



Communicative Language Teaching to Enhance Speaking Skills in B1.1 Level

Enseñanza comunicativa del lenguaje para mejorar las habilidades del habla en el nivel B1.1

Ensino Comunicativo de Línguas para Melhorar as Habilidades de Fala no Nível B1.1

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Abstract

English is far one of the most spoken languages in the world. For this reason, developing the Speaking skill has become a vital way to communicate among people whose native language is not English. Most of the time, new language learners are afraid to express their thoughts by speaking because they are afraid to make intonation mistakes or mispronounce a word or phrase. The CLT is an approach that makes the learners use the language in real-life situations. It is focused on the interaction among students that produce speech or conversation for most of the classroom time using the target language. It enhances communication through different techniques. For this study, it was interesting to implement specific speaking techniques such as interviews, strip stories, and role-plays throughout a school year to boost students speaking troubles. This research aims to apply the Communicative Language Teaching approach to develop Speaking skills in 16 years old students from a public high school under remote learning. The results obtained were consistent. They show an increase in the speaking level in most students despite the remote learning time.

Keywords: English; Communicative; Language Teaching; Speaking Skill; Communicate.

Resumen

El inglés es, con diferencia, uno de los idiomas más hablados del mundo. Por esta razón, desarrollar la habilidad Speaking se ha convertido en una forma vital de comunicarse entre personas cuya lengua materna no es el inglés. La mayoría de las veces, los nuevos estudiantes de idiomas tienen miedo de expresar sus pensamientos hablando porque temen cometer errores de entonación o pronunciar mal una palabra o frase. El CLT es un enfoque que hace que los alumnos utilicen el idioma en situaciones de la vida real. Se enfoca en la interacción entre estudiantes que producen discursos o conversaciones durante la mayor parte del tiempo de clase usando el idioma de destino. Potencia la comunicación a través de diferentes técnicas. Para este estudio, fue interesante implementar técnicas de habla específicas como entrevistas, tiras cómicas y dramatizaciones a lo largo de un año escolar para aumentar las dificultades para hablar de los estudiantes. Esta investigación tiene como objetivo aplicar el enfoque de Enseñanza Comunicativa del Lenguaje para desarrollar habilidades de Habla en estudiantes de 16 años de una escuela secundaria pública bajo aprendizaje remoto. Los resultados obtenidos fueron consistentes. Muestran un aumento en el nivel de habla en la mayoría de los estudiantes a pesar del tiempo de aprendizaje remoto.

Palabras clave: inglés; Comunicativo; Enseñanza de idiomas; habilidad para hablar; Comunicar.

Resumo

O inglês é de longe uma das línguas mais faladas no mundo. Por esta razão, desenvolver a habilidade de falar tornou-se uma forma vital de comunicação entre pessoas cuja língua nativa não é o inglês. Na maioria das vezes, os novos aprendizes de idiomas têm medo de expressar seus pensamentos falando porque têm medo de cometer erros de entonação ou pronunciar incorretamente uma palavra ou frase. O CLT é uma abordagem que faz com que os alunos usem a língua em situações da vida real. É focado na interação entre os alunos que produzem fala ou conversação durante a maior parte do tempo de sala de aula usando a língua-alvo. Melhora a comunicação através de diferentes técnicas. Para este estudo, foi interessante implementar técnicas de fala específicas, como entrevistas, histórias de strip e dramatizações ao longo de um ano letivo para aumentar os problemas de fala dos alunos. Esta pesquisa tem como objetivo aplicar a abordagem do Ensino Comunicativo de Línguas para desenvolver habilidades de fala em alunos de 16 anos de uma escola pública de ensino médio em regime de ensino à distância. Os resultados obtidos foram consistentes. Eles mostram um aumento no nível de fala na maioria dos alunos, apesar do tempo de aprendizado remoto.

Palavras-chave: Inglês; Comunicativo; Ensino de línguas; Habilidade de Fala; Comunicar.

