

ANALYSIS OF PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITTEN PRODUCTION IN FRENCH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE: EVOLUTION AND IMPACTS

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Abstract: This article delves into the instruction of writing in French as a language (FSL) and explores the teaching methods utilized for this purpose, along with their development and the transformations they have undergone over time. It provides an examination of modern techniques as well as the progression of teaching writing in FFL throughout recent decades. The factors influencing these approaches are scrutinized, including advancements in technology shifts in learners as well as instructors' attitudes and perspectives vis a vis improvements in language studies. Correspondingly, the strengths and weaknesses of teaching methods in FFL context are identified. This study aims to explore how French writing has evolved over time by analyzing teaching methods such as the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio Oral Approach, Audiovisual Global Approach, Communicative Approach, Cognitive Approach and Skills-based Approach. The research focuses on understanding how each of these methods impacts the teaching of writing in a language and contributes to the enhancing language skills, among learners.

Keywords: Teaching. Approaches, Language Skills, Learners.

ANALYSE DES APPROCHES PÉDAGOGIQUES DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT DE LA PRODUCTION ÉCRITE EN FRANÇAIS LANGUE ÉTRANGÈRE : EVOLUTION ET IMPACTS

Résumé : Cet article se concentre sur l'enseignement de la production écrite en français langue étrangère (FLE) et examine les approches pédagogiques utilisées pour cet enseignement, ainsi que leur évolution et les influences qu'elles ont subies au fil du temps. Il examine en détail les méthodes traditionnelles et innovantes, ainsi que l'évolution de l'enseignement de la production écrite en FLE au cours des dernières décennies. Les influences qui ont façonné ces approches pédagogiques sont également analysées, telles que les développements technologiques, les changements dans les attitudes et les perceptions des apprenants et des enseignants, ainsi que les avancées en matière de recherche linguistique. Enfin, les avantages et les limites des différentes approches pédagogiques pour l'enseignement de la production écrite en FLE sont identifiés.

Mots-clés : Enseignement ; Approches ; Compétences linguistiques ; Apprenants.

Introduction

Throughout the years, the way foreign languages are taught in writing has undergone significant changes influenced by various teaching methods, like the grammar translation approach, the direct method and others (Cuq & Gruca 2005). such, as the audio oral approach, audiovisual structural global approach, communicative approach, cognitive approach and skills-based approach (Germain, 1993). Various approaches to foreign language teaching have different perspectives on the incorporation of written tasks and their impact on language proficiency. For instance, the traditional grammar-translation method emphasized writing exercises that involved translation between languages, while also giving importance to speaking skills (Cuq & Gruca, 2005). In contrast, modern methods such as the communicative approach placed a greater emphasis on oral communication than on writing (Germain, 1993). Similarly, the audio-oral and audiovisual approaches followed suit by prioritizing listening and speaking skills over writing (Defays et al., 2003). In recent times, newer models of communication and competency have aimed to strike a balance by situating writing within authentic communicative contexts for practical language use (Manchón, 2009). This indicates a shift in teaching approaches, moving away from rigid grammar-centered writing tasks towards a perspective that views writing as a multifaceted skill closely intertwined with overall communication abilities (Kroll, 2003). Scholars have emphasized that language (L2) writing instruction should extend beyond linguistic elements to encompass aspects such as writer identities, audience connections, and real-world contexts (Hyland, 2003; Leki, 2000). There is a growing recognition that the development of writing skills involves considering individual and sociocultural factors that influence the acquisition of writing abilities (Cumming, 2001; Silva, 1993).

The development in these approaches has offered viewpoints on the best ways to enhance foreign language writing abilities moving from strict grammar instruction to using real written genres and tasks for communication (Grabe, 2001). While conventional techniques such as grammar translation and the direct method faced criticism for limiting creativity, contemporary competency based strategies have combined the strengths of various methodological models to revive the importance of writing in language acquisition. In its exploration of teaching method evolution, this study aims to identify factors such as technological advancements, shifts in learner and teacher attitudes, and insights from studies that have influenced the delivery of writing instruction over various time periods. By comparing the strengths and weaknesses of modern teaching techniques, it can inform the development of tailored writing approaches that are most suitable for foreign language learning environments (Manchón, 2009). This research paper seeks to investigate the evolution of teaching methods for written expression in French language instruction over time. Through an examination of influential factors such as technological advancements, shifts in learner and teacher perspectives, and advancements in language studies, the study aims to elucidate the strengths and weaknesses of traditional approaches like grammar-focused learning in comparison to more contemporary methods such as communicative and skills-based approaches. Ultimately, the insights gleaned from this analysis of teaching models can inform the development of tailored writing instruction designed to meet the varied needs of foreign language learners.

