Dialogues in English Language Students Textbook for Grade 12 Senior High School

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Abstract

Education plays a significant role in maintaining or deconstructing patriarchal gender constructions in society. Within this ambivalent arena, this study aimed to analyze the representation of gender constructions in a textbook for grade 12 Indonesian EFL students published by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia in 2018. The textual analysis proposed by McKee is used to analyze the data. Language functions attributed to the two genders are used as the parameters to find their feminine or masculine depiction based on Lakoff's (1973) and Coates' (2013) concept of language and gender, combined with Millet's Sexual Politics. The study revealed that the textbook shows gender deconstructions towards language functions used in female-only, male-only and mixed sex dialogues. The deconstruction of the stereotypes can be seen from the presence of feminine traits in male characters, such as asking for information and producing more phatic and expressive utterances than females. In contrast, female characters are depicted to be dominantly produced masculine traits, such as being knowledgeable by giving more information than men and dominating in conversations. Although, at some points, the characters are still associated with stereotyped gender traits, the efforts to deconstruct traditional images of both genders need to be appreciated even though they still seem ambivalent.

Keywords: textbook, deconstruction, gender stereotype

Introduction

Schools as learning centers serve a vital role in cognitively teaching students and inculcating societal standards applied in students through the learning process. In this case, textbooks, the most widely used and required learning resources in schools, play a significant part in constructing one's knowledge through the ideologies represented in the content (Mihira, 2022; Paudel & Khadka, 2019). It is because students can internalize the values presented in the textbook content, which will indirectly affect how they behave (Aryawan et al., 2022; Emilia et al., 2017; Islam & Asadullah, 2018; Julianti et al., 2019; Khanadi et al., 2022; Suwastini, Saraswati, et al., 2023; Wiraningsih, 2021). It includes the representation of gender construction contained in textbooks which will affect the preservation of positive as well as negative representations of gender in society since textbooks are the form of ideology created in the society where the textbook is created (Fahik, 2020; Gebregeorgis, 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to have gender-neutral content in learning materials to eliminate the negative construction of gender.

Gender bias has been an important issue emerging in society for decades. Many studies have complained about the representation of women and men, which are still biased by patriarchal gender categories. It is inseparable from the bias found in textbooks. Ahmad & Shah (2019) examined the gender bias implied in the English textbooks for 5th grade in Pakistan and revealed that the females characters are underrepresented throughout the textbook, purposively designed to maintain male dominance. Barton & Sakwa (2012) revealed that the textbooks in Uganda include dominant representation of male characters, while females' positive depiction was underrepresented. Other studies have been conducted by Sulaimani (2017) in Saudi Arabia, Shamsuddin & Hamid (2017) in Malaysia, and Lee & Mahmoudi-Gahrouei (2020) in Iran. In Indonesia, Ariyanto (2018) revealed gender bias portrayal in the English textbook for junior high school. Julianti et al. (2019) also found that the book included traditional construction of proper space for men and women. Female characters were mostly depicted in domestic spheres, while the male characters were mostly outdoors. Similarly, Suwastini, Wiraningsih, et al. (2023) also found the English

textbook for the seventh grade junior high school included gendered language. Another study was conducted by Rachmijati & Cahyati (2018) who analyzed the gender representation in English high school textbooks and found that females are underrepresented. Furthermore, Suhartono & Kristina (2018) analyzed the English textbooks for grades ten and eleven and found the supporting result.

Similar issue is also found in the EFL textbook for grade 12. As the result of the preliminary observation, women are often formed to be in a particular "ideal type" of society which most of the time causes gender inequality that often marginalizes them (De Beauvoir, 1956; Mihira et al., 2021; Millett, 2000; Mulvey, 1989; Suwastini, 2013). In this case, the female characters in the textbook were depicted as being dependent and emotional (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Damayanti, 2014b; Ellemers, 2018; Suwastini et al., 2020). The compartmentalization of how women speak is also inseparable from the linguistic method used by both genders, namely male-competitive and female-constructive/cooperative which results in men having masculine characteristics such as being rational, bold, ambiguous, controlling, active, and independent, whereas women have the opposite features, including being indirect, weak, submissive, passive, expressive, kind, and dependent (Ariyanto, 2018; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Julianti et al., 2019; Mihira, 2022; Paudel & Khadka, 2019; Wiraningsih, 2021).