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a communicative method that aims is to enhance students to develop speaking skills through a sort of activity. (Brown, 2007) proposed four interconnected characteristics to define CLT, which included classroom goals, engaged language techniques for meaningful purposes; fluency and accuracy as communicative techniques", and use of language in a productive and receptively style. CLT became a well-known approach because it is interested in the communicative competence; furthermore, it is more important to process the communication rather than mastery the learner's language during the process. Teachers' role is the central pillar in the education process. Teachers facilitate the genuine communication; also, they became a participant during the process and a kind of counselor to the learners

CLT's main goal is to make students to communicate in a fluent way. (Harmer, 1982) mentioned that "CLT now functions as a generalized "umbrella" term to describe learning sequences which aim to improve the students' ability to communicate' in contrast to 'teaching which is aimed more at learning bits of language just because they exist – without focusing on their use in communication". Considering that CLT was proclaimed as one of the best methods from the past, nowadays it gives the opportunity to learners to get a meaningful communicative experience.

Communicative Activities

As we can notice, everything is based on communication. "Students can learn to communicate in many different ways and as a result of many different techniques." (Harmer, 1982). Since early years, CLT teachers have looked for a way to develop classroom activities according to the CLT methodology. (McCarthy & Carter, 2006) proposed some activities based on fluency and accuracy:

Fluency

Speakers have the ability to speak with few grammar mistakes and be able to express ideas without hesitation.

These activities are focused on fluency:

- Reflect natural use of language
- Focus on achieving communication
- Require meaningful use of language
- Require the use of communication strategies
- Produce language that may not be predictable
- Seek to link language use to context

Accuracy

It is a bit different from fluency since it requires an advanced level of the language. It includes no grammar mistakes in speaking or writing and correct pronunciation.

The principal activities focused on accuracy are:

- Reflect classroom use of language
- Focus on the formation of correct examples of language
- Practice language out of context
- Practice small samples of language
- Do not require meaningful communication

Communicative Language Teaching Techniques

This approach provides teachers with a great variety of techniques to develop English-speaking skills through communicative student-student activities by constantly exposing students to the target language. Thus, they interact in formal and informal tasks such as games, role-plays, and problem-solving activities. As (Thomson, 1996) cited, CLT was designed for meaningful communication: in and out classroom situations; as a result, thanks to the authenticity of the applied activities to real-life situations.

This research intends to deepen and apply the most relevant techniques to make student become fluent and acquire the language by using: interviews, strip stories and role-plays. Reason why in this research, some techniques were applied through the content during one school year. Students received different input activities in order to develop their English speaking skills. In this way, in order to conduct the interview among them, they were exposed to vocabulary of every common activity in their daily lives, such as hobbies or activities that cause them stress in their daily lives. On the other hand, for the strip stories technique, they were immersed in the grammatical forms and appropriate vocabulary so that when they spoke, be fluent and meaningful. Finally, the most relaxed part for students is to write their own dialogues and perform them in a role-play. It should be noted that in all these techniques, a lot of emphasis is placed on fluency, intonation, and correct pronunciation. It is important to mention that the teacher becomes an academic guide

Interviews

This technique provides the opportunity to develop and improve the speaking skill, not only inside the classroom but also outside it and it is considered an effective technique to achieve the main goal: to develop English-speaking skills. “The interview technique” is appropriate involved both in pair and group (Brown, 2001). The primary purpose of the interview is to maintain a dialogue on a topic of common interest for students. For this reason, it becomes a great opportunity to socialize student’s thoughts in real life situations by using vocabulary and grammar structures without any doubt. It is essential to mention that peers do this oral activity; students are asked to talk to each other to get information about a specific topic. As (Johnson, 1975)cited, the teacher must facilitate the learning condition. The teacher guides and helps the students answer when applying the technique with any doubt.

Strip stories

This technique helps to develop the Speaking skill through describing pictures using realia; moreover, it relies heavily on visual aids to convey ideas. Learners can tell stories using photographs. It is mandatory to activate the previous vocabulary and prepare them for the new vocabulary and grammar structures. Learners join in a collaborative work activity, then the teacher gives them the strips, and learners read and try to understand it. After that, learners retell the story in their own words. This activity is essential to foster the learner's creativity and imagination likewise their speaking skill. When using the Picture Strip Stories for CLT, (Richards J. C., 2006, p. 20) recommends to the teacher plans and delivers an oral presentation in a manner that allows much participation from the students and helps direct them towards the desired learning outcomes. (Freemans, 2000, p. 129) proposes that many teaching-learning activities can be done with picture strip stories; one of them is by giving a small group a strip story. A student in the group will then show the first picture of the story to the other members of her group and ask them to predict what the second picture is like. Another example of implementing the picture strip techniques is breaking down a story sentence by sentence and putting each sentence on a separate strip of paper. These sentences are then randomly distributed to each student. The students' task then is to orally communicate the contents of their strips to the others in the class and to orally re-assemble the story by putting the sentences of the story into a logical sequence.