1. Statement of the Problem

The evolution of teaching methods for written expression in French language instruction presents a complex landscape influenced by various factors such as technological advancements, shifts in learner and teacher perspectives, and advancements in language studies. Traditional approaches, like grammar-focused learning, have been juxtaposed against contemporary methods such as communicative and skills-based approaches. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches is crucial for developing tailored writing instruction that meets the diverse needs of foreign language learners in FSL contexts.

2. Aim of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the evolution of teaching methods for written expression in French language instruction over time, with a focus on identifying factors such as technological advancements, shifts in learner and teacher perspectives, and advancements in language studies that have influenced the delivery of writing instruction. Additionally, the study aims to compare the strengths and weaknesses of traditional approaches like grammar-focused learning with more contemporary methods such as communicative and skills-based approaches. Ultimately, the insights gained from this analysis of teaching models are intended to inform the development of tailored writing instruction designed to meet the varied needs of foreign language learners.

3. Research Questions

The present study brings about the following research questions:

1. How has the teaching of writing in French as a Second Language (FSL) evolved over time?
2. What are the impacts of various teaching methods, including the Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Audio Oral Approach, Audiovisual Global Approach, Communicative Approach, Cognitive Approach, and Skills-based Approach, on the development of French writing skills?
3. What factors, such as technological advancements, shifts in learner and teacher attitudes, and insights from language studies, have influenced the evolution of teaching methods for French writing instruction?

4. Research Hypothesis

The use of methods based on creativity and personal expression improves the quality of written production in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) learners.

5. The Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study explores the evolution of teaching methods for writing in French as a Second Language (FSL) and French as a Foreign Language (FFL) instruction, drawing on research by Cuq & Gruca (2005), Germain (1993), Manchón (2009), and others. It examines historical progression from traditional approaches like the grammar translation method to contemporary methodologies like communicative and skills-based approaches, considering how pedagogical practices have adapted to changing educational paradigms. Central to the framework is an analysis of pedagogical approaches, including traditional grammar instruction and modern communicative methods, and their effectiveness in enhancing French writing proficiency. It also addresses factors influencing teaching methods such as technological advancements and

sociocultural influences, and integrates language acquisition theories to understand how writing proficiency is shaped by linguistic elements and real-world contexts. Overall, the framework aims to provide nuanced insights into teaching methods for French writing instruction, informing the development of tailored approaches to meet the diverse needs of learners in FSL and FFL contexts.

6. The Methodological Framework

The SGAV methodology, pioneered by Pavao Guberina in 1965, emphasizes two critical components for language acquisition: visual imagery and auditory input. Guberina advocated for the fusion of sound with images to enrich comprehension and retention of a language. He posited that language acquisition is facilitated through both auditory and visual recognition. This approach has prompted inquiries into the integration of visual aids in language education. Research suggests that incorporating such aids can positively influence students' learning outcomes and motivation levels (Mayer & Moreno, 2003; Sweġler, 2005). Consequently, the SGAV methodology has transformed language teaching by underscoring the significance of image and sound in language learning (Curran, C. A., 1976) According to J. Cureau (1968: 461), the SGAV method comprises four main elements: "audio," "visual," "structuro," and "global." It centers on everyday verbal communication in French. In practice, the SGAV method is implemented by presenting recorded sketches accompanied by still films in the classroom. These film images are integrated into the student book, alongside corresponding dialogues. The lesson typically unfolds in four stages: presentation, explanation, repetition, and transposition (Guberina, P., 1965). However, this method may render learners passive, as they often fail to take initiative. They may learn structures mechanically through exercises. Within this method, writing was not deemed significant but rather viewed as an extension of speaking. According to H. Besse (1985: 44), "language is primarily perceived as a means of oral expression and communication, with writing seen only as a derivative of the oral form, with spoken French being prioritized." SGAV methodologies considered reading optional in language learning, as it did not stimulate learners' hearing (e.g., films with subtitles). Ultimately, the audio-visual structuro-global approach does not accord great importance to the written word in foreign language learning. Instead, it deems oral communication more essential, especially at the onset of learning. Consequently, word dictation remains the preferred exercise for refining written production skills (Mayer, R. E., & Moreno, R., 2003).

