

## The Electronic Platforms Effect on English Language Teaching Strategies

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to investigate the English language universities instructors' perspectives of the effects of using electronic platforms along with face-to-face teaching methods in teaching English language. The study also investigates the teaching strategies, the learners' behaviors, and the classroom managements in both the virtual classes and the face-to-face classes. The participants of the study were 32 English language instructors from the Departments of English at the College of Arts and the College of Education for Humanities at the University of Anbar. A questionnaire was developed to collect the data of the study. A percentage was used to analyze the items of the questionnaire. The findings revealed that there was a huge gap between the teaching strategies, students' behaviors, and classroom management when delivering instruction via the electronic platforms and face-to-face classroom. There were negative educational effects of using electronic platforms in teaching English language at the Departments of English in the University of Anbar. Using electronic platforms did not help the learners to achieve the goal of learning English language, to be able to

use the language in real communication, and to understand the deep knowledge that the curriculum present. The teaching strategies were restricted to one teaching method, that is the instructor centered of the educational process, while the emotional, affective, classroom management were neglected in virtual classes. The virtual realm has its own feature that the pedagogical realm needs to cope with, it is a fact that all the educational institutions need to be aware with.

**Keywords:** Educational Effects, Electronic Platforms, EFL Instructors, Instructors' Perspectives.

### **Background of the Study**

The Covid-19 pandemic quarantine has influenced more than 1.6 billion teachers/ educators in more than 190 countries all over the world. Since the beginning of March 2020, in most countries, the educational institutions have been closed, and suspended face-to-face instruction in 186 countries, and took the decision to shift to distance learning which represents about 74% of the total students all over the world.

One academic year has passed since the first experience of using the electronic platforms in teaching in general and teaching the English language in particular in the Iraqi educational institutions due to the Covid-19 pandemic quarantine during the academic year 2019-2020. The educational process via the electronic platforms during the current academic year 2020-2021 is continued. The best source that can evaluate this experience is from the university professors who are specialized in English language Literature, Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, and Methodology.

## Problem of the Study

Since the rapid use of electronic platforms, the researchers competed to reveal the effect of such platforms on educational contexts, some researchers investigated the effect of electronic platforms and social media applications on students' language outcomes, other investigated students' and university instructors' attitudes and perspectives toward learning and teaching via such methods (see previous studies section below). To the researcher's best knowledge, no study in Iraq has investigated universities English Language instructors' perspectives toward the teaching strategies that they use in the virtual classes and inside the classrooms, face-to-face teaching. The researcher asked a question, via Google forms, addressed to the University of Anbar professors to find out and reveal what comes to their minds while they are teaching via the distance learning method. The most prominent answers were about teaching strategies that they abandoned as a result of the nature of the teaching method, that is distance learning. The present study is an opportunity for the English language instructors to reflect on their virtual teaching processes to stand on the real and actual teaching methods that they usually implement inside the classroom.

## Research Questions

To achieve the aim of the study, the following reserch questions have been set:

- 1- Is there a difference between instructors' perspectives toward teaching via electronic platforms and face-to-face?

- 2- Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward the teaching strategies used in virtual classes and face-to-face classes?
- 3- Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward the learners' behaviors in virtual classes and face-to-face classes?
- 4- Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward classroom management in virtual classes and face-to-face classes?

### **Significance of the Study**

The study is considered as a mirror that reflects university instructors' teaching behavior when teaching via virtual classes. It can help the English language instructors to be aware of their actual use of teaching methods to create and stimulate an educational atmosphere in the virtual classes, which are characterized by abstract classes.

### **Aims of the Study**

This study aims to investigate the instructors' perspectives of the educational effects of using electronic platforms in teaching English language, that means investigating the teaching strategies, the learners' behaviors, and classroom management in virtual classes and face-to-face classes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The present study took into consideration most of the teaching strategies, learning domains, and personal factors were implemented in the Iraqi context. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the teaching has shifted from

the traditional teaching (face 2 face) inside the classroom to electronic education. Thus, it is worth investigating the electronic educational effects on the instructors' teaching strategies.