Role Plays

Students – student interaction is essential to develop this technique. It allows students to apply cooperative learning. This technique became a great idea to engage students to participate without pressure. Students can work in pairs, small or big groups, by simulating real situations, TV programs, airport and restaurant scenes, etc. Learners will be able to use expressions or phrases to develop their Speaking Skill. Notably, “role-play not only provides a variation in teaching technique but also allows a more student-centered approach to learning.” (Howell, 1992). As (Felder, R.M y Enriquez, E.R, 1995) mentioned on their article *“the benefits of the approach are fully realized when the group work is structured to assure such features as positive interdependence, individual accountability, and appropriate uses of teamwork and interpersonal skills”*

Speaking Skill

Speaking is a communicative skill that allows people to give information about a specific topic. As (Chaney, A.L & Burk , T.L, 1998) mentioned, it is the process of making and sharing meaning by using verbal and non-verbal symbols in different contexts. It is an essential part of language learning, and for sure, it contributes to the learner's success during the language learning process and, without doubt, in the future life. The main goal of developing the speaking skill is to use the language instead of repeating by memorizing. Learners construct their ideas expressed in sentences and dialogues even they make mistakes. One of the problems found in this research is that students cannot communicate their thoughts in the L2, as (Sikapang, 1993) states that the lack of practice speaking English in the classroom becomes one of the significant obstacles for the students in English speaking mastery.

The speaking skill is divided in:

The Productive Skill

As (Chanstain, 1988) expressed, “Speaking is a productive skill that involves many components, such as grammar, strategy, sociolinguistics, and discourse.” As we know, speaking is one of the main priorities in the learning-teaching process. It allows the learner to produce and use the language properly, reason why this research will be focused on the oral part.

Importance of Speaking

In the words of (Philips, 2007)“Speaking is an interactive process constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing”. Of course, speaking is required everywhere, simple or formal conversations; in a regular or business meeting, speaking is the top form to communicate. All type of learners communicates their thoughts and opinions by speaking. In addition, (Gardner, 1972) states that the learner’s stimulus for language study would be determined by his attitude and readiness to identify by his orientation to the whole process of learning a foreign language. In addition, interaction is a vital part of the speaking process, as (Richards J. C., 2008) states that the better oral interaction involve in “turn -taking, topic management, and questioning strategy, in direct approaches create condition in oral interaction through group work, task work, and other strategies

Control Practice and free Practice in Speaking

Control Practice is necessary to guide learners through speaking activities. During the practice, they can make oral mistakes, so the teacher needs to provide the indicated techniques to help

learners and promote the communication activities. On the other hand, learners can communicate without pressure or fear by working on *free practice activities*. Learners share information, and at the same time, they get information. Moreover, learners go through expressing ideas, thoughts, and feelings through verbal utterances in different situations and in any context.

Methodology

The applied methodology will include applied research, more specifically, action research. As (Clark et al., s. f.) proposed, “Action research represents an extension of the reflection and critical self-reflection that an educator employs daily in their classroom.” Additionally, findings emerge as the action develops and takes place; however, they are not conclusive or absolute but ongoing. (Koshi, 2010). In the same way, applied research intends to solve practical problems and uses empirical methods. In education, it is applied to test the educational process in the learning-teaching environment, and its goal is to determine the feasibility of a theory.

Therefore, it will be the ideal methodology research to prove the hypothesis proposed. The instrument to be used is a pre-posttest due to this research intended to enhance students to develop The Speaking English skills with a high level of pronunciation, fluency, and intonation. The research was developed in an intervention stage and it is correlational because it involves the two variables and their relationship. The intervention was carried out to one experimental group of twenty-three students.