7. The different methods.

7.1 *The Traditional Method*

The grammar translation technique, a conventional approach, was widely employed from the 1700s through much of the 20th century. Its aim was to facilitate the understanding and translation of literary texts in a foreign language through a systematic process: initially, by comprehending and elucidating word meanings, followed by the introduction of grammatical rules, and concluding with the translation of short sentences and texts authored by others. During the 18th century, translation exercises typically revolved around thematic content, while the 19th century saw the introduction of the version-grammar method, which involved breaking down foreign-language texts into segments and translating them word-for-word into the native language. According to C. Puren (1988: 23), the widespread adoption of this methodology spurred the development of newer, more contemporary theories, ultimately paving the way for the emergence of direct methodology. In the past, the teacher was regarded as the sole arbiter of knowledge, and classroom interaction was primarily one-directional, with information flowing from the teacher to the students. The teacher's role was characterized by complete dominance over the class, possessing knowledge and authority, formulating questions, correcting answers, and reprimanding errors, which were viewed as

punishable linguistic offenses. The primary objective of the teacher was to enforce linguistic norms. According to the traditional method, the status of the learner was characterized by the following aspects:

- Passivity in the learning process,
- The importance of individual effort,
- Total submission to the teacher's authority,
- The teacher's rejection of error and hesitation,
- Lack of creativity.

In the traditional teaching approach, written language held sway, often overshadowing oral communication. Classroom instruction predominantly revolved around written activities, which sometimes hindered students' ability to express themselves orally. In Algeria, post-colonial era, French language instruction initially centered on studying French literature, gradually incorporating works by Algerian authors (Batsita, N. 2017). These curricula heavily emphasized written language, alongside moralistic themes. Activities primarily involved rote memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary, often presented in isolation.

It is evident that rigid adherence to grammatical rules and memorization of vocabulary lists was not conducive to genuine development of writing skills. While this approach may have been effective for producing adept translators of literary texts, it fell short in nurturing proficient writers in the target language (Stern, H. H. 1983).

7.2 Direct method

Direct methodology, which emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, is seen as a response to traditional methodology in the teaching of modern foreign languages. According to C. Puren, it is considered to be the first specific method for teaching foreign languages. Proponents of this methodology emphasize the practical aspect of language, using it as a communication tool to connect with foreign speakers (Berlitz, M. D. 1838).

In the direct methodology, teachers are assigned several responsibilities aimed at immersive language learning experiences. These include communicating solely in the target language, avoiding translation into the native tongue, employing various visual aids such as objects, images, and non-verbal cues to convey the meanings of new words, utilizing mimics and gestures to aid comprehension, posing questions and guiding reading activities, and dedicating substantial class time to oral interaction (Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. 2014).

Within this method, learners are accorded a special status, emphasizing active participation and engagement in the language learning process. In direct methodology, writing is related to the background and priority is given to oral learning of the target language. Writing activities such as dictation, reproducing stories reading in class and free composition exercises are less common in this pedagogical approach. However, this does not mean that writing is totally absent from the direct method (A. P. R. 1984). Students are expected to engage in writing practice as a secondary aspect to speaking. Writing tasks within the direct methodology may include activities such as taking notes while participating in exercises, composing sentences or paragraphs to summarize a dialogue, or transcribing recorded conversations. The main purpose of integrating writing into the direct methodology is to improve students' comprehension and language production skills by providing practice opportunities and encouraging them to reflect on their language usage. Although speaking is

prioritized, writing still contributes to mastering the target language within this method. The learner status via the direct method.