Although gender prejudice persists in texts, several gender deconstructions have been discovered in EFL textbooks in recent years. Blangsinga et al. (2021) have exemplified how deconstructions of gender bias can be performed in textbooks. Lestariyana et al. (2020) and Setyono (2018) found women were depicted to be more intelligent than men which also indirectly attaches masculine qualities to women in English textbooks for junior high school. This implicitly demonstrates an attempt to educate the reader about a positive portrayal of women (Chowdhury, 2017; Curaming & Curaming, 2020). All of this results in a constructive reconfiguration, where ideas of conventional womanhood progressively change to embrace attitudes, behavior, and options that were previously disregarded. However, it should be noted further

that none of the studies analyzed the textbooks based on the language function used in dialogue. Therefore, this study focused on “how are the representation of gender constructions through language function represented in Indonesian senior high school student's English textbook for 12th grade?” that aims to determine the gender representation especially its deconstruction implied through the language function attributed to each gender in the 12th-grade students' English textbook by the Indonesian Ministry of Education.

Research Methodology

Research Design

This study applied a qualitative descriptive study that used textual analysis proposed by McKee (2003) to find out the gender representation portrayed through the dialogue and analyze the bias implication in the dialogues. The data were collected manually, in which notes became one of the main instruments of data collection other than tabulation. Through content analysis, this method is particularly useful for gaining insight into complex, subjective experiences and allows for a more in-depth understanding of the studied topic.

Research Instrument

The researchers were in charge of collecting data by reading the book repeatedly, taking notes, and recording the findings using an observational checklist. Furthermore, the researchers were aided by field notes taken during the data collection process. In this case, the field notes included a depiction of gender stereotypes as well as the notion of deconstruction.

Source of Data

The subject of this study was the dialogues in the Indonesian EFL textbook for grade 12 students published by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Indonesia in 2018. This textbook was analyzed considering that it is widely used in Indonesia. The use of textbooks as a research subject is particularly relevant in Indonesia, where textbooks play a significant role as a primary source of information for students. By researching textbooks, researchers and educators

can gain a deeper understanding of the content and structure of the materials used in the classroom. It can provide valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the educational system, as well as inform efforts to improve the quality of education.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed through several phases: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles et al., 2014). The data were collected through document analysis using a table of identification and field notes as the instruments. This technique involves four key steps: reading, note-taking, classifying and documenting. Data reduction involves categorizing the selected data as the process of transforming large amounts of data into manageable chunks. In this study, the dialogues selected were those that the gender can be identified. The study focused on the representation of the two genders in dialogues, be it conversations between female and male characters, female and female characters, male and male characters, and female and male characters.

The following characteristics were examined to find out the gender bias implied through the dialogues:

- (1) The language function used to sort out the data was the one proposed by Leech (1981). Four main categories were used in this study, they were informational utterances (includes asking and giving information), phatic utterances (to maintain social interaction), expressive utterances (to express one's feelings), and directive utterances (to ask someone to do something). The directive utterances were then divided into more specific categories (Lee, 2019), such as (a) ordering/commanding/instructing, (b) advising/suggesting, (c) offering/inviting, and (d) requesting. After that, the selected data were then compared to find the dominant function used in each gender dialogue.
- (2) Lastly, the total number of words and turns produced by each gender in the dialogues was counted to reveal and support the gender representation in the textbook.

Data display involves organizing the data into tables to facilitate understanding and interpretation. In data display, several codes were used, including "M-M" (Male to Male), "F-F" (Female to Female), "M-F" (Male to Female), and "F-M" (Female to Male). Finally, conclusion drawing and verification involve making sense of the data, synthesizing findings, and verifying conclusions through triangulation. Triangulation by data sources following (Miles et al., 2014), was carried out using different data, such as language and visual data related to the research, to support the validity of the data and the conclusion drawn.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The findings related to the total representation of female-only, male-only, and mixed-sex dialogues throughout the 12th-grade EFL students' textbook can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 (see below).

