

# Language Learning Strategies among Students of Undergraduate Malay Studies at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani, Thailand

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## Abstract

This study was conducted to obtain information on the use of language learning strategies among undergraduate students of Malay Language Studies at Prince of Songkhla University (PSU), Pattani, Thailand. Specifically, this study is to identify the level of mastery of language learning strategies. This is a quantitative descriptive study through survey method. A total of 100 students were selected as respondents. In this study, information of the students involved will be collected through the use of questionnaires instrument. The collected data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 for descriptive. The results showed that students are influenced by language learning strategies, but the findings showed that the listening and speaking strategy have more influence followed by the reading and writing strategy. In conclusion, although the language learning strategy does not affect the achievement in Malay language, the use of accurate and appropriate strategy will be able to help students increase proficiency and achievement in Malay language and become outstanding students.

**Keywords:** Language Learning Strategies, Language Skills, Student Undergraduate, Malay Language

## Introduction

Language is an important element in life. Humans use language as a medium for communication, either directly or written. The use of proper and precise language will give a deep meaning to people in conveying their wishes, feelings, opinions, and understand others through communication. Proficiency of a language is very important in human life, especially in education, business, employment and so forth that require communication in order to easily connect with various parties. In the context of teaching and learning, learning strategy is a technique or steps taken by the students to map or arrange their learning method. Steps in learning will help students understand what they learn easily, quickly and creating a fun environment. Moreover, it also provides an opportunity for the students to become more mature, independent, and competent in applying various learning strategies according to the situation, especially in their learning process.

Zamri (2015) stated that learning strategies are the ways or techniques used by students to assist their learning process. The use of various instructional strategies is able to help students better learn the language. Teh and Embi (2014) expressed language students who are able to properly and correctly use a variety of language learning strategies can improve their language skills because they are more prepared with the strategies that they have been studied. However, to use language learning strategies well, a student needs to be guided. They need help learning how to effectively learn the language. The teacher plays an important role in this regard and teachers should help the students by introducing various components of proper language. At the same time, this can aid the process of learning and improve the students' language skills.

### **Problem Statement**

The study of language learning strategy in Malay Language at universities in Thailand that focused on learning strategies of listening, speaking, reading and writing is new. Most studies on the LLS are related to the study of English learning strategies. Among those studies by Kasma (2012), Nisakorn (2010), Orawee and Thanyapa (2011), Lappayawichit (1998), Ratanaphorn (1998), Ountwattana (2000) and more.

The statement has prompted the researchers to study the Malay language learning strategies in Thailand by selecting PSU, Pattani as a location for research. This study is to look at the use of language learning strategies among undergraduate students of language studies at PSU Southern Thailand. In addition, this study also aims to open up opportunities for other researchers to explore and expand the study on Malay language learning strategies in Thailand. Studies on Malay language have a lot of progress in Thailand, but there is no study on the Malay language learning strategies had been carried out. The researcher is interested on this topic because it is a new thing that needs to be explored to increase the knowledge and proficiency of the Malay language in Thailand. Most of previous studies of Malay Language are more focused on lexical language, Malay language proficiency, attitudes and use of Malay language, the use of dialect and so on.

Among the studies on the Malay language that was conducted in Thailand, especially in the southern regions of Thailand is study conducted by Razak and Haq (2011) related to the Malay language proficiency. Norizah (2005) on the other hand, studied about attitudes and usage of Malay language among university students in southern Thailand, Ahmad Fathiyah (2012) studied about Malay language teaching practice in a private religious schools at Phatanasad Muslim School, Worawit (1990) studied on the impact of Thai language on Malay Pattani language, and finally Fathy (2012) which studied of the dilemma Yawi language at Southern Thailand.

Based on the above statement, it can clearly be seen that no study on the Malay language learning strategy has been carried out in Thailand. In addition, there is lack of studies looking at the comparison of Malay language proficiency based on gender, year of study and Malay language achievement among student in Thailand. Previous studies focused on the Malay language sociology. Other studies is also focusing on the Malay Pattani language dialect instead of studies on the standard Malay language that should be mastered by students to help the them be proficient in Malay language. Standard Malay language proficiency among

students is necessary to help them to use it properly as the utilization of standard Malay is important in administration and education systems of Southern Thailand.

