Designing IELTS Writing Material For Learners With Low Level Of English Proficiency Based On Needs Analysis

By Muhammad Saifuddin

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Abstract

Designing IELTS Writing for learners with low level of English Proficiency needs a good needs analysis. It was because the teaching material should meet learners' needs and consider their weaknesses. This reasearch was intended to design IELTS Writing teaching material for lecturers whose English proficiency was still low. Needs analysis was conducted to identify respondents' common errors and weaknesses. Respondents took writing test which consisted of two tasks; task 1 and task 2. From the data analysis, it was found that there were 10 most common errors in task 1 and 8 most common errors in task 2. Summarizing the most common errors in task 1 and task 2, they were considered based on the most respondents' errors and essay structure was the main common error respondents did. Furthermore, the design of IELTS Writing teaching material considered the findings as the basis of material design.

Keywords: Needs Analysis, English Proficiency, IELTS Writing

A. Introduction

Studying abroad is one of the things that Indonesian lecturers aspire to live up to their professional development, including those of University of Pesantren Tinggi Darul Ulum. To do so, they must have good English Proficiency reflected in their IELTS' scores. IELTS, which stands for International English Language Testing System, becomes international standardized test broadly acceptedby over 9.000 organizations in the world, including universities, companies, and professional organizations (Hopkins and Nettle, 2002). The IELTS test is conducted by certain international institutions, i.e. as British Council, IDP Education and IALF.

IELTS is available in two different versions; Academic Module and General Training Module. These two types of IELTS test vary based on their purposes. First, Academic module is taken by candidates who are willing to study abroad in universities

or higher educational institutions. They need IELTS as a requirement to be admitted at undergraduate or postgraduate programmes which use English as the language of instruction. Meanwhile, General Training Module is taken by the candidates who expect to study in Senior High Schools level or move to another country in which they must be able to speak English.

IELTS test examines test-taker's listening, reading, writing, and speaking skills. Among these four sessions, writing is considered as the most challenging part of the test. In order to succeed in the writing test, test takers require several abilities; they are grammar, spelling, punctuation, organization, planning, and more importantly proofreading (Hedge, 2001). Besides, they should able to produce coherent and cohesive writing, which require academic writing skills. These aspects become hindrance for the candidates, especially those who speak English as a foreign language, and whose exposure to English is of minimum amount. This may become the reason why most of them failed in IELTS writing section.

The IELTS writing section consists of Task 1 and Task 2. For task 1, test takers are asked to describe and interpret graphs, tables, charts, or diagrams. To have a good piece of writing, they need to have an ability to read and analyse figures by classifying or comparing presented data. In doing this task, test takers are given 20 minutes to complete their writing, which should comprise at least 150 words. Meanwhile, IELTS Writing Task 2 asks test takers to write an essay that present their ideas about certain topics. The candidates need to write about their opinions and support them with some facts, evidence, or examples which support the main discussion. Of course, Task 2 is much more challenging because they have to finish their 250 words essay in 40 minutes. The overall time allocated for IELTS writing sessions is 60 minutes.

Some of the lecturers join IELTS Preparation Programme held by Unipdu's Language Centre before taking an IELTS test. This program utilizes some common IELTS handbooks. For instance, writing materials were taken from IELTS preparation books, such 101 Helpful Hints for IELTS, The Official Cambridge Guide to IELTS Student's Book. IELTS Writing Section, etc. However, the use of the common books in this training program does not seem to meet participants' needs as they have different points of difficulties. Therefore, analysing their needs as a basis to design IELTS writing teaching material is of paramount importance. Learners' needs may represent their demand, motivation, want, expectation, and weakness they possess in a better way (Bagshaw,et.al., 1984). The needs analysis refers to the way or procedure to analyse and maintain some valuable information as the basic things and references to undertake curriculum development to meet individuals' learning needs (Richards, 2001: 51).

A study was conducted by Minh and Canh (2012) to design IELTS Academic Purpose teaching material for intensive an English Class. The teaching material was aimed to be used for undergraduate students who intended to continue their study to improve their both general English and Academic English. They conducted a needs analysis to design syllabus and English teaching material. This study was expected also to be able to prepare the students to follow lectures which used English as the introductory language in Hanoi or some other countries.