Table 1. The Frequency of Language Function used in Single-sex and Mixed-sex Dialogues in the Textbook

No	Language Functions	M-M	F-F	M-F	
				M	F
1	Asking for information	6	6	4	2
2	Giving information	12	12	1	4
3	Phatic	8	7	1	1
4	Expressive	7	5	1	-
5	Directives: ordering/commanding/instructing	4	2	1	1
6	Directives: advising/suggesting	5	3	-	2
7	Directives: offering/inviting	1	2	-	-
8	Directives: requesting	-	-	-	-
	TOTAL	43	37	8	10

Table 1 shows the language function used in dialogues found in the textbook. Based on the table, it can be identified that both genders were represented equally in terms of language function conveyed by the female-

only and male-only in their dialogues. It could be identified through the presence of almost every language function category assessed in the textbook, except for directive–requesting, which is missing in both female-only dialogues and male-only dialogues. The similar appearances of missing categories found in mixed-sex dialogues could also be seen. In this case, both female and male characters did not produce any utterances of directive: offering/inviting, and directive: requesting. Additionally, another missing utterance that did not being produce by the two genders are directive: advising/suggesting for male character and expressive utterances for female character.

Although both genders have missing language function categories production, it did not eliminate the fact of their equality times of utterances produced in some other categories. Based on the table it could also be identified that both female and male characters in single-sex dialogue were producing the same amount of utterances in Asking for and Giving information categories. Meanwhile, in mixed-sex dialogues both genders were represented producing pathic and directives: ordering/commanding/instructing utterance in the same amount of utterance. These implicitly shows that both genders were given the same chance to express their thoughts without having to consider whether the expressions were typically used by women or men. For instance, could be seen in Excerpt 1 below:

Excerpt 1

- Stranger : ...How long will it take from this bus station? Is this Arjosari station?
- Tania : Yes. This is Arjosari bus station. It takes about 22 hours from here to Jakarta.
- Stranger : Do I have to change buses after arriving in Jakarta?
- Tania : After arriving in Lebak Bulus Terminal, you have many options to reach your final destination. You can get in a 'Trans Jakarta' bus, metro mini, bajaj, taxi, and ojek. You can ask the bus driver there.

(Chapter 1. Page 5)

The excerpt shows a glimpse of conversation in mixed-sex dialogue in the

textbook. Based on the excerpt, it can be seen that the male character who acts as a stranger keeps requiring information from the female character named Tania by asking her. Likewise, the male character in the dialogue was also found to have a deconstruction in which he was identified to have three utterances in the feminine category, such as four times appearances in "asking for information", one time in each, "phatic utterances" and "expressive utterances".

Furthermore, the findings were also supported in the following excerpt that was quoted from same-sex dialogue (see Excerpt 2).

Excerpt 2

Beni : What is another name for Seattle?
Alex : It is called the Emerald City.
Beni : What can we do at the Bloedel Reserve?
Alex : We can visit seasonal gardens and natural woodlands.

(Chapter 2. Page 20)

The excerpt shows a conversation of two male characters named Beni and Alex. In Excerpt 2, Beni appears to have a masculine characteristic - 'direct' - throughout the conversation. However, this does not negate that he indirectly displays a typically feminine 'dependent' character when analyzed using the language feature. Since Beni was the one asking the question, subconsciously, it made him depend on Alex to give him the information he needed, which caused them to have one of the feminine traits – dependent. Thus, this finding shows the deconstruction of the masculine traits – independent attached to men. It shows that gender equality is starting to be seen and implemented. It is especially true when men, on the other hand, show a deconstruction that suggests men could also have feminine traits since the number of utterances made by men and women is the same. In this case, Beni seems to produce more 'Asking for information' utterances more than Alex which once again strengthen the gender deconstruction role reflected in the textbook.

Lastly, another excerpt that supports the gender deconstruction findings in

the textbook could be seen in Excerpt 3 below:

Excerpt 3

dr.Nahda : Hello...
 Fafa : Hello, doctor
 dr. Nahda : You look terrible. What can I do for you?
 Fafa : I can't go to school today.
 dr. Nahda : Oh, I am sorry to hear that. What's the problem?
 Fafa : My stomach hurts terribly. I think I have a fever as well.