The learners' role in the direct method differs significantly from that of traditional teaching approaches. In this method, the emphasis is on actively involving learners in constructing their knowledge rather than passively absorbing information. Learners are encouraged to take a proactive approach, demonstrating motivation and investing effort in understanding concepts. They are also prompted to participate in role-playing scenarios, which facilitate comprehension and retention of information. Additionally, learners are encouraged to incorporate body movements while expressing themselves verbally, which aids in understanding and internalizing the language. Essentially, the direct method empowers learners by placing them at the forefront of knowledge acquisition, giving them an active role in their learning journey.

7.3 *The Audio-oral Approach*

The audio-oral approach was introduced in the USA in the 1940s to meet the US Army's need for language training for its service men. This approach is based on Bloomfield's structuralist model and draws on behaviorist conditioning theories. According to this approach, learning a language involves assimilating a set of linguistic structures through exercises such as repetition in order to form linguistic automatisms and habits. (Bloomfield, L. 1933). The teaching materials used in the sixties and early seventies were designed to develop all four language skills with the emphasis on oral expression. As far as written expression was concerned, the material offered numerous activities but these were often limited to transformation and substitution exercises, or to compositions in which the learner was encouraged to use the linguistic structures presented orally. (Larsen-Freeman, D. 2000). The English teachers Palmer and West developed the principle of transformation and substitution exercises. This method involves modifying elements in previously taught linguistic structures to enable the learner to produce appropriate responses. Léonard's French as a Foreign Language textbook *Paroles et pensées* (1965) incorporates this method by proposing written exercises aimed at practicing specific linguistic structures, such as the formation of comparative sentences. (Finocchiaro, M., & Brumfit, C. 1983). In addition to written exercises, Léonard's manual (1965) offers composition topics that encourage the learner to imitate the texts presented at the beginning of the lesson. For example, one such topic is "A memorable day in your life" in which the learner must recount a memorable day using indirect discourse and reformulate the conversations that take place. Another topic is "A conversation with a police officer", which invites the learner to imagine a conversation with a police officer using the linguistic structures taught in lesson 9 of the manual. Writing pastiches of texts can be challenging without a comprehensive understanding of how a model functions, and this aspect is often overlooked. As a result, learners' written output may remain superficial and fail to develop competence in written production. As John Hattie points out: "When tasks are too simple, they do not allow the learner to build more complex knowledge and skills" (Hattie, 2009). It is therefore important to provide learners with writing tasks that encourage them to develop their understanding of text structures and their ability to produce texts independently.

7.4 *The Communicative Approach*

Towards the end of the 1960s, the audio-oral approach to language teaching began to lose popularity. Learners, when faced with real-life communication situations with native speakers, found it difficult to apply the linguistic structures they had learned in class. It is therefore necessary to find solutions to meet their communication needs. The main aim of the communicative approach to language teaching is to enable learners to communicate effectively in real-life communicative situations. As Tanriverdieva (2002) points out, this method is called an "approach" because it is based on theoretical principles borrowed from various disciplines including sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and pragmatics. According to Littlewood (1981), this approach emphasizes the importance of communication as an interactive process, involving the expression and understanding of messages in a given cultural context. Therefore, the primary objective of the communicative approach is to cultivate genuine, culturally relevant communicative skills in learners, empowering them to actively participate in meaningful social interactions. Hymes' work in the United States, along with contributions from a team of experts associated with the Council of Europe (including publications such as "Threshold Level English" in 1975 and "Un niveau seuil" in 1976, authored by Coste et al.) inaugurated a new conception of language didactics placing the emphasis on communication and social interaction. Henceforth, the content taught had to meet learners' communicative needs rather than dictated by pre-established linguistic rules. Although knowledge of language structures is necessary for communication, it is not sufficient (Germain, 1983). In today's world, the written word holds increasing value, as communication encompasses various forms such as understanding written documents, drafting memos, or communicating instructions in writing. Moirand emphasizes that teaching writing should no longer focus solely on analyzing language and producing grammatically correct sentences in isolation. Today, writing serves as a distinct means of communication and must be taught accordingly, emphasizing communication through and with the written word. To illustrate this approach, Moirand proposes an innovative method for teaching written production in a foreign language in his book "Situation d'écrit" (1979: 9). This method is based on acquiring reading strategies through the study of non-literary writings such as newspaper articles, business letters, reports, or summaries, before gradually transitioning to the production of similar writings. In the communicative approach, learners are encouraged to be active participants in classroom activities. Language learning becomes a collaborative effort between learner and teacher, with both parties engaged in lesson creation and concept understanding. While the teacher remains present to guide and support learners, they often adopt a more facilitative role to allow learners to take ownership of their learning journey. In summary, writing holds a significant place in the communicative approach as it enables learners to develop communicative competence in the target language. Through writing, learners gain insights into the social, cultural, and pragmatic norms of communication in that language.