B. Literature Review
1. Need Analysis

A variety of English teaching and learning process will determine different language needs. It refers to learning needs that what is supposed to give to the students is that based on their learning needs. Bagshaw, et.al (1984) defines needs based on demand, motivation, interest, weakness, hope, dan the limitation of students' learning. In relation to English for specific purpose, students' needs involves the procedure used to gain more information of learning needs (Richards, 2001: 51). This information is attained as a basis for creating and developing curriculum to fulfill certain learning needs.

Furthermore, need analysis is intended to desain syllabus and material design which underpin students' learning needs in order to gain effective material delivery. As it is stated by Songhori (2008) that needs analysis take an important part in the process of design and undertake language teaching either based on learning English purposively or general purpose. Richards (2001: 52) describes some benefits of needs analysis:

a. To know what kind of skill that students need to play their roles, example; university students, teachers, officers, nurses, etc.
b. To determine learning materials used which are suitable for students' needs
c. To determine certain students which mostly need language skill in learning group
d. To determine whether it is necessary to change learning direction or not
e. To evaluate what students can do and what they can't do
f. To gain information on certain problems experienced by students in learning language

2. Designing Need Analysis

To be able to maintain proper result of analysis, need analysis should be conducted properly and systematically so that the results really represent students' learning needs. Richards (2001: 63) states that to design need analysis needs relevant procedure. It aims at seeking valid data of the needs which represent learning needs comprehensively. This need analysis should include collecting, organizing, analyzing, and reporting the collected information.

However, to conduct needs analysis, a reseracher should ensure that the information needed is suitable to what is sought. There must be clear reasons and purpose why it is needed to collect information based on need analysis. In this case, to analyze students' needs in IELTS Writing, there are some procedures to do:

a. Revewing related literature
b. Analyzing questionnaire in large numbers
c. Communicating to previous reseracher who conducted the same survey
d. Interviewing teachers to determine the purpose
e. Identifying students' learning background
f. Presenting the proposal
g. Developing trial- questionnaire
h. Validating it to peer review
i. Trying out the questionnaire
j. Selecting the rearch subjects; staffs and students

k. Arranging schedule to get the data
l. Distributing questionnaire
m. Interviewing some selected subjects
n. Analyzing the data
o. Reporting the result

3. Organizing Collected Information

Based the result of need analysis, there are some information derived from some different sources gathered into different list. It means that those different sources should be classified and arrange them in a list though it come from different classified sources, for example; the result of the analysis can be based on certain situation in which learners are custom to their daily English usage, a situation which describe the students' weaknesses and difficulties, result based on students' responses and feedbacks, and different type of learning activities which are usually done.

Besides, the result based on the information organization can be various according to students' learning difficulties, interesting activities, errors-made frequency, general problem when interacting with others, advices and argumentations for learners' aspects of difficulties, different linguistic features used in different text and context.

4. IELTS Test

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System. Jakeman and McDowell (2009) argue that IELTS refers to international test which covers testing English language proficiency held by the University of Cambridge, British Council, and IDP (International development Program) Australia. This IELTS test includes two different tests, called; Academic Module and General Training Module. Academic Module defines as a test used as prerequisite for learners candidate who are going to study at universities or educational institutions.

These universities or educational institution requires their learners to use English for their daily language used. Meanwhile, General Training Module is addressed to learner candidate who are willing to continue their study at high schools or willing to migrate to another country which requires their citizen to be able to use English.

a) Listening Section

Listening is a part of IELTS test which is done at the beginning of the test. This listening test aims at testing test takers' comprehension of listening in the form of conversation contextually, academically, formally and informally. This listening session is divided into 4 sections, they are; section 1, section 2, section 3, and section 4. Every section in IELTS listening test consists of 10 questions. Besides, listening test takes 40 minutes. Section 1 consists of two-ways conversation in social context or semi-formal context. In section 2, test takers listens to a talk by a speaker in non-academic situation. While, section 3 consists of 3 to 4 speakers talking about academical topics. In section 4, test takers listen to a monologue or a lecture by a lecturer in a university.

b) Reading Section

This section of reading test measures test takers' reading of 1500 to 2000 words of the pessage in a limited time to gain information. There 40 questions in this part and

test takers are given time within 60 minutes. The reading passages and questions presented are provided based on the level of difficulties. Thus, test takers will have more chances to accomplish the reading test.

c) Writing Section

Writing test measures test takers' writing ability to write two different forms of writing in a certain time. This test is divided into two categories; task 1 and task 2. Task 1 requires test takers to write a report based on graphs or tables presented. Test takers should describe the information stated in graphs or tables within at least 150 words while the time given is 20 minutes.