Previous researchers had shown that studies on Language Learning Strategies (LLS) are very important when learning a second language or foreign language. There are a few researchers who have proven the importance of understanding the processes and methods in learning a second language or foreign language. The local researchers mainly focus on the study related to the teaching and learning aspects of grammar, comprehension, dialect, pronunciation, spelling and more, but there are less study which examines how a student successfully mastered some aspect of the language.

### **Research Purposes and Objectives**

Generally, this study aims to look at the use of language learning strategies by undergraduate students of Malay Studies at PSU.

1. Identifying the proficiency level of the Malay language learning strategies among undergraduate students of Malay Language Studies at PSU based on four language skills.
2. Identify the relationship between language learning strategies and the level of Malay Language achievement among undergraduate students of Malay Language Studies at PSU.

### **Research Question**

Specifically, this study aims to answer and explain the following research questions:

1. What is the proficiency level of Malay language learning strategies among undergraduate students of Malay Language Studies at PSU based on four language skills?
2. Is there a relationship between language learning strategies and Malay Language achievement level among the undergraduate students of Language Studies at PSU?

### **Research Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

The study employs a quantitative descriptive study, through a survey method. In this study, the information of students involved is collected through the use of questionnaire instruments. According to Mohamed Amin Embi (2000), survey method is a method often used by the researchers especially in the study related to education. In this study, researchers would like to identify the language learning strategies used by undergraduate students of PSU.

#### **Population, Location and Samples**

A sample is a small group from the researchers' target population to conduct the research. Mohd Majid Konting (2005) expressed that a sample is a number of individuals taken through the selection process or a group. Next, the sampling is a strategy to get information about a population. In this study, the sample size selection is based on simple random sampling that was conducted on 430 students of Malay Language studies at PSU. Thus, of the total number of students, the researchers set out to select 100 samples in which 25 students have been selected for each year of study, from year 1 to year 4.

### Research Instruments

Questionnaire used by researchers is adapted from Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) and Zamri (2004) and modified in accordance with the title, elements and location environments surveyed. This questionnaire consists of two parts, A, B and C. Part A is related to the demographics of the respondents' personal information, while part B is a questionnaire inventory about language learning strategies based on listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. Part B of this questionnaire were given the option responses using the five Likert scale which are Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Uncertain (U), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

### Data Analysis

Researchers analyzed the collected questionnaire data using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0. Analyzing the quantitative data is to look at the frequency of the mean and standard deviation obtained in this research to answer the research questions. Descriptive analysis is the data analysis process that can explain the demographics of the sample related to the frequency and percentage in terms of gender, year of study and Malay Language result and achievement.

### Research Findings

#### Profile of Respondents

In this study, a descriptive analysis is used to analyze the demographic profile of respondents based on the frequency and percentage in terms of gender, year of study, and Malay Language achievement results. Then, this analysis is also used to answer the first question of dismantling the mean, percentage and standard deviation obtained.

The sample in this study consisted of 100 undergraduate students of PSU, which taken the Malay language course. The students comprised of year one to year four students. Table 1 showed the profile or clear information about the respondents. The number of male students involved in this study was 33 people (33.0%), while females comprised 67 students (66.0%). The respondents consisted of 25 students (25.0%) which represent year one to four respectively. The semester's final results for Malay Language subject showed a total of 40 students (40.0%) achieved grade A, 47 students obtained grade B (47.0%) and 13 students attained C (13.0%).