7.5 The Cognitive Approach

In the 1970s, the cognitivism movement emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of structuralism and behaviorism in the field of learning. Cognitivist researchers, including Ausubel and Carroll (1971) in the realm of languages, began delving into the mental processes involved in learning situations. Coinciding with the rise of the communicative approach, the cognitivist movement initially sought to enhance the traditional approach by leveraging the strengths of the aural-oral method. While it remained important to develop automatic responses, comprehension was not to be neglected. Both the communicative approach and the cognitive movement emerged around the same time, emphasizing different aspects of language learning. The communicative approach prioritized real communication contexts, while cognitivism underscored the significance of comprehensively understanding language and memorizing linguistic structures. These two approaches complemented each other by combining real communication and interaction with cognitive strategies to enhance learners' ability to communicate effectively in authentic situations. From the cognitivist perspective, language teaching shifted from merely helping learners acquire automatisms to viewing language learning as a creative process where understanding plays a vital role. Cognitive models emphasized the individual as the primary actor in their own learning process. Today, the cognitive approach remains relevant in both research and classroom practice, advocating for a balance between oral and written language teaching. While written production activities are integrated into pedagogical programs, they often serve as simple vehicles for teaching grammar rather than explicitly addressing learners' writing difficulties or fostering the acquisition of effective writing strategies. Nonetheless, some activities, such as composition or gap-fill exercises, are suggested to support learners in developing proficiency in written expression.

7.6 Competency Based Approach

The competency-based approach to teaching, which emerged in the 1970s, shifts the focus from knowledge assimilation to skill acquisition. It aims to develop students' personal and social skills by employing their knowledge in practical activities that extend beyond the classroom. Competence, in this approach, encompasses recognized knowledge or abilities in a particular field, as defined by various scholars. It involves the integration of multiple cognitive resources to solve problem situations effectively. Competence is not just about possessing knowledge or abilities but also about knowing how to act with relevance in a given context. The pedagogical project is a new concept within the competency-based approach, serving as a didactic organizer to achieve a certain level of competency. It encourages teachers to work on problem situations through project-based pedagogy, where learners are actively involved in their learning process. Teachers facilitate rather than dictate, fostering better integration among learners and promoting improved learning outcomes. In a competency-based approach, project writing becomes a significant activity for developing learners' relational, organizational, and scriptural skills. It provides collaborative work experiences, enhances motivation to write, and helps learners overcome writing-related challenges. Writing projects contribute to improving the quality of students' writing by offering a richer and more complex writing experience. Teachers play a pivotal role in this

approach, requiring them to demonstrate creativity, autonomy, and attentiveness to students' needs. They act as facilitators, considering learners' interests and negotiating objectives and means to achieve them. Learners are active participants in their learning journey, engaging in personal research, developing problem-solving skills, and fostering independent learning and critical thinking.

Table 1. Written production in different pedagogical approaches

Approaches	Difficulties with written production
Traditional Method	Focused on grammar and translation, it regards written production as secondary and doesn't allow for any real practice of this skill.
Direct Method	Focused on oral expression, includes written production based on oral models, but this is often limited.
Aural-oral method	Focuses on oral comprehension and expression and can help students develop their written production skills by transcribing dialogues or oral texts.
Structured-global audiovisual method	The authenticity of materials is emphasized and written production is considered important, but students are often asked to write from pre-existing models rather than independently.
Communicative approach	Focused on communication, it places the emphasis on written production, encouraging students to write texts in real-life communication situations.
Cognitive approach	Reflection and metacognition are at the heart of learning, and written production is integrated to help students improve their skills.
Competency-based Approach	Written production is considered a key skill and students are encouraged to write texts in authentic communication situations using planning, writing and revision strategies, as well as language and pragmatic skills.