In addition, the present study aims to compare classroom management in the face-to-face classroom and virtual classes in teaching the English language. Further, the students' behaviors have been investigated due to the significant role that the behavior plays as a factor that has a significant educational effect on teaching the English language virtually and face-to-Face.

### **Limits of the Study**

- 1- **Participants:** The participants of the study are all English language instructors at the Departments of English.
- 2- **Place:** The Departments of English is at the College of Arts and the College of Education for Humanities at the University of Anbar.
- 3- **Time:** The study is conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021.

### **Definition of Basic Terms**

Educational Effect:

**Theoretical definition:** Any factor that influences the outcomes of the educational process (Weber and Skirbekk, 2014)

**Operational Definition:** It is the variables that influence students' language achievement, teaching strategies, students' behaviors, classroom management, virtual classes, and face-to-face classes.

### **Electronic Platforms:**

**Theoretical definition:** It is "an undertaking operating in two (or multi)-sided markets, which use the internet to enable interactions between two or more distinct but interdependent groups of users to generate value for at least one of the group "Jaque et al.,2018:3).

**Operational Definition:** The electronic platform is every online site that is being used to communicate with students, such as Google Classroom, Google Meet, Zoom, FFC, WhatsApp, and Viber.

### **EFL Instructors:**

**Theoretical definition:** They are the instructors who are non-native and teach the English language as a foreign language at the university level. They are the instructors who facilitate communication between the EFL learners (Salahshour and Hajizadeh, 2013: 164).

**Operational Definition:** They are the Iraqi instructors who teach the English language as a foreign language in the Iraqi context.

### **Introduction**

From the researcher's experience in teaching the English language at the university level, the teaching process in general and teaching the English language specific for Iraqi students is not an easy task. The first language of all Iraqi students is the Arabic language, and the language system of the Arabic language is completely different as compared with the English language system. So, it is difficult to use the Grammar Translation Method, Audio-lingual Method, Direct-Method, and any other method that requires a high level of the cognitive process without adjusting them to the Iraqi context. This means that it is important to choose the elements and the features of these methods that fit the Iraqi students and the Iraqi context. The

researcher believes that to teach English language in the Iraqi context, we need to adopt Krashen's (1977) comprehensible "Input Hypothesis" I+1.

Most English language teachers focus on cooperative and collaborative learning which involve learner-centered characteristics. The learners share and exchange information to achieve the goal of learning the English language. Such learning needs to promote intrinsic motivation and lower anxiety. Cooperative and collaborative learning involve cultural aspects of learners' differences (Oxford,1997: 443).

Interactive learning is a matter of production and reception, it is a process of ingtaking, and giving. Such process is achieved by pair and group work, to receive authentic input in a real context, to exchange a meaning full communication in authentic context (Brown, 2000: 48).

The whole language method is one of the most famous schools to learn a foreign language. It involves cooperative education, learner-centered learning, participatory education, community learning, authentic language, integration of the four skills, and holistic language assessment (Al-Khayyat, 2020)

Content-Based instruction aims at integrating content with language learning. It focuses on teaching language through the subjects. It reflects learners' needs, the content provides the basis for activating both cognitive and interactional processes. The previous knowledge plays an important role in learning via content-based learning (Brown, 2000: 50).

Task-Based Instruction focuses on meaning, this means that language form is not important as the meaning, the most important is that language learners can be able to convey the message. The task is the building block of instruction. The task is characterized by meaning is primary, the

communication needs to solve a problem, to communicate via real-world, activities, there are processes and products, it is important to reach the product, the outcomes.

Brown (2000) states three major principles of language learning and teaching, namely: cognitive principles; affective principles; and psychomotor principles. The cognitive principles are the most common domain used in a pedagogical context. The affective domain is dealing with emotions, feelings, and attitudes. The psychomotor domain includes all activities that the learner practice to achieve a goal of language learning. It is the ability to convert a learning subject into confidential action.

English foreign language teachers' perspectives toward the use of communicative language teaching techniques inside the classroom have been investigated since the widespread of this teaching approach in the world, and the results revealed that the English language teachers sometimes use communicative techniques in teaching English language (Challob et al., 2016: 234). So, investigating EFL teachers' perspectives can be a good indicator to reveal an educational factor or effect that contributes to learning English language achievement.