The Common European Framework of References for languages (CEFR) is the international standard for describing and comparing language ability in any language by level. According to the Ecuadorian Curriculum, which is aligned to CEFR standards, students from Second of “Bachillerato” must get a B1.1 level when they finish the school year. In other words, they will be able to speak and give an opinion about specific topics and deal with different situations where the language is spoken. Learners are expected to get a language threshold at this level. Thus, communicating well is essential; because of this, the learning-speaking activities must be relevant in their language acquisition.

This research is mainly interested in enhancing the oral communication skill of the students. It is essential to mention that before the intervention, students showed limited development of English speaking skills, but after applying the communicative techniques, there is a significant difference between them in pronunciation and content. In addition, there is a marked weakness in speaking

fluency and limited use of words to express ideas; speech is primarily smooth but with some hesitation and unevenness caused, especially by rephrasing and groping for words. Moreover, pronunciation merits significant study because a comment attempts to be pronounced in different forms; it was great and did not interfere with communication.

On the other hand, students were able to comprehend and respond to most of the questions and topics discussed. On the use of vocabulary, students utilized the words accurately learned in class for the situation given. Finally, the content is prepared and distributed—good examples, which fit the subject and audience. At least four items were mentioned.

Instrument of the research

A *research instrument* was used to get, measure, and analyze information from the research topic. This research paper uses a Pre-Posttest as the main instrument since they are considered the preferred instruments to compare the results obtained by the participants and because of their similarities and to avoid bias information.

Procedure of collecting data

The Pre Posttest was structured according to the topics students have studied during the school year. The pre-test was applied when the school year started (September); due to the remote teaching during the previous school year, interviews were conducted by the online platform TEAMS. The methodology was as follows: two students and the teacher per session, an icebreaker short interview asking personal issues about them. Afterward, some images were displayed on the screen, and each student was asked to describe a different picture; in this way, the use of vocabulary and grammatical structures could be evidenced. Finally, some images were shown, each student was asked to talk about their preferences and interview their partner. On the other hand, the post-test was applied four months later, at the end of the first term. During these months, the indicated techniques were applied to reinforce the weakness in the speaking skill that students presented. The data collected was analyzed and classified through a rubric in which the following speaking sub skills were considered: grammar, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, and content; thus, a liker scale was applied as follows:

Table 1 - Rubric indicators

Indicator	score
Excellent	= 5 points
Good	= 3 points
Satisfactory	= 2 points
Needs improvement	= 1 point

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Population

This paper has a primary goal: to put into practice various techniques to enhance students' speaking skills by implementing the Communicative Approach. The population of this research is the twenty-three students from Second of “Bachillerato,” from “Maximiliano Spiller” High School.

Results

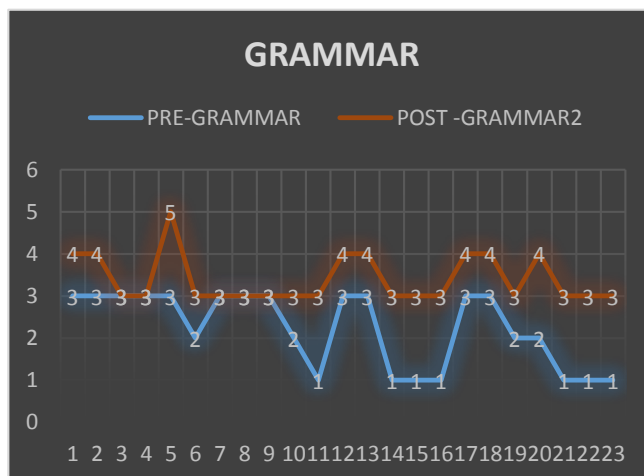


Image 1-(2021). GRAMMAR_Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- María Augusta Villacrés C.

The data collected from 23 case studies show a significant asymmetry concerning the mean. It can be inferred then that the methodology with which the second BGU students learn grammar was not the most adequate; since only 11 students of the 23, representing 47.82%, learn moderately; and 12 have difficulty learning grammar, they were not learning.

