

# ENHANCING THE SAFETY OF FOREIGN WORKERS THROUGH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT AND THE COMPETENT USE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES (ICTS)

## *MENINGKATKAN KESELAMATAN PEKERJA ASING MELALUI PENINGKATAN KEMAMPUAN BERBAHASA (TIK)*

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### ABSTRAK

*Fokus penelitian ini untuk mengetahui bagaimana pengetahuan bahasa asing dan kompetensi dalam penggunaan teknologi informasi dan komunikasi (TIK) berkontribusi terhadap keselamatan orang Indonesia yang bekerja di luar negeri. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian berbasis kuesioner dan wawancara semi terstruktur dengan pekerja Indonesia yang bekerja di sektor informal, terutama sebagai pekerja rumah tangga di Singapura, Taiwan, Malaysia, dan Hongkong. Metode ini menghasilkan data korelasional dan kualitatif yang kaya sehingga memberikan pemahaman mendalam mengenai pengetahuan tentang bahasa dan kompetensi pada teknologi informasi dan komunikasi berkontribusi terhadap keselamatan orang Indonesia di negara-negara ini. Dengan demikian, hasil yang didapatkan membuktikan kegunaan pemahaman bahasa yang berbeda dan juga manfaat mempunyai kompetensi bahasa dalam penggunaan telepon seluler sebagai salah satu contoh teknologi informasi dan komunikasi. Penelitian ini menjadi dasar bagi perusahaan di daerah agar merekrut pekerja dengan kompetensi bahasa untuk menjamin keamanan mereka saat bekerja di luar negeri.*

**Kata kunci:** bahasa Inggris, teknologi informasi dan komunikasi, pekerja migran Indonesia

### ABSTRACT

The focus for this research was how the knowledge of a foreign language and the competence in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) contributed to the safety of Indonesians working abroad. The study was questionnaire-based research and semi-structured interviews with Indonesian workers working in the informal sectors, particularly as domestic workers in Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and Hongkong. The method led to rich correlational and qualitative data providing an in-depth understanding of how knowledge of a language and competence on information and communication technologies contributed to the safety of Indonesians in these countries. Thus, the results provided here have proved the usefulness of understanding different languages and also the benefit of being competent on the use of cellular phones as an example of information and communication technology. This research provides a basis for suggesting areas where recruiting companies can intervene to ensure safety while working over-seas.

Keywords: English, information and communication technology, Indonesian migrant workers

## INTRODUCTION

The influx of millions of people on the move today requires the world's policy-makers and political leaders ensure that migration takes place in ways that are fair, mutually beneficial and respectful of human rights (Chungong, M., Al-Hussein, R., Zeid, & Ryder, 2015). This is crucial due to the increasingly world's largest ungoverned space, which calls for an understanding of nearly every aspect of life from the minutiae of our daily lives to more fundamental questions about identity, relationships and even our own security through

the power of technology and language (Schmidt & Cohen, 2013).

With the present day rapid growth and development, the world-over, a good command of language and better knowledge of communication technologies are crucial components of fostering a dynamic workforce and are always needed to facilitate quick and smooth communication between workers and their employers. Understanding a language helps workers engage in a meaningful communication about real actions, real things, and their real lives (Azar, 2006), while being

knowledgeable in the use of information and communication technologies encourages globalisation and exchange of information on several issues, including security and individual safety. These two soft skills are fundamental for migrant workers (Beqiri, 2016).

Studies have continued to show that working in multiple territories as a migrant worker, effective use of other languages, health and safety communication is literally important (Everson, 2014). RosPA Guest (2014) in the article on inadequate communication mentions that most of the risk enhancing factors with migrant workers are related to inadequate communication, such as a lack of spoken or written English, or limited understanding of other languages, as well as poor comprehension (understanding information and communication) signs or signals. This is one of the factors leading to many migrant workers subjected to labour exploitation and abuse.

Studies on recruitment processes and working conditions for low-skilled migrants consistently reveal indicators of abuse commonly associated with labour exploitation due to miscommunication (ILO, 2012). For Indonesians, the most common gender which opts much for foreign domestic jobs are women. It is estimated around 49,6 million Indonesians work abroad and most of them (around 70%) are women, most are employed in domestic sector as maid or domestic helper and manufacture sector), where most of them are prone to exploitation.