(Chapter 1. Page 4)

Excerpt 3 describes a conversation between a patient named Fafa and a doctor named dr. Nahda. It was told that Fafa was having an issue with his stomach and would see dr. Nahda. In the excerpt, it can be seen that dr. Nahda greets his patient first by saying "Hello..." which is then responded to the patient. Greeting and showing gratitude are part of phatic utterances (Halomoan, 2022; Situmorang, 2017). Its primary function is none other than maintaining social relationships with others. In this case, both male characters have shown an effort to maintain social relationships by greeting one another that makes them show their expressive side and break the roles of men to always be straight to the point without even bother to produce pathic utterances.

Besides language function, this study also identified gender bias based on the number of words and turn-taking. Word count is the number of words produced by speakers in a conversation. Meanwhile, turn-taking is speaking turn(s) taken by the participant in a conversation or a discussion. Referring to language and gender, the representation of speakers both in word count and turn-taking indirectly implied the speakers' role and representation in conversation. The total number of words and turn-taking can be seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Number of Words and Turns in Single-sex and Mixed-sex Dialogues Appearances in the Textbook

Data	M-M	F-F	M-F
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			M	F
No. of dialogues	7	6	1	
No. of speakers	14	12	1	1
No. of turns	33	35	5	5
No. of words	333	265	45	87

In Table 2, it can be seen the number of appearances of the identifiable gendered dialogue. Based on the findings, the dialogues only existed in three chapters throughout the textbook. There are four female-only dialogues and two male-only dialogues in Chapter 1 that can be found on pages 5, 6, 9, and 10 for female-only dialogues and pages 4 and 8 for male-only dialogues. For Chapter 2, there are two female-only dialogues which can be found on page 25, male-only dialogues which can be found on pages 20 and 24, and two dialogues on page 25.

However, in chapter three, only one male-only dialogue can be found on page 40. Based on Table 2, both females' dialogues showed the same dominance in the number of turns and words uttered compared to the males' in single-sex dialogues. In this case, the female characters were seen to have 35 turns and 333 words produced, whereas the male characters show a total of 33 turns and 265 words count throughout the textbook.

Based on the general appearances, it is fair to state that the two genders almost have similar appearances in all of the parameter categories, even though one of the genders does not show any utterances in a few categories. It implicitly shows that both genders are equally represented in the same language function categories. It should be noted that this study focused on the use of language functions assigned to the two genders. Therefore, the number of occurrences of the categories of dialogue between the two genders is considered one of the textbook's main points of deconstruction or confirmation factor of bias.

Discussion

The present study found an attempt to deconstruct the stereotypes that appeared in the dialogues in the textbook. As shown in Table 1, the deconstruction occurs in the presence of masculine traits in females' expressions, such as giving information and dominating tendency, while the

categories for feminine traits in males' expressions are asking for information and the use of phatic and expressive utterances. Intriguingly, female-only and male-only conversations had the same number of occurrences in one of the three feminine identical trait categories, "asking for information" utterances. There are six occurrences of females and males utilizing the utterances in the single-sex dialogue throughout the textbook and twelve occurrences of both genders using the utterances in the category of masculine "giving information" utterances. Each domination is explained as follows.

The Domination of Masculine Traits in Females' Expressions

a. Giving Information by Women

Giving information shows one's intelligence in certain knowledge. In this case, intelligence becomes one of the masculine traits often associated with males (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Mihira, 2022; Millett, 2000; Paudel & Khadka, 2019; Puspitasari et al., 2021). Meanwhile, directive adds to the masculine traits because being directive means instructing someone to do something (Eshreteh & Badran, 2020; G. (1981). S. T. S. of M. I. A. C. I. to L. P. B. Leech, 1981; Oktapiani et al., 2017) It represents an activity showing power traits often identified as masculine qualities. Therefore, the depiction of female characters in the directive category shows a deconstruction effort of women as passive and dependent on being active and independent, as seen in Excerpt 1.