In contrast to this original behavior (PRE-TEST), it is evident to appreciate that the implementation of a new methodology in the teaching-learning process associated with grammar generates a positive impact since it allows overcoming the problems of learning grammar. Thirteen students, which represents 56.52%, go from a condition of regular and good respectively to very good in both cases. Significantly, seven students acquire the condition or qualification of excellent.

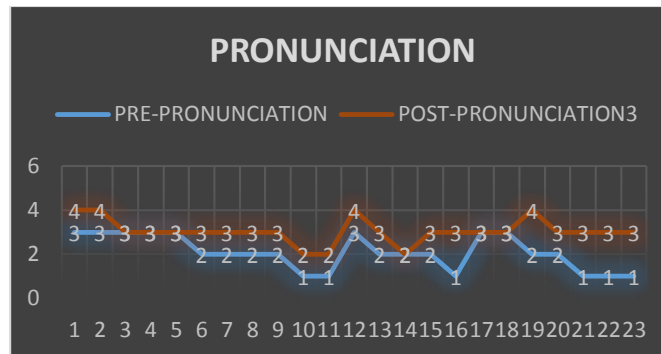


Image 2 - (2021). PRONUNCIATION Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- Maria Augusta Villacrés C.

The methodology with which the second BGU students practice English pronunciation was not the most adequate, since only eight students out of 23, which represents 34.78%, learn moderately, and 15 have difficulty learning pronunciation and are not even learning. Through the application of the pedagogical method studied or POST-TEST, the following results were obtained: three students with 13.04% are the same in spite of the methodology applied, within the average 16 students representing 69.56% present an average of good and four students 17.39% stand out with a qualification of excellent.

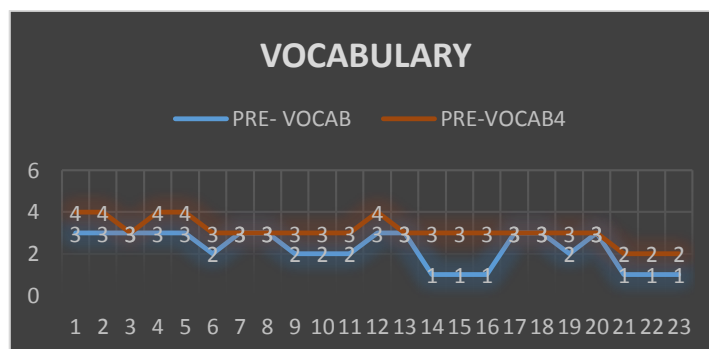


Image 3-(2021). VOCABULARY_ Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- María Augusta Villacrés C.

On the vocabulary practice, in the PRE-TEST, six students, 26.08%, present difficulty in learning English, five students 21.73% are below the expected average, and 12 students 52.17% are within the expected average, giving a total sample of 23 students.

On the other hand, applying the post-test through the pedagogical method studied, we have the following results: three students have not improved, which represents 13.04%, 15 students are within the expected average, which is 65.21%, and 23.73% are students who are in the excellent qualification.

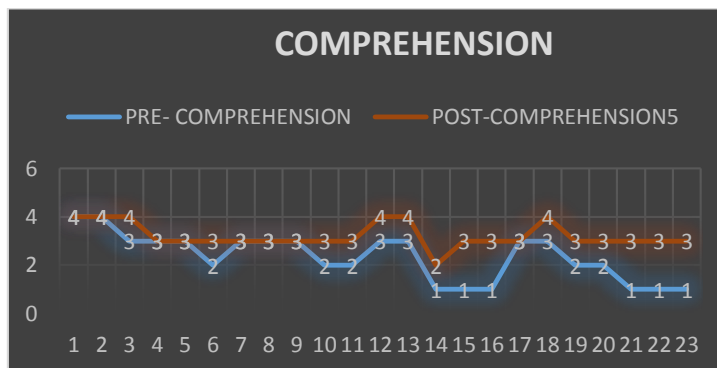


Image 4-(2021). COMPREHENSION Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- María Augusta Villacrés C.

About the comprehension indicator in the PRE-TEST, six students present the greatest difficulty 26.08%, five students are below the average line 21.73%, and ten students with a percentage of 43.47% that added together give the sample of 23 students.

After applying the CLT method, six students are above the midline level, 16 students are in the midline, which is equivalent to 69.56%, and one student has not improved his performance.