However, most of them are departed with little or no language competence. This obviously leads to a gap in communication between these workers and their employers. Therefore, one important thing that should be met by the workers going abroad is the language issue. The language should be well understood since it serves as the

main key in communication. In addition, with good language understanding, the workers are more capable of making negotiation regarding their jobs and they will not be misguided by any parties taking the advantages on their ignorance. The issue of the settlement of Indonesian house-maids abroad is an on-going discussion. The point in question regards the lack of protection of the workers and their lack of skills that eventually impact on their safety during their staying over-seas. One of the major factors causing persecution and violence of workers' over-seas is the limited knowledge of foreign languages to the countries of destination.

Language is just knowledge of words with no natural boundaries and it is just a part of knowledge that deals with words, and in that respect it is like the part of knowledge that deals, say, with telephone numbers (Hudson, 2003). In an explanation Hudson (2003) further suggests that it is a cognitive linguistics view which is divided into sub-areas and no boundaries, in contrast with the traditional division of knowledge into boxes. This implies that language is very easy to learn and there is nothing special with one's cognition in acquiring a new language. This motivates those seeking foreign jobs to learn a new language with ease. Speaking in general is using background and linguistic knowledge to create an oral message that will be meaningful for the intended audience (Chastan, 1988; Arnold, 2000). Arnold (2000) says that "it is taking thoughts and putting them into words and saying them, with much of this process being done unconsciously". In other words, speaking a second language requires one to learn, build and organize as many vocabularies as possible. This is the only way one can communicate in a second language. According to Cargile et al (1994), language attitude has a long

history which stretches across several decades and established within different social scientific disciplines. This implies that language is a powerful social force that does more than conveying intended referential information; for better or worse, hearers may react to linguistic and paralinguistic variation in messages as though they indicate both personal and social characteristics of the speaker (Cargile, Giles, Ryan, & Bradac, 1994). Why, discuss language attitude? Because it is individual attitudes which influence communication within society.

Krech, Crutfield and Ballachey (1962) see attitude as a system which contains three components; cognition, feelings, and action tendency. Huitt, W. & Cain, (2005) have summarized psychologist views about these three components on attitude as follow:

- (1) Cognitive component concerns with the knowledge regarding surrounding environment and ideas that are usually categories.
- (2) Affective component concerns with feeling or emotion that colors or fills the spirit of knowledge or ideas containing in the cognitive component.
- (3) This component deals with the value of “good or not good”, “happy or not happy”. The feeling of good or happy shows positive attitude and conversely the feeling of not happy or not good shows negative attitude.
- (4) Conative component concerns with one’s tendency to act or react in particular way.

Language Behavior explains a behaviorist theory on how humans develop language- it’s a process of building language skills on top of each other as a result from interacting with the environment (Language Behavior-n.d; Alleydog.com’s). Delays in acquiring age-appropriate verbal repertoires in

preschool children with no known organic etiology may be explained by defective or absent behavior-environmental contingencies (Drash and Tudor, 1993). Desirable sounds made by infants are reinforced and these build on each other and eventually form the ability to speak languages (Language Behavior-n.d; Alleydog.com’s).

Human behavior comprises anything resulting from one’s experience and interaction with his environment in the forms of knowledge, attitude, and action In other words, human behavior refers to several activities which include walking, talking, reacting, dressing, thinking and among others which are observable directly or indirectly .This means that it is only a person’s actions or activities which can be considered behavior. In relation to this research, language behavior of an employ refers to employ interaction while at work which comprise of activities such as talking (talking to customers, colleagues, or to employer/subordinates), writing (writing report/paper), listening (listening to customer’s complaints, listening superordinate orders) and of course interactions via information and communication technologies.

Other than the language, Information and communication technology (ICT) utilisation also serves as an important life supporting factors for the Indonesian workers (Fadhilah and Rachmawati, 2010). In this paper, the terms utilization of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) refers to the making use of cellular phones. For Indonesian workers, this communication device may reduce the distance which makes them hard to communicate directly with their families in their home country. Additionally, this device can be used to interact directly with any related parties when they experience any problems in the country of placement.