Based on the excerpt, it can be seen that Tania is confidently answering all of the questions asked by the customer. It seems that she knows exactly the answer to the needed information, which implicitly depicts her as someone who masters the topic of the conversation through the knowledge she has about the topic. Furthermore, Tania showed that she also mastered questions that were not only related to the *Arjosari* bus station but also to the *Lebak Bulus* terminal in Jakarta. It shows that she is serious and a master of the topic because she can answer her customers' questions in detail, indirectly indicating the masculine traits reflected in her.

On the other hand, the male character in the dialogue was also found to be producing female related language function categories such as "asking for

information", "phatic utterances" and "expressive utterances". These three categories connotatively are closely related to feminine traits such as passive, dependent, and emotional, which are constructed to be attributed to women rather than men. It is because asking for information shows that the speaker requires the interlocutor to give them the information needed, showing that they are dependent on their answer, which indicates a passive trait (Blangsinga et al., 2021; Cépeda et al., 2021; Emilia et al., 2017; Leech, 1981; Mihira, 2022). It implicitly suggests that they are emotional. Depicting males' dominant utterances in these categories shows the deconstruction of the traditional stereotyping of females and males in society: female–feminine and male–masculine. It means the effort to shift the stiff paradigm on such stereotypes is slightly changing.

b. Women's domination in conversation

According to Coates (2013) and Tannen (1990), stereotypically, men are represented as those who tend to take control of a conversation. They take more turns than their interlocutor(s) when the member of the two genders converse in the same conversation (Benlaghrissi, 2022; Coates, 2013; Tannen, 1990). In other words, women were popularly represented as those who were talkative. As mentioned by Tannen in her book, women still talk too much even though men talk and take more space in conversation than women. It is inseparable from the binary opposition associated with both genders, which places women as inferior and men as superior. It indirectly affects the role of women in society in which the thoughts, opinions, and talk expressed and initiated by women are underestimated or unimportant compared to the conversations spoken by men.

The present study revealed that even though the number of words produced by each gender seemed to confirm the traditional traits of the two genders, a different view of gender representation was seen from the turn-taking they produced. Based on Table 2, the total number of turns in mixed-sex dialogues showed an even number of turns. However, in single-sex dialogue, the turns produced by the female characters dominated the male characters,

with 35 turns produced by female characters and 33 by males. According to the conventional stereotype, the dominance in turn-taking is directly tied to the dominant traits held by men. Thus, the depiction of female characters with more turns than male characters in the textbook deconstructs the traditional notion of women as passive and subordinate (Blangsinga, 2022; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Emilia et al., 2017; Mihira et al., 2021; Wiraningsih, 2021). It is because a prevalent number of turns might indicate a dominant position and an active role in the argument.

The differences in representation that arise from the two aspects of the word count and turns indicate inconsistency in the representation of the two genders when viewed from the word count and turns. Two reasons are behind this phenomenon. Firstly, the female characters were described in their traditional traits, such as being talkative and expressive, but also being associated with masculine traits, such as being active and dominant. Meanwhile, the male characters were depicted as direct and straight to the point whilst showing feminine-associated traits – passive at the same time. These representations invite ambiguity since, on the other hand, it does deconstruct women's negative image on one side yet imply the typical stereotypical traits of women on the other and vice versa.

Unfortunately, this representation invites ambiguity since the dominance could simultaneously be interpreted as a positive and negative construction. It is positive because it shows a deconstruction of females' conventional representation who are depicted as passive and dependent (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Blangsinga, 2022; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Emilia et al., 2017; Wiraningsih, 2021) to be active and independent. The dominance also indirectly shows that Tania controls the conversation by providing the information needed, meaning that she has mastered the topic of the conversation. On the other hand, it could be negative because it confirms the stereotype that women talk more and are more expressive than men (Haider & Al-Abbas, 2022; Paudel & Khadka, 2019; Wiraningsih, 2021).

Though it invited ambiguity, the effort to deconstruct the traditional traits of each gender needs to be appreciated. It is because it certainly has a positive

impact on the development of women's representation which shows positive changes to their traditional representation as passive and expressive (Blangsinga, 2022; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Emilia et al., 2017; Mihira et al., 2021; Wiraningsih, 2021). These appearances demonstrated that female figures were indirectly assigned roles to take control over males when conversing, which was often given to males (Zimmerman, Don H. & West, 1975). Likewise, with men, the depiction of male figures with the dominance of feminine traits in the dialogue shows a new perspective that they could also be seen as subservient instead of always dominant (Dabbagh, 2016; Julianti et al., 2019; Suhartono & Kristina, 2018).