In task 2, test takers are requires to write their argumentation toward a topic. Test takers' writing composition should be well-arranged clearly and academically based on writing components. Moreover, test takers are expected to support their argumrntation with some exammples. It is because writing in task 2 should be longer than writing in task 1. The time given in task 2 is 40 minutes

d) Speaking Section

Speaking test here refers to one-to-one interview in which test takers will have conversation with native speakers. This speaking test is broken down into 3 sessions which give chance to test takers to show their English skills. In case, this IELTS speaking test is addressed to measure test takers' language ability to use English well under certain topics. Time given to them will be 11 to 14 minutes. In part 1, test takers are given opportunity to talk about some common topics, like; introduction and short interview. Part 2 challenges test takers to speak in in longer time than before. They can speand 1 to 2 minutes to a chosen topic by the interviewer. While in part 3, it is two-ways discussion in which the questions are more implicit related to that topic in part 2. It is expected for test takers that they are actively involved in the discussion with the interviewer.

C. Research Methodology

This research focused on identifying participants' weaknesses and learning needs, some procedures of needs analysis were conducted. The results of this need analysis were the basis to go through the design based research. This design based reserach provided the research with systematic stages of designing certain area. As it is defined by Reeves (2006) that the use of design based reserach method covers four sequential stages, they are; analysis of practical problems, development of solution based on existing knowledge, evaluation reserach of the solution in practice, and reflection on the produces design principles.

The collected data through needs analysis were analyzed and interpreted to see the gap of the level difficulties that determined the suggested solution of the problems. Listing and displaying them in a table of frequency presented the description of basis of the material design.

1. Participants / Population and Sample

The respondents of this research were Unipdu lecturers and students whose TOEFL paper-based scores were between 400-450. This was gained from Unipdu

Language Center which conducted English Proficiency Test previously. There were 20 respondents involved in this research.

2. Instruments

To obtain data, there were questionnaire and writing test as the instruments of the research. The questionnaire was administered to the subjects to gain insight into candidates' prior knowledge and to make clear what their needs and expectations are. Further, they were asked to do writing test. This writing test consisted of two parts, writing task 1 and task 2. In task 1, the candidates were required to write at least 150 words about information presented in a line graph. In task 2, they were asked to write a 250-wordessay on a certain topic.

3. Data Analysis

The IELTS's writing teaching syllabus and teaching material were constructed based on the identification of candidates' common errors or weaknesses. To reveal learners' common errors and weakness, data were taken from the results of the subjects' task 1 and task 2 writing. After the candidates had accomplished the test, several procedures were conducted as follows;
a. Tabulating and classifying data based on the questions
b. Checking the respondents' writing result
c. Classifying errors based on their types of error, for example; errors in subject and verb agreement, plural, or topic sentence.
d. Counting and rating each type of error based on common errors they made to find out respondents' common errors and weaknesses.

D. Findings
a. Task 1

After analyzing 20 answer sheets in writing task 1, it was found that there were 16 writing aspects which became respondents' weaknesses. Referring to this 16 writing aspects, there were 10 aspects as the main problems for the respondents, their common errors; essay structure, run-on sentence, conjunction, determiner, preposition, agreement, tense, countable/ uncountable, overlapping, and missing verb.

Essay structure

The first aspect that respondents found difficult in writing task 1 was how to organisetheir writing. Out of 20 respondents, 100% of them made mistakes in organising their essay structure. It can be seen that they were not able to illustrate trends, summarize important features, and write conclusion. Obviously, to write IELTS task 1, respondents should state general statement which described trends, which contain the details of the presented line graph. They should be able to illustrate whether the *trend* tended to rise or fall. None of the respondent who could include the core aspects of IELTS Writing Task 1: introduction, general statement, description, and conclusion.