Feedback is an important factor that influences English language teaching. Al-Khayyat (2019) investigates the effect of some feedback techniques on students' English language achievement. The result revealed that feedback has a positive effect on students' language achievement.

The researcher in the present study believes that classroom management is a crucial factor that affects the learning process. Learning the English language in the Iraqi context is accompanied by anxiety. Thus, the physical environment of English language classroom, the sight, the sound, the comfortable atmosphere, seating arrangements, chalkboard use,



equipment, teacher voice, the teacher body-language, teaching large classes, teaching multiple levels in the same class, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation interaction, and teacher's roles are all factors that can have a great effect on the English language teaching and learning processes.

Habibi (2018) defines classroom management as "a set of techniques and skills that allow a teacher to control students effectively to create a positive learning environment for all students "(P.2016).

Classroom control or management is what the teacher acts during presenting a lecture. It is the decisions that the English language teacher takes due to students' actions or situational context demands (Habibi, 2018:2017). When the classroom is well managed, free of stress, and a comfortable atmosphere is dominated, the teaching process will cultivate its goal successfully. (Kayikci, 2009).

Learners' behaviors as an educational factor have an important effect on the English language teaching process. It is fact that students behave differently in virtual classes compared to real classes, face-to-face context. Learners show less anxiety, less awareness, less interaction, reduce roles, and less emotion when they learn the English language via virtual class. It reveals that virtual classes are a more relaxed and comfortable environment than face-to-face education (Roed, 2010: 171). The most recommendable behavior inside a classroom is the student's respect.

### **Related Studies**

This section presents some studies that use the most common teaching strategies that have been investigated to reveal the effect and the influence of the teaching strategies inside the classrooms and the virtual classrooms.

Arslan (2020) investigated the effect of the "flipped" strategy in teaching the English language. The sample consisted of 78 studies indexed in the most popular scientific journals. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that technology, digital technology, has facilitated the use of flipped strategy in teaching the English language. The flipped strategy has a great effect on developing students'. Language achievement, students' grammar knowledge has been developed, and also flipped strategy has promoted students' vocabulary storage. The results revealed that flipped learning improved students' motivations, self-confidence, interaction, satisfaction, and cognitive strategy.

Arslan and Isik-Dogan (2020) investigated the effectiveness of planned focus on form, or meaning, or exposure to implicit or explicit knowledge in learning of foreign language. The participants were 60 students from 5<sup>th</sup>-grade secondary school. The results revealed that the focus on form in teaching the English language was more significant than regular teaching.

Soler (2020) investigated the effect of the "Theatre Technique" as a teaching communication method to the university students' level. The participants were 51 students from third grade at the Department of English, Faculty of Education, the University of Valencia during the academic year 2018-2019. Task-Based learning model and eight plays were used to collect the data of the study. the result revealed that theatre as an educational tool to learn the English language has developed both verbal and non-verbal aspects such as students' vocabulary, pronunciation Speaking, Listening, and grammar in addition to the enhancement of collaborative learning, self-confidence, and cultural habits. Also, students' motivation toward learning English has been developed positively.

Feltes and Oliveira (2019) investigated the effect of the Active Learning Approach in developing students' autonomy and engagement in learning the English language. A discussion activity, a project, a portfolios, a flipping technique, a visual-based instruction, a think-pair technique, and a debate activity were used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that students built the learning experience it becomes more effective than transmitted by the instructors. Furthermore, the active learning made the classroom atmosphere interesting, inclusive, meaningful, and fun

Habibi et al., (2018) investigated the classroom management problems and the strategies used inside the classroom from EFL instructors' perspectives. The participants were eight EFL schools students. An observation checklist, focus group discussions, and semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that there were several classroom management such as problem of students' participation, managing learners' behaviors, EFL teachers' behaviors, and non-major English specialized field.

Sentence and Csizmadia (2015) investigated the experienced teachers' perspectives who teach for the first time using a computer in England. 300 teachers participated in the study. A questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that the teachers use different teaching strategies in teaching via computer to enhance students' understanding and comprehension.