Source: prepared by the article's author

Different approaches to teaching written production in a foreign language vary in the importance they place on this skill. The traditional approach, centered on grammar and translation, relegates written production to a secondary role, hindering real practice. The direct approach, focused on oral skills, incorporates written production from oral models but often in a limited manner. The audio-oral approach, emphasizing comprehension and oral expression, aids students in developing their written production skills through activities like transcribing dialogues. In the audiovisual structural-global approach, while written production is deemed important, students often rely on pre-existing models rather than writing independently. The communicative approach, prioritizing communication, emphasizes written production by encouraging students to write in authentic communication contexts. In the cognitive approach, reflection and metacognition drive learning, and written production is integrated to enhance students' skills. Lastly, in the competency-based approach, written production is viewed as a key competency, prompting students to write in authentic communication situations using planning, writing, and revision strategies, along with language and pragmatic skills.

8. Results and discussion

The grammar translation method emphasizes instructing students in grammar rules and vocabulary through translation. Students frequently translate sentences and passages from their native language to the target language and vice versa. While this technique helps grasp the language's framework, it may not provide opportunities for writing practice and genuine interaction. The direct approach prioritizes teaching the target language without relying on translations. Students immerse themselves in authentic contexts to acquire the language, similar to how they learned their native language. This approach can enhance writing skills by emphasizing written work and communication. However, it may lack a structured approach for mastering grammar and vocabulary. The audio-oral method emphasizes understanding and speaking the language. Students practice phrases and conversations to improve pronunciation and language comprehension. Although beneficial for oral skills, it may not offer opportunities for written learning. The global approach integrates grammar instruction with real-world scenarios. Students learn grammar rules and new vocabulary by immersing themselves in contexts, utilizing media like videos and audio recordings. This method enhances writing skills by demonstrating grammar and vocabulary application in various situations. However, some may find it less interactive compared to other methodologies. The communicative method focuses on promoting communication in the target language. Students engage in real-life communication scenarios, such as role-playing, group conversations, and projects. While this approach improves writing skills through written expression and interaction, it may not fully support mastering grammar and vocabulary. The cognitive approach encourages self-reflection in learners to enhance their learning process and discover effective study techniques. Learners analyze their learning methods and adapt them to their preferences. This approach benefits written education by allowing learners to tailor their study techniques to their learning style. However, it may lack a structured framework for mastering grammar and vocabulary. The competency-based method aims to enhance language abilities required for real-life interactions. Students learn to use the language to achieve communication objectives. This technique improves writing skills by focusing on communication and written expression. However, learners may need proficiency in the target language to actively engage in communication tasks. In summary, each method and approach to learning writing has its pros and cons. Some provide structure and guidance for grammar and vocabulary learning, while others emphasize authentic communication and written production. It's crucial to choose a method that suits each learner's learning style and meets their language skills needs.

Conclusion

It is true that despite the progression through various stages, there can be a sense of stagnation in the teaching of written expression. However, certain enduring ideas have become integrated, such as recognizing the equal importance of oral and written expression, as well as the value of a rich vocabulary. As Porcher (1986: 64) emphasizes, acquiring knowledge doesn't mean discarding what has been previously learned but rather expanding upon it. The competency-based approach, among others, drawing from the strengths of earlier methods, has played a significant role in reinstating writing to its rightful place in foreign

language education, particularly in terms of written comprehension and expression. Reflecting on the historical trajectory, it's evident that the teaching of written production often followed a hierarchical approach, beginning with the mastery of grammar and spelling rules deemed fundamental. However, this approach can stifle creativity and limit freedom of expression, often confining written output to rigidly structured and guided sentences, as seen in grammar-translation methods or the audiovisual structuro-global approach. While each method has its merits and drawbacks, all have contributed to the evolution of teaching written production in foreign languages. The communicative and competency-based approaches appear to be particularly effective in enhancing students' language skills by emphasizing communication and practical language use in authentic contexts. Therefore, it's crucial to consider these diverse approaches when designing tailored teaching programs aligned with learners' needs and objectives.

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