In addition, it was found that most of the respondents wrote much less than 150 words, which resulted in the attainment of low scores. The following is a sample of a respondents' writing result:

"The line graph describes that the number of books read by men and women at Burnaby Public Library from 2011 to 2014. It's about 3 years period. The number of books read by men were increased significant than read by women.
From the first year, at 2011 the number of books read by men about 2000 but 4000 read by women."

The writing sample above implies that the respondent had low understanding and mastery of writing task 1. The respondent only wrote 61 words out of the required 150 words. It also showed that the respondent had no capability of how to write *general trends* and graph's details as it seemed that the writing result only consisted of an opening and short description.

Run-On Sentence

The second writing aspect that the participants found difficult was how to write sentences in grammatically accepted English. In English language sentence structure, independent clause refers to some words containing subject, verb, and other components and it builds meaningful sentence. If there were two or more independent clauses which are not linked properly, then the sentences is run-on. Based on the findings, there were 7 respondents or 35% of them made run-on-sentence, the example is as follow;

a. "Books read by male readers are uplifting years by years from 2011 to 2014 it's uplifting 1400 books."
b. "The number of books read by woman always increased and in year 2013 the number of boks read by men and women were same there were 9000 readers."

Conjunction

Another problem the respondents had was conjunction. It should link between sentences, expressions, or words. As its function is a linking words, some of conjunctions are not properly used in the beginning of the sentence, such as and, but, , and so. However, there were some errors made by the respondents.

a. "So, it can be concluded that there were increasing on the chart but it was not significant."
b. "But, from 2013 to 2014, it was decreased.
c. "But after it, the number of books Read by woman was dropping and the number of books Read by men were climbing."

From those sentences above, it showed that the respondents also had problem in conjunction. There were 6 respondents or 30% who made errors dealing conjunction. The following is the correct form;

a. "Therefore, it can be concluded that there was an increase, but it was not significant."
b. "However, from 2013 to 2014, it decreased."
c. "Nevertheless, consequently, the number of books read by woman dropped, and the number of books read by men climbed."

Determiner

Determiner was also the problem which respondents had to have. Determiner, in English, refers to some certain words can be put in front of nouns to shows general word meaning or specific one. There are two kinds of determiner; general determiner and specific determiner. General determiner defines general nouns readers cannot identify which it meant, while specific determiner refers to specific referred object. Among 20 respondents, there were 5 respondents made errors in using determiner. The example of their errors were as follow:

a. "It shows that the interest of woman to read the book is not good as their passion in 2013."
b. The number of books read by the men in 2011 starts at 3.000.
c. Even though there were the increase up to 10.000 but after that there were...."

Based on these sentences, it can be seen their errors. The respondents were unable to differentiate whether they should use general or specific determiner. The following sentences are the appropriate sentences;

a. "It shows that the interest of woman to read books is not good as their passion in 2013."
b. The number of books read by men in 2011 starts at 3.000.
c. Even though there were an increase up to 10.000 but after that there were...."

In sentences (a), the word "books" showed unspecific book that it was not preceded by determiner "the" because "books" showed general meaning. The word "men" should be used, which it was because the word "men" referred to general meaning and not specific meaning. In sentence (c), the word 'increase' should be added with determiner "an" that it showed general meaning.

Preposition

Preposition is part of speech which shows the correlation of nouns, it links between nouns in a sentence. 20 respondents did some errors in using preposition. For example:

a. "on 2011 the number books read"
b. "But on 2012, ..."
c. "books read of men...."

The error in sentence (a) was inappropriate use of determiner "on". To mention years, the preposition used should be "in". The same thing happened in sentence (b). Meanwhile, sentence (c) should use preposition "by" rather than "of".

Tense, Countable/Uncountable, Overlapping, and Missing verb.

Besides, the respondents also had some weaknesses in tense, countable/uncountable, overlapping, and missing verb. Although it was not significant enough, there were 4 respondents did it. The overall identification of the respondents' common errors and weaknesses is drawn below:
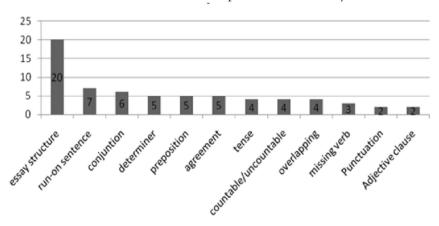
Chart 1. The Number of Participants and Errors They Made

b. Task 2

The results of writing task 2 showed that there was found 17 writing aspects, but it was identified that there were 8 students' common errors, they are essay structure, conjunction, word form, agreement, run-on, fragment, agreement, and determiner. However, as some aspects were the same problems as in task 1, the following discusses essay structure, conjunction, and fragment.