Zhao (2007) investigated teachers' perspectives toward integration technology in teaching 17 studies that investigated teachers' perspectives toward integration technology in teaching English language. The results revealed that integration technology in teaching has the following characteristics: teacher-centered educational process; weakness in teacher-

students interaction and the willingness to use technology is not present and the teachers were unwilling to replace face-to-face teaching with distance teaching via technology.

Safitry et al., (2015) investigated teachers' perspectives towards using information technology in teaching inside the classrooms. 20 elementary teachers in West Java participated in the study. A standard Technology Implementation Questionnaire (TIQ) was used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that the teachers have never received formal training on using technology, and the teachers have positive attitudes toward teaching via technology.

The above studies show the significance of using some teaching strategies that foster English language teaching and also English language teachers and instructors' perspectives toward using some teaching strategies and electronic platforms in teaching the English language. The present study investigates EFL instructors' perspectives toward the educational effects of using the electronic platforms in teaching the English language, which means to investigate the teaching strategies, the learners' behaviors, and the classroom management in virtual classes and face-to-face classes.

## **Methodology**

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants of the study were all the English language professors at the department of English at both the College of Arts and the College of Education for Humanities at the University of Anbar, Iraq during the first semester of the academic year 2020-2021. The participants' academic titles were: Asst. Instructor; Instructor; Asst.Prof.; Asst. Prof. Dr.; Prof., and Prof. Dr. Table 1 shows the distribution number of the participants without their

academic titles and positions. The participants' variables such as age, teaching experiences, and specialization did not calculate, because the study aims to compare, in general, between teaching methods, technology proficiency classroom management in the face-to-face classroom and in virtual classes in teaching the English language.

**Table 1: Distribution of the Participants**

College	Instructors
College of Arts	13
College of Education for Humanities	19
Total	32

### **Instrument of the Study**

The researcher has built a questionnaire to collect the data of the study. The researcher has distributed open questions to the EFL instructors and elicits the items of the questionnaire from the instructors' responses on the open question. The questionnaire consisted of three dimensions: the teaching strategies, learner's behavior, and classroom management. The teaching strategies dimension consists of eleven items, the learner's behavior dimension consists of eight items, and the classroom management dimension consists of eight items.

The researcher has designed the questionnaire by using Google forms to be able to distribute it to the participants electronically via the following link: <https://forms.gle/kjwy>

### **Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire**

To obtain the validity of the questionnaire, it was given to specialists in methodology and applied linguistics. They suggested some recommendations which have been taken into consideration.

To obtain the reliability of the questionnaire, it has been distributed to a pilot sample which consisted of 12 English language instructors at the University of Anbar. After 10 days the questionnaire has been re-distributed to the same sample under the same conditions. After analyzing the items of the questionnaire, the reliability coefficient was revealed to be 0.88 via using Cronbach Alpha. The result indicates that the dimensions and the items of the questionnaire are acceptable.

## **Results of the Study**

### **Result of the first Question:**

To answer the first question of the study "Are there a difference between instructors' perspectives toward teaching via electronic platforms and face-to-face, a percentage was used. The instructors' perspectives are as follows:

66.7% of the participants have neutral perspectives toward teaching via electronic platforms, 22.2% have negative perspectives towards teaching via electronic platforms, and 11.1% have positive perspectives towards teaching via electronic platforms. Concerning face-to-face teaching, 92% of the participants have positive perspectives toward teaching via face-to-face, 6% have neutral perspectives toward teaching via face-to-face and 2% have a negative perspective towards teaching face-to-face. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: Participants' percentages on the type of classrooms.

Classes	Negative	Positive	Neutral
Electronic Platforms	22.20	11.10	66.70
Face-to-Face	2.00	92.00	6.00

### Result of the Second Question

To answer the second question "Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward the teaching strategies used in virtual classes and face-to-face classes? a percentage ratio was used. Table 3 shows the instructors' responses on the items of the teaching strategies dimensions.