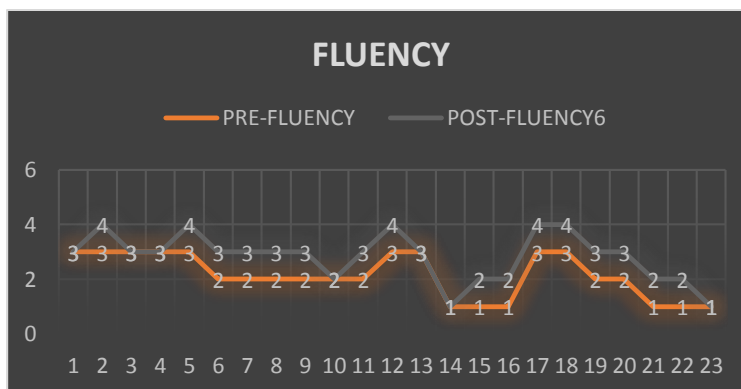


Image 5 (2021). FLUENCY _ Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- María Augusta Villacrés C.

As can be seen in the PRE-TEST graph of the Fluency indicator, six students comprising 26.08%, eight students with a percentage of 34.78%, and nine students with a percentage of 39.13% are within the average.

After the CLT method 23 students that are the sample 5 students, 21.73% are in the excellent qualification, 11 students that is equivalent to 47.82% are within the expected average with a qualification of good and with a qualification of bad there are five students with 21.73% giving 100% of the segmented sample.

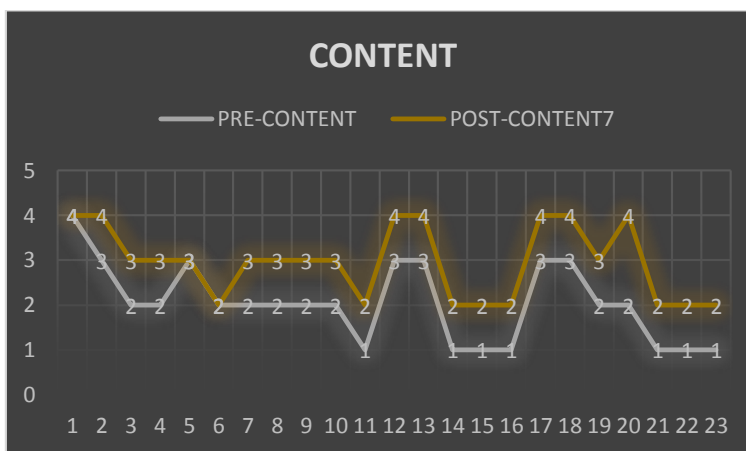


Image 6- (2021). CONTENT _ Pre-Posttest test applied by Carmen Gutierrez- María Augusta Villacrés C.

According to the graph, it can be observed the final indicator is “content” for the PRE-TEST; there are seven students who need improvement that represents 30.43%; nine students are at the satisfactory level with a percentage of 39.13%, and six students are in the level considered as good which represents the 26.08% giving a total percentage of 100%. The POST-TEST comprises 23 students of the sample studied and the segmentation where eight students 34.78% are students under the average deficient in the pedagogical method applied, seven students with 30.43% within the expected results for the use of the teaching-learning methodology and 30.43% stand out with qualification of good applying the POST-TEST corresponding to the study.

Conclusion

In general terms, it can be concluded that the implementation of the CLT method allows achieving good learning in terms of performance, 100%, and 39.43% as excellent, a condition that, in the

initial phase, did not exist in a single case. In the pronunciation indicator: the sample is 23 students comprising 100%, where 86.95% are in the average and above it making the method applied in the pronunciation indicator is optimal for these students. In Vocabulary, 20 students performed satisfactorily with the method applied in English, representing a percentage of 86.95%, giving the expected results. Comprehension is the one that stands out in the whole method applied because it consists of understanding the English language, where it can be observed that this method is optimal for teaching. The results obtained in the graphs show that these indicators potentially reinforce the pedagogical method studied in order not to diminish the students' strength in future studies. In conclusion, students have better understood the English language through the Communicative language method, which makes it excellent for the research.

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