The Domination of Feminine Traits in Male Expressions

a. Asking for Information by Men

When someone asks for information, they want to know something about the question they asked. It shows indirectly that the person asking is dependent on the person being asked, which is a trait that is often linked to women (Lee & Collins, 2014; Paudel & Khadka, 2019; Wiraningsih, 2021). As with the first category of the language function table, the single-sex dialogues showed that both men and women were represented equally in the textbook. It means that both men and women were depicted to be dependent. Unlike women who were conventionally always depicted as dependent (Ahmad & Shah, 2019; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Damayanti, 2014; Millett, 2000; Suwastini, 2013), this time, the feminine trait is starting to be seen in male character as shown in Excerpt 2.

In addition, comparable results may also be gleaned from the total number of occurrences of both sexes in the masculine category of – "giving information" utterances. To give information is to provide others with the information they require. It demonstrates the speakers' independence, as they are not dependent on others. The categorization implies that they are turning into an information center. Thus, in their appearances in the second category of Table 2, males are still portrayed stereotypically as independent (Ariyanto, 2018; Blangsinga et al., 2021; Damayanti, 2014a; Emilia et al., 2017; Julianti et al., 2019; Paudel & Khadka, 2019).

b. The domination of phatic and expressive utterances used by men

Other domination spotted from the findings is the deconstruction efforts that are present in the textbook based on the phatic and expressive utterances used by men. Implicitly, it exemplifies the good endeavor to deconstruct the traditional gender stereotype. Maintaining social relationships and expressing feelings is closely related to women conversing (Coates, 2013; Lakoff, 1973; Tannen, 1990), especially in single-sex dialogue. In this case, men were found to use the utterances eight times for males and seven times in total for female characters (see Excerpt 3)

Based on the excerpt, it could also be seen how the male characters utilize phatic utterances in their conversation. As known commonly, phatic utterances are used to maintain social relationships with others. In this case, both male characters have shown an effort to maintain social relationships by greeting one another. It is not a coincidence because, at the end of the conversation, the two male characters also say goodbye to each other. In this case, the male characters also show their expressive side, through the used of expressive utterances such as "*You look terrible*" and "*Oh, I am sorry to hear that*", and "*Get well soon*". It demonstrates a positive sign since there has been a deconstruction in conventional male conversations, previously synonymous with direct, rational, straight-to-the-point talk to expressive and considerate.

The domination of male characters in producing identical feminine traits certainly supports the deconstruction of genders. It is because Women's language is known to be used to maintain social interaction (Coates, 2013; Lakoff, 1973; Pilkington, 1998). Therefore, its use is dominantly attached to women. However, in this case, male figures seemed to be depicted as dominating the role of maintaining social interaction in the conversation since it was found that there were nine times of phatic utterances produced by males and eight times for expressive utterances. While on the opposite, female figures were only captured eight and five times for both feminine categories. It contrasts the image of men, who are often identified as rational and straightforward speakers. Hence, these findings show a sign of a paradigm shift

in which males are depicted as having feminine traits and vice versa.

Conclusion

Based on the comparison of female-only, male-only, and mixed-sex dialogue found in students' English textbooks for grade 12, it can be concluded that the textbook shows gender deconstruction representation. However, the deconstruction of the stereotypes such as women being talkative, indirect, expressive and friendly, while men are speaking more directive can be seen from the presence of feminine traits in male characters, such as asking for information and producing more phatic and expressive utterances than female characters. In contrast, female characters are depicted to be dominantly produced masculine traits such as being knowledgeable by giving information more than men do and dominating the conversations. It shows that females and males are no longer consistently depicted in their traditional stereotype construction, indicating a positive effort in deconstructing conventional gender concepts. Although, at some points, the characters are still associated with stereotyped gender traits, the efforts to deconstruct traditional images of both genders need to be appreciated even though they still seem ambivalent.

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