Essay Structure

Essay in IELTS Writing Task 2 has the same structure like others. There are opening paragraph, content, and conclusion. Introductory paragraph should be brief, and state the topic as well as using some general facts. In addition, respondents should write about what they were going to write. Almost all respondents experienced this problem in writing the opening paragraph. Consider the following example:

> *"Smartphone, as the innovation in our digital world nowadays, is becoming an essential device. Most people has it, including children. It's good for them to have smart phone for their safety. It means that parents can contact their children and know their children's position because of GPS at their smart phone. The other hand, some parents suppose that smart phone causes the negative effects for children, for example healthy reason, the applications, the features etc."*

The results of respondents' writing essay above showed that they did not understand how to write the opening paragraph. In this paragraph, there was still found few sentences that are not important and not cohesive with the other sentences in a paragraph, for example, *"Most people has it, including children."*. Based on this paragraph, it was found some general facts that should be the basis of the essay writing. In addition, the respondents did not write about what he would write in the next paragraph.

Besides the respondents' weaknesses in writing the opening paragraph, they were also experiencing problems in writing the passage. This paragraph's contents consisted of two or three paragraphs, no more and no less. However, many respondents wrote one paragraph of the content. Of course, this made the essay lack of

contents. Each paragraph of content must have one main idea followed by supporting sentences that may include relevant examples. Here is an example of respondents' writing:

"To begin with, smartphone have many benefits for children, especially for their safety. Sometimes, children go out with their friends without parents permission. By having smartphone, parents can control their children where they are playing or going by calling their children or use the GPS to check where their children go."

"In spite of the fact that smartphone have not all give positive effect. Some parents use smartphone as a media for children to play the games. It can be a bad thing because children will be addicted to play the games on their smartphone. And it also make children less of socialization with their friends. Besides that, children also have many changes to use their smartphone to browse negative content on the internet. Because many sites that show the negative advertisement, and children can be free to click the advertisement then go to the sites that have been clicked."

The content of the first paragraph indicated that the supporting sentences used were relevant to the topic sentence. The topic sentence showed the importance of smartphones children's safety. However, the next sentence indicated what children often did, going without permission. In the next paragraph, the author gavetoo many supporting details, such as the use of smartphones to play games, the effect of smartphone which could reduce the social life interaction, and inappropriate usage to browse unexpected content. However, the author did not specify why and how it all happened. For example, how a smartphone can make children experience problems in social life interaction.

Conjunction

Conjunction used in this task varied than those which were in task 1 because it covered coordinative and subordinative conjunctions. Coordinative conjunction refers to linking words connecting two or more clauses in a paragraph that have equal function. While subordinative conjunctions are used to link two clauses which are not equal; independent clause and dependent clause.

There were 9 respondents had this kind of problem. It might be because subordinative conjunction, in English, are not always followed by cluase but phrase. It might be seen from one of respondents' writing; *"Beside a lot of advantages, some people trust that it is able to causes many problems for children."*. The conjunction "beside" should be changed to "despite" because it must be followed by phrase.

Fragment

Resppondents' common errors in essay writing was incomplete sentences, called fragment. It is incomplete sentences but it seems to be completed. The followings are the examples:

a. "Moreover violence action which could to be practice by ur children."
b. "In spite of the fact that smartphone have a not all give positive effect."
c. "In addition, even though many parents can control the use of using mobile phone of their children."

These three sentences seem understandable. However, they were not good sentences, they were fragment. Those sentences were all dependent clauses which needed independent clause in order to have complete meaning of the sentences.

c. Questionnaire

Having done task 1 and task 2, respondents were asked to answer questionnaire. This questionnaire related to IELTS' writing session. It was proven that there were 2 respondents or (10%) of 20 respondents who had followed IELTS test and the rest of them (90%) had not followed yet. Besides, there were 55% of 18 respondents had the main problem, that was writing. It was truely identified that although 85% of the respondents had not taken IELTS test yet, they had problem in writing. They felt difficult in writing components. This might cover grammatical and vocabulary aspect.