Table 1:

*Profile of survey respondents*

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	33.0%
	Female	67	67.0%
Year of Study	Year 1	25	25.0%
	Year 2	25	25.0%
	Year 3	25	25.0%
	Year 4	25	25.0%
Results	A	40	40.0%
	B	47	47.0%
	C	13	13.0%

### Descriptive Analysis

In this section, the researchers used the descriptive analysis of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations for the variables of gender, year of study, and language learning strategies. Next the researchers categorize and interpret the average mean score into five levels based on Mohd Majid Konting (2005) to determine the average mean value for each of the variables studied. Interpretations of the mean scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2:

*Interpretation of Mean Scores*

Mean Value	Level
3.68 to 5.00	High
2.34 to 3.67	Moderate
1.00 to 2.33	Low

### Mastery Level of Listening Strategy

These findings will answer the first research question about the level of Malay language learning strategies among undergraduates of Malay language studies at PSU. The table shows the descriptive analysis involving the percentages, means and standard deviations that are achieved for every item in listening learning strategy. The overall mean result for listening strategy was 3.7876 (SD = 0.57521), which is at a high level. Of the seven items that are at a high level, the statement showing the highest mean and standard deviation is the 3rd statement (*carefully listen to anything described by the teachers*) with a mean score of 4.27 (SD = 0.750) and followed by the first statement (*focus when the teacher is teaching*) with a mean score of 4.25 (SD = 0.730), the next is the 4th statement (*ask the teacher to repeat anything that is taught*) with a value of 4.14 (SD = 0.865).

Based on the highest three items, it is clearly shown that the students mainly depends on the teacher to improve the proficiency of their listening strategies. Statement with the moderate mean interpretation which recorded at the lowest moderate level is the 10th statement (*watching television in Malay*) with a mean score of 2.98 (SD = 1.356). The next moderate result is the 5th statement (*listen to the radio in Malay language*) with the mean score of 2.99 (SD = 1.307), followed by the 7th statement (*sit in the front row when learning Malay language*) which is 3.59 (SD = 1.138). Overall, the average listening learning strategy is at the high level even when there are 3 items that are at a moderate level.

Table 3:

*Listening learning strategies*

No.	Item	Frequency and Percentage (%)					Mean	Std. Dev	Mean Interpretation
		SD	D	U	A	SA			
1	Focus when the teachers are teaching.	2 2.0%	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	60 60.0%	35 35.0%	4.25	0.730	High
2	Listening carefully when friends are speaking in Malay language.	3 3.0%	3 3.0%	14 14.0%	61 61.0%	18 18.0%	3.89	0.844	High
3	Carefully listen to anything described by the teachers.	2 2.0%	-	6 6.0%	53 53.0%	39 39.0%	4.27	0.750	High
4	Ask the teachers to repeat anything that is taught.	3 3.0%	1 1.0%	10 10.0%	51 51.0%	35 35.0%	4.14	0.865	High
5	Listen to the radio in Malay language.	21 21.0%	9 9.0%	33 33.0%	24 24.0%	13 13.0%	2.99	1.307	Moderate
6	Listen to friends read passages in Malay language clearly.	4 4.0%	6 6.0%	17 17.0%	55 55.0%	18 18.0%	3.77	0.952	High
7	Sit in the front row when learning Malay language.	7 7.0%	8 8.0%	27 27.0%	35 35.0%	23 23.0%	3.59	1.138	Moderate
8	Ask a friend to repeat what is being read.	1 1.0%	3 3.0%	19 19.0%	59 59.0%	18 18.0%	3.90	0.759	High
9	Ask for clarification if you do not understand when listening for the first time.	4 4.0%	2 2.0%	8 8.0%	53 53.0%	33 33.0%	4.09	0.922	High
10	Watching television in Malay language.	23 23.0%	11 11.0%	23 23.0%	31 31.0%	12 12.0%	2.98	1.356	Moderate
<b>Total</b>							<b>3.78</b>	<b>0.576</b>	<b>High</b>

**Mastery Level of Speaking Strategy**

The results of descriptive analysis are presented in Table 4 to see the mastery of learning