**Table 3: Percentage of the Instructors' Responses on the Teaching Strategies Dimension.**

Dimension	Items	Face to face		Electronic Platform	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Teaching Strategies	There is a space for collaborative education.	86.00	14.00	17.00	83.00
	There is a space of creative and innovative aspects.	94.00	6.00	0.00	100.00
	The instructor prepares the teaching materials via multimedia aids before the lecture.	63.00	37.00	91.00	9.00
	There is space to provide immediate feedback.	92.00	8.00	54.00	46.00
	There is a space to understand students' needs.	100.00	0.00	13.00	87.00
	There is a space to use the four language skills in each lecture.	100.00	0.00	8.00	92.00

There is a space for informal assessment.	99.00	1.00	52.00	48.00
The lecture is instructor center.	97.00	3.00	51.00	49.00
There is a space to teach communicative competence (functions are emphasized over forms).	89.00	11.00	27.00	73.00
Need to speak in a slow tone which consumes the lecture time.	13.00	87.00	79.00	21.00
Need to repeat the information several times.	18.00	82.00	93.00	7.00

Table 3 shows that the instructors' responses on the items related to the face-to-face teaching strategies are higher than that of teaching via electronic platforms. The instructors agree 100% on the items entitled "There is a space to understand students' needs" and " There is a space to use the four language skills in each lecture" when teaching face-to-face, while the instructors agree on 13% and 8% when teaching via electronic platforms.

In addition, 87% of the instructors disagree on the item entitled " Need to speak in a slow tone which consumes the lecture time" when teaching face-to-face, while when teaching via electronic platforms only 21% of the instructors disagree on this item. This means that 79% agree that they need to speak in a slow tone which consumes the lecture time. 94% of instructors agree on the item entitled "There is a space of creative and innovative aspects" when teaching face-to-face, while 100% of the instructors disagree on the same item when teaching via electronic platforms.



### Result of the Third Question

To answer the third question "Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward the learners' behaviors in the virtual classes and face-to-face classes?", a percentage ratio was used. Table 4 shows the instructors' responses on the items of the Learners' Behaviors dimension.

**Table 4: Percentage of the Instructors' Responses on the Learners' Behaviors dimension.**

Dimension	Items	Face to face		Electronic Platform	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Learners' Behaviors	students are motivated by the desire to learn, rather than by grades or degree requirements	90.00	10.00	46.00	54.00
	Students prepared the materials before the lecture.	88.00	12.00	16.00	84.00
	There is a space for peer interaction.	85.00	15.00	23.00	77.00
	students' trends towards learning are passive	11.00	89.00	88.00	12.00
	Students can provide immediate responses to a given question.	98.00	2.00	51.00	49.00
	All students follow the lesson's material in the textbook during the lecture.	93.00	7.00	5.00	95.00
	Silent is dominated the classroom environment (students prefer to be the distance from the instructor)	43.00	57.00	98.00	2.00
	There is a space for social isolation and hand flapping.	97.00	3.00	8.00	92.00

Table 4 shows that the instructors' responses on the items related to the learners' behaviors dimension are as follows: the percentage ratio of the items related to face-to-face teaching is higher than the percentage ratio of the items related to the electronic platforms. 98% of the instructors agree on

the items entitled " Students can provide immediate response to a given question" and " There is a space for social isolation and hand flapping" that can be done in face-to-face classes, while in electronic platforms only 51% and 8% of instructors agreed that such items can be implemented. While the negative item that is entitled " students' trends towards learning are passive" only 11% of the instructors agreed to be implemented in face-to-face classroom, while 88% of instructors' responds agree that students have passive trends toward learning via electronic platforms.

### Result of the Fourth Question

To answer the fourth question "Are there differences between English language instructors' perspectives toward the classroom management in the virtual classes and face-to-face classes?", a percentage ratio was used. Table 5 shows the instructors' responses on the items of the classroom management dimension.