In today's rapidly changing world, an understanding of ICTs is very important, since, the functions of a cellular phone can be easily understood. The justify functions of a Cell Phone, Richards (eHow Contributor, No Year) says that cell phones have rapidly evolved from portable phones into devices that also function as alarm clocks, music players, global-positioning satellite, or GPS, devices and much more. This is what makes them become not only flexible long distance communication devices but also: devices to gain information: such as SMS, MMS, Bluetooth, Infra-red, and other features on its internet application; devices to store data and also devices for entertainment. The aspects of communication intensity according to Devito, are as follow:

- (1) The frequency of communication- it regards one's intensity in making communication.
- (2) Duration spent for communication- refers to the length of time spent when communicating.
- (3) Attention given when making communication- is defined as focus given by participants during communication. (DeVito, 2009).

The study of ICT sets to describe the functions of information and communication technology, in regard to the present study, we explore the values of a cellular phone as one form of (ICT) which can be used to enhance understanding and safety of foreign workers. The term ICT utilization capability is used to define workers' ability in making cellular phone technology. In a foreign country, the potential to understand new media for fostering understanding and exchange of information among workers is important. Judicious deployment of ICTs can encourage and sustain cultural and linguistic diversity in individuals (UNESCO, 2004). ICT facilitates understanding and easy

communication among in workers and with their employers. It also encourages rapid and quick communication with respective authorities in case of danger and hardships

Orderliness in communicating shows equality of some activities performed regularly. The level of message broadness when communicating means that the varied topics or messages being discussed and the number of people involved in the communication relate with the quantity of people asked to communicate during the communication. The level of message depth when communicating refers to the message exchanging in a more detailed way marked by honesty, openness, and trust each other among participants during communicating.

Mastering a foreign language of the placement country and the ability to utilize the ICT, cellular phone, may improve the worker's performance in doing the jobs and at the same time avoid them from the violence carried out by the employer in the placement country. Those seeking work in foreign countries, except their countries of origin are vulnerable to work risks which may include exploitation, poor working conditions etc. In the effort to regulate and protect its citizens, the Republic of Indonesia, in article 27 verse (2) of the 1945 constitution regulates work, it is stated that "every citizen has the right to proper work and living with dignity" (Indonesian Republik, 2004) . This article means that the country guarantees the right of its citizens in regard to work. It means that the protection of worker's safety is not only the responsibility of the party hiring them, but also a government responsibility to guarantee safety of its citizens mostly those working as domestic workers abroad (TKI).

Today, government regulates Indonesian Workers overseas (TKI)

through Act No 39 year 2004 regarding Settlement and Protection. However, though the Government of Indonesia regulates work and working conditions through the constitution, it is very difficult to monitor working conditions of its citizens abroad. In a study by Mojab (2001) it was revealed that though at most of the times, immigrants may be having better knowledge compared to the locals of a given country, they are less like accepted for better jobs. They are instead taken on for manual jobs which do not require any skills. This has led to deskilling- a situation where foreign workers are considered potential for manual labour (Mojab, 2001). Most of the foreigners then end-up risking their lives by doing unhealthy jobs and providing services which are unsafe like prostitution for women and drugs for men.

This implies that any measures to protect Indonesian citizens, may only guarantee health working conditions and safety for those workers working in the country. Yet, healthy working conditions and safety are significant factors in the day today running of any company's activities for all workers. Every employee is required to work under good conditions, however, this can only work if their work guarantees safety. In such a situation, better means are needed as alternatives to guarantee safety of a given country's citizens while abroad, among such means is the good knowledge of language and also competence in using cellular phones as one form. Besides, there is need for prior protection.

Due to the need for prior protection, the government of the Republic of Indonesia through Policies and Acts has regulated the conditions and procedures to become a foreign worker commonly known as 'TKI' for particular placements in foreign countries. The existing regulation is found in the Decree

on Transmigration and Man Power of the Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia No Kep-104 A/MEN/2002 which stipulates that every registered potential TKI must firstly, go for on the job counseling and also fulfill all the working requirements. Likewise, in the Act No. 39 year 2004 regarding Settlement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad, the potential TKI is required to meet the following requirements: must be 18 years old, must have attended formal education for at least 21 years (twenty years), or have a certificate acknowledging his or her skills attained through competence test. The Act No.39 year 24 regarding Settlement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Abroad has regulated the protection for TKI from their departure to their return to the homeland.