No	Item	Frequency and Percentage (%)					Mean	Std. Dev	Mean Interpretation
		SD	D	U	A	SA			
1	Speak/talk to a friend in Malay language.	3 3.0%	3 3.0%	7 7.0%	70 70.0%	17 17.0%	3.95	0.796	High
2	Ask friends to repeat what is spoken.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	17 17.0%	60 60.0%	20 20.0%	3.96	0.737	High
3	Focus when a friend is talking in Malay language.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	13 13.0%	58 58.0%	26 26.0%	4.06	0.750	High
4	Ask friends to correct the pronunciation error in Malay language.	1 1.0%	4 4.0%	21 21.0%	56 56.0%	18 18.0%	3.86	0.792	High
5	Start a conversation in Malay language as often as possible.	4 4.0%	2 2.0%	23 23.0%	48 48.0%	23 23.0%	3.84	0.940	High
6	Focus when the teacher speaks in Malay language.	2 2.0%	-	5 5.0%	58 58.0%	35 35.0%	4.24	0.726	High
7	Speak in Malay language clearly and concisely word by word.	2 2.0%	1 1.0%	22 22.0%	58 58.0%	17 17.0%	3.87	0.774	High
8	Referring to the dictionary if it is difficult to understand a word.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	10 10.0%	48 48.0%	39 39.0%	4.22	0.786	High
9	Plan in advance what is intended to be spoken.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	18 18.0%	57 57.0%	22 22.0%	3.98	0.756	High
10	Speak in formal Malay language without mixing with native language dialect/others.	3 3.0%	2 2.0%	25 25.0%	46 46.0%	24 24.0%	3.86	0.910	High
<b>Total</b>							<b>3.98</b>	<b>0.428</b>	<b>High</b>

The results of descriptive analysis are presented in Table 4 to see the mastery of learning strategies from the speaking aspect. Table 4 shows the speaking strategy which consist of 10 items. The whole items in Table 4 shows the high mean interpretation which is 3.98 (SD = 0.42890). Based on the whole items, the 4th statements namely (*focus when the teacher*



*speaks in Malay language*) had a high mean which is 4.24 (SD = 0.726), while the second highest statement is the 8th statement (*referring to the dictionary if it is difficult to understand a word*) with a mean score of 4.22 (SD = 0.786). Next, the third highest statement is the third statement that is (*focus when a friend is talking in Malay language*) with a mean score of 4.06 (SD = 0.750). Next, items that is at the lowest level is the 5th statement (*start a conversation in Malay language as often as possible*) with a mean score of 3.84 (SD = 0.940).

Table 4:  
Speaking learning strategies

No	Item	Frequency and Percentage (%)					Mean	Std. Dev	Mean Interpretation
		SD	D	U	A	SA			
1	Read aloud an excerpt in Malay language clearly/fluently.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	11 11.0%	61 61.0%	25 25.0%	4.07	0.728	High
2	Read carefully the question / quotes/text in Malay language before answering questions.	1 1.0%	2 2.0%	7 7.0%	67 67.0%	23 23.0%	4.09	0.683	High
3	Read various books / reading materials in Malay language.	-	3 3.0%	4 4.0%	65 65.0%	28 28.0%	4.18	0.642	High
4	Read the text/excerpts of questions in Malay language repeatedly.	1 1.0%	5 5.0%	6 6.0%	64 64.0%	24 24.0%	4.05	0.770	High
5	Concentrate when reading an excerpt.	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	7 7.0%	65 65.0%	23 23.0%	4.04	0.777	High
6	Do the exercise repeatedly.	3 3.0%	6 6.0%	11 11.0%	60 60.0%	20 20.0%	3.88	0.902	High
7	Ask the teacher to correct the errors while reading text/ excerpts in Malay language.	2 2.0%	3 3.0%	11 11.0%	56 56.0%	28 28.0%	4.05	0.833	High
8	Ask friends to correct errors while reading text / excerpts in Malay language.	4 4.0%	4 4.0%	16 16.0%	45 45.0%	31 31.0%	3.95	0.999	High
9	Focus when the teacher read the text in Malay language.	1 1.0%	-	11 11.0%	64 64.0%	24 24.0%	4.10	0.659	High
10	Underlines content / important facts whenever I read a text /	3 3.0%	2 2.0%	5 5.0%	62 62.0%	28 28.0%	4.10	0.823	High



excerpts in Malay  
language.