**Table 5: Percentage of the Instructors' Responses on the classroom management dimension.**

Dimension	Items	Face to face		Electronic Platform	
		Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
Classroom Management	There is a space for affective (emotional) domain.	100.00	0.00	7.00	93.00
	Believe in teaching the English language via electronic platforms.	6.00	94.00	50.00	50.00
	There is a space for sconsidering students' diverse background.	92.00	8.00	36.00	64.00
	Students' attendance is in the normal range.	100.00	0.00	14.00	86.00
	The first language is allowed for technical purposes.	0.00	100.00	79.00	21.00
	There is a space to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning.	94.00	6.00	17.00	83.00
	There is a space to maintain	100.00	0.00	0.00	100.00

	good eye contact.				
	There is a space to change position appropriately with actions.	78.00	22.00	0.00	100.00

Table 5 shows that the instructors' responses on the items related to face-to-face classroom management have a high percentage that percentage related to the items of the classroom management in the electronic platforms. 100% of the instructors agree on the items entitled " There is a space for affective (emotional) domain", " Students' attendance is in the normal range", and " There is a space to maintain good eye contact" in face-to-face classroom management, while the same items scored 7%, 14%, and 0% respectively when implementing them in electronic platforms.

### Discussion of the Results of the Study

The results obtained from the analysis process, of the instructors' responses on the items of the questionnaire, revealed that there was a huge gap between the teaching strategies, students' behaviors, and classroom management when delivering instruction via the electronic platforms and face-to-face classroom. From the EFL instructors' perspectives, the diverse teaching strategies and techniques were more applicable in the face-to-face classroom than in electronic platforms.

In the face-to-face classroom there was a space for collaborative education, creative and innovative aspects, understanding students' needs, use the four language skills in each lecture, informal assessment, teaching communicative competence (functions are emphasized over forms), and there was no need to repeat the information several times.

While such strategies and techniques are very limited to be implemented in the electronic platforms which recently became tools that are being used to deliver teaching such as Google classrooms, Google meets,

zoom platforms, FCC platforms, and the different types of social media applications.

The gap has existed in students' behaviors too, the students' behaviors in face-to-face classrooms were more flexible, reliable, manageable, understandable, and active than in electronic platforms, which were characterized with rigid and artificial behavior.

In the face-to-face classrooms students were motivated by the desire to learn, rather than by grades or degree requirements, students prepared the materials before the lecture, there was a space for peer interaction, students can provide immediate responses to a given question, all students follow the lesson's material in the textbook during the lecture, there was a space for social isolation and hand flapping, there was a space for an affective (emotional) domain, there was a space for considering students' diverse background, students' attendance was in the normal range, the first language was not allowed, there was a space to help learners eliminate psychological barriers to learning, and there was a space to maintain good eye contact.

While teaching via electronic platforms all the mentioned features above can be implemented in a very limited range and capacity, and some of them cannot be achieved such as there is no space to maintain good eye contact, there is no space to change position appropriately with actions, and all students follow the lesson's material in the textbook during the lecture without integrating additional sources.

In brief, there are negative educational effects of using electronic platforms in teaching the English language at the Departments of English in the University of Anbar, even though that using electronic platforms have positive effects on developing students' knowledge, but the effect size of gaining knowledge is not positive as the students get the same knowledge from face-to-face instruction.

The researcher infers that the best solution to overcome the educational instruction obstacles is to use blended learning, integrate technology in the educational process, and use face-to-face instruction to add spirit to the educational process. This inference is supported by the findings of Arslan's (2020) study, he analyzed more than 78 studies that revealed the technology and the digital materials which have facilitated the teaching process.

In addition, this fact is supported by the findings of a Dissertation conducted by Challob (2018) who found that there is a positive effect of using blended learning in developing EFL language writing and their perceptions toward learning the English language.

### **Conclusion**

The results revealed that students need to contact the materials and the supervisors or the instructors, the tangible emotion, materials, feelings, motivation, and atmosphere are required to achieve the goal of education in general and teaching the English language in specific.

The use of a variety of teaching methods in a pedagogical context is necessary for developing learners' competence. Such a thing is very difficult to be achieved when using electronic platforms and can be only achieved in face-to-face classrooms.

Finally, classroom management is out of the instructor's control due to the virtual nature of the educational process. Several arguments and many justifications that a learner can resort to in evading the reality or the instructor's authority during the instruction process. The virtual realm has its feature, that the pedagogical realm needs to cope with, it is a fact that all educational institutions need to be aware of.

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