Additionally, among introducing graph, giving overview, and giving detail, *give detail* took the main problem. It was also stated that mentioning relevant and contrast, and describing general trends were their weaknesses. On the other hand, 56% of the respondents could write between 150-200 words and they must finish it in 40-60 minutes. Also, less than 50% of the respondents understood *thesis statement* that it might impact on lacking coherence.

E. Discussion

The IELTS Writing test is aimed to measure a wide range of writing skills, including how well test takers write ananswer appropriately to a question, organise ideas, use a range of vocabulary and grammar accurately. In IELTS Writing Task 1, test takers should be able to mention all the major features of the statistics or charts. They also need to describe the statistics accurately and concisely. Another problem is that the respondents found difficult paraphrasing. Most of the respondents simply re-wrote the information in the question without paraphrasing properly. In fact, paraphrasing in IELTS Writing is of paramount importance. Paraphrasing skill shows test takers mastery of English. That is to say that they should avoid repeating the same words and phrases and try to vary the sentence structures they use.

Considering IELTS's writing completion, it needs good writing ability. Individuals should understand writing components as well as essay aspects. Furthermore, based on the findings of the research, most of the respondents got some difficulties in writing. In writing task 1, there were 16 errors of writing aspects and 17 errors in task 2. It showed that respondents were lack of writing abilities, especially essay writing.

As this research purpose was to design IELTS' writing teaching material, analysis of the findings was done descriptively. Needs analysis was conducted to seek respondents' most common weaknesses. IELTS writing test was divided into two tasks, task 1 and task 2. In fact, respondents showed different main problems. In task 1, their common problems were essay structure, run-on sentence, conjunction, determiner, preposition, agreement, tense, countable/ uncountable, overlapping, and missing verb. While, in task 2, they got most common problems in common errors, they are essay structure, conjunction, word form, agreement, run-on, fragment, agreement, and determiner.

These most common errors or weaknesses were gained from respondents' writing test in which the identification of needs analysis was based on the most dominant errors they made. For both task 1 and task 2, essay structure became the most common problems although there were some others. Based on the analysis, respondents still could not produce and write good essay. To be able to write good essay, it must have sufficient parts of its body; such as thesis statement, topic sentence, supporting detail, conclusion. This may be categorized as academic writing.

The design of IELTS writing teaching material was due to the main problems found. Then, this design of teaching material covered some activities highlighting learners to deepen and understand the writing material. Syllabus was also provided to give general aspects covered in teaching material design.

Implications for Suggested Training Syllabus
The suggested syllabus for an 18-hours IELTS Writing training is as follows:

Task I
Meeting 1: IELTS Writing Task 1 structure
Meeting 2: The Run-On Sentence
Meeting 3: Articles
Meeting 4: Subject - Verb Agreement
Meeting 5: IELTS Writing Task 1 Vocabulary

Task II
Meeting 6: IELTS Writing Task 2 Essay Structure
Meeting 7: Essay Structure: How to write body and conclusion
Meeting 8: Signpost words to order information

F. Conclusion
During this research, analysis was conducted to IELTS writing test and questionnaire from 20 respondents. The IELTS writing task analysis involved writing task 1 which should be at least 150 words and 250 words for task 2. Based on its analysis, it was found that the respondents' main difficulties in writing 1 were as follows:

1. Essay structure
2. Run-on sentence
3. Conjunction
4. Determiner
5. Preposition

6. Agreement
7. Tense
8. Countable / Uncountable
9. Overlapping
10. Missing verb

Meanwhile, writing task 2 asking candidated to convey opinion and argumentation identified the following problems:

1. Essay structure
2. Conjunction
3. Word form
4. Agreement

5. Run-on
6. Fragment
7. Agreement
8. Determiner

After analyzing the results of respondents' writing task 1, respondents faced difficulties in answering the provided questions. However, individuals should pay more

attention on essay structure when having task 1. In fact, respondents didn't show that they all knew and understood about it. On the other side, writing task 2 required respondents to produce at least 250 words which it also needed their ability in providing essay structure as well. They proved that they still lacked of writing organizations, for instance, thesis statement, relevant and contrast, conclusion. Besides, they had difficulties in developing the idea of the paragraph which became fundamental thing in IELTS writing task 2.

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