<b>Total</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>0.463</b>	<b>High</b>
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### **Mastery Level of Reading Strategy**

Of the 10 items, the 3rd statement namely (*read various books/reading materials in Malay language*) scored the highest mean of 4.18 (SD = 0.642) followed by the 9th (*focus when the teacher read the text in Malay language*) and 10th statement (*underlining the content/important facts whenever I read a text/excerpt in Malay language*) which shared the same mean of 4.10 (SD = 0.659, SD = 0.823 respectively). Next, the third highest statement is the 2nd statement (*read carefully the questions/quotes/text in Malay language before answering the questions*) with a mean score of 4.09 (SD = 0.683).

The statement with the lowest mean is the 6th and 8th statement. Statement 6 (*do the exercise repeatedly*) recorded a mean score of 3.88 (SD = 0.902) and the 8th statement (*ask friends to correct errors while reading text/quotes in Malay language*) with a mean score of 3.95 (SD = 0.999). Descriptive analysis in Table 4.5 shows the recorded total mean of reading learning strategy is 4.0510 (SD = 0.46325) with the total mean interpretation that is high.

**Table 5:** Reading learning strategies

### **Mastery Level of Writing Strategy**

Based on the 10 items available in Table 6, 9 items recorded a high level mean interpretation and 1 item is at moderate level. Statement with the highest mean is the 3rd statement (*ask the teacher to check and fix the content of writing*) with the mean score of 4.36 (SD = 0.732), followed by the 2nd statement (*use a dictionary to find incomprehensible words*) with a mean score of 4.23 (SD = 0.851). Next, the 9th statement (*referring dictionary if it is difficult to understand a word*) with mean score of 4.15 (SD = 0.821). The 4th statement (*check what was written before continuing writing*) also recorded a high score of 4.05 (SD = 0.809).

Out of 10 items in Table 4.6, item 6, namely (*writing neatly/prettily when doing practice / answering questions*) recorded a moderate mean interpretation with the mean score of 3.61 (SD = 0.952). Descriptive analysis in Table 6 showed overall mean record for writing learning strategy was 4.0050 (SD = 0.387) with an overall mean interpretation that is high.

Table 6:

*Writing learning strategies*

No	Item	Frequency and Percentage (%)					Mean	Std. Dev	Mean Interpretation
		SD	D	U	A	SA			
1	Do writing exercise more often.	5 5.0%	2 2.0%	4 4.0%	67 67.0%	22 22.0%	3.99	0.893	High
2	Use dictionary to find incomprehensible words.	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	9 9.0%	45 45.0%	42 42.0%	4.23	0.851	High
3	Ask teachers to check and fix the writing content.	2 2.0%	- -	3 3.0%	50 50.0%	45 45.0%	4.36	0.732	High
4	Check what you have written before continue writing.	3 3.0%	1 1.0%	9 9.0%	62 62.0%	25 25.0%	4.05	0.809	High
5	Write the important points before answering questions.	3 3.0%	4 4.0%	16 16.0%	53 53.0%	24 24.0%	3.94	0.867	High
6	Writing neatly/prettily when doing practice/answering questions.	3 3.0%	4 4.0%	42 42.0%	31 31.0%	20 20.0%	3.61	0.952	Moderate
7	Check/fix the answers that were written before submitted to the teacher.	2 2.0%	1 1.0%	22 22.0%	54 54.0%	21 21.0%	3.91	0.805	High
8	Reading books on how to write.	3 3.0%	3 3.0%	17 17.0%	61 61.0%	16 16.0%	3.84	0.838	High
9	Referring to dictionary if it is difficult to understand a word.	2 2.0%	2 2.0%	9 9.0%	53 53.0%	34 34.0%	4.15	0.821	High
10	Use various writing techniques in writing exercise.	4 4.0%	1 1.0%	20 20.0%	44 44.0%	31 31.0%	3.97	0.858	High
<b>Total</b>							<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.387</b>	<b>High</b>

**Discussions**

Based on the study that have been conducted on undergraduate student of Malay Language studies, PSU, it was found that Zamri (2015) model of language learning strategies affect mastery of learning strategies among students. The listening, speaking, reading and writing strategy influenced the students in learning Malay language. This can be proven by the findings that the overall mastery level of the strategies have high mean interpretation. In listening strategy, the effect of Mohamed Amin Embi (2000) can be seen in statements that have the high mean and standard deviation. The model stated the details of listening

strategies such as description during listening, plans to listen to the information and identify the previous knowledge before listening. This clearly proves the selection of the highest statement is closely related to the model and affects the students. This relation can be seen in the 3rd statement (carefully listen to anything described by the teachers), the first statement (focus when the teacher is teaching) and the 4th (ask the teacher to repeat anything that is taught). Based on these findings, it is clearly shown that the students require high concentration to improve listening strategies. This can be proven by Ayu (2015) and Yazid (2017) which stated that listening is an important communication processes among people and it involves understanding and processing information that is being heard. This proves that the students who concentrate on listening skills will give a good response and is among the characteristics excellent students.

Next, for speaking strategy, focusing when someone speaks Malay became the student's choice. Students who want to improve their speaking proficiency pay attention when listening to a friend speaks in Malay. In addition, referring to the dictionary if it is difficult to understand a word also helps the students master the strategy more effectively. For reading strategies, most students prefer to read and underlining the facts each time they read to avoid making mistakes. This finding is supported by research conducted by Nisakorn (2010) which states that, during the learning process, students need to constantly test his memory with the knowledge materials in order to be able to remember efficiently. Outstanding language students will always read a variety of genres and text to enhance their understanding and grasp a better term. Writing strategy showed the findings of always ask the teacher to check any writing done. In addition, make written exercises more frequently also helps students master their writing strategies. According to Kasma (2012), writing a note or do a writing exercise helps the student's ability to build and compose complex sentences to express things that played on their minds.

The results showed that language learning strategies do not affect in improving students' academic achievement. Interpretation of the findings also shows that students who practiced accurate and effective learning patterns help to increase the level of their achievement. The relationship of learning strategies based on year of study showed a negative finding that is there is no correlation of learning strategies with year of study. It supported by a study by Chamot and O'Malley (1994), Griffith (2003) on foreign language learners which did not find any difference and there is no clear pattern of strategies transition, despite the decrease and increase use of individual strategy.

### **Implications of Research**

Through this study, the use of language learning strategies should be clearly exposed to the undergraduate students at PSU. This is because, diverse use of language learning strategies will better able to help students master the Malay language proficiently. In this case also, teachers particularly should play an important role by making exposure about the Malay language acquisition and correct language learning strategies more clearly among students.

Clear exposure by the instructors help improve students' understanding because teachers have great influences in the students' language learning process in the hope that they guide and convey the knowledge correctly. Zamri (2015) stated education experts agreed about the influence of teachers on students whether in terms of attitude, achievement, aspiration and

motivation. In addition, Awang (2011) explained that an effective teacher in teaching Malay language to foreign language speakers is a teacher who is willing to understand the socio-cultural background, value systems and systems of native language of the students. The findings could also conclude that;

1. Instructors must first identify the students' environment and then formulate teaching and learning activities that fit the students.
2. Teachers need to expose the proficiency of Malay language more effectively.
3. Instructors should provide exposure to the language learning strategies.
4. The instructors need to plan for activities involving students that apply various learning strategy that is able to open the minds of the students.
5. Malay language proficiency among students of PSU is important because it is not only for academic achievement, but also for the social life environment and their religion.
6. Exposure to the appropriate language learning strategies can be used as a knowledge discourse among students.

### **Conclusion**

As a whole, this study has comprehensively discussed the results of the study on learning strategies used among undergraduate students of Malay Language studies at PSU. There are differences in the use of language learning strategies based on gender, which showed that for the listening and speaking strategy, male students had use the strategies more frequently than female students. On the other hands, female students showed more proficiency in reading and writing strategies. The discussed aspects also showed that there is no relationship between language learning strategy and the achievement level and year of study among students.

This study also demonstrates the use of appropriate language learning strategies will help students master the Malay language learning easier. The role of teachers is essential to produce students of language studies, PSU who master the Malay language proficiently and additionally increase the performance in tests. This study is expected to serve as a guide and reference to the teachers to provide exposure on the mastery of Malay language and the use of effective learning strategies to produce students who excel in language. Support from the instructors at PSU can improve attitudes, knowledge and willingness of students to use the correct learning strategy to improve their Malay language proficiency.

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