This research is intended to discover the extent to which the Indonesian worker's foreign language competence and their ICT utilization capability in making use the cellular phone give benefit on their safety level when working in the placement country.

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The study used questionnaire and semi-structured interview as the data collection procedures. The interview were conducted with Indonesian Workers working in the informal sectors, particularly as domestic workers in Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia and Hongkong as the participants of this research. The semi-structured interview was used to gain a fairly open framework which allows focused, conversational, two-way communication with the informants. The developed questionnaire was refined through dialogue with prospective participants. A total of 100 participants, all were recruits of the re-registered group for the working period of 2014. To select the

participants, we performed accidental sampling. This technique is categorized as a non-probability sampling technique which determines the sample based on spontaneous factors. Accidental sampling techniques is also known as convenience sampling technique, the sample units are only selected if they are easily and conveniently accessible (Kimani, 2013).

### Procedure

Prospective participants were asked two questions each to establish eligibility for participation. These questions included: were they currently employed as Indonesian domestic workers? Were they working legally? If the answer to both questions was yes, they were then given a questionnaire, the first page of which consisted the researchers' identities, the institution(s) represented or affiliated with, and the purpose of the study, along with an assurance that their names and contact details were not required in order to participate.

### Correlation Analysis

Through calculation significance, correlation coefficient and the relational direction of both variables to be correlated shall be acknowledged. Determinant coefficient ( $r^2$ ) is the square of the correlation coefficient showing the percentage of Y variable changing that shall be changed as a result of the changes on X variable. The correlation analysis used is the Product Moment correlation stated by Pearson. The technique of this correlation is used to discover the correlation existence between the two variables typed interval. The formula used is:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum X_1 Y_1 - (\sum X_1) (\sum Y_1)}{\sqrt{\{n \sum X_i^2 - (\sum X_i^2)\} \{n \sum Y_i^2 - (\sum Y_i^2)\}}}$$

Information:

$r_{xy}$  = the correlation coefficient sought

$n$  = the number of subjects scored

$X$  = the value of variable 1

$Y$  = the value of variable 2

### Determinant Coefficient (R Square)

Determinant coefficient is the square of the correlation coefficient used to discover the percentage of the influence of independent variable (X) towards the changes on dependent variable (Y).

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### Multiple Regression Testing

The research hypothesis was tested using analysis of simple linear correlation. The analysis consisted of the following variables: the Ability to Communicate in a Foreign Language of the placement country (X1), Communication Intensity (X2) as the independent variable, and Work Safety (Y) as the dependent variable. The model of linear equation can be seen in the following equation:

$$\text{Model: } Y = b_0 + b_1 X_1 + b_2 X_2 + e$$

Multiple determinant coefficient is gained:  $R^2 = 0.417 = 41,70\%$ . Descriptively, the influence of the variables: Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) simultaneously gives impacts on the of variable Work Safety (Y) with 41,70%, and the remaining 58,30% is described by other factors excluded in the model.

### F-Testing

To simultaneously test the significance of influence of the variables: Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) over the Work Safety (Y), F-testing is performed with 95% of trust level. The proposed hypothesis is:

$H_0$  = means that there is no simultaneous influence between the Ability to

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of The Estimate
1	.663 <sup>a</sup>	.417	.403	5.91996

a. Predictors : (Constant). X2, X1

**ANOVA**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1088.528	2	544.264	22.485	.000
	Residual	2347.982	97	24.206		
	Total	3436.510	99			

b. Predictors : (Constant). X2, X1

c. Dependent Variable : Y

Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) over Work Safety (Y).

Ha = means that there is simultaneous influence between the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) over Work Safety (Y).

Testing Criteria:

If  $F_{count} < F_{table}$  or significance  $> 0,05$ ; Ho is accepted and Ha is rejected and that the relation is said to be not significant.

If  $F_{count} > F_{table}$  or significance  $< 0,05$ ; Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted and that the relation is said to be significant.

Based on the simultaneous hypothesis testing the value  $F = 32,485$  is gained with the error probability: p-value (Sig) = 0.05. The value  $F = 32,485$  is bigger than  $F_{table} = 3,090187$  (at  $\alpha = 0,05$  and  $df1 = 2$ ;  $df2 = 97$ ) or is equal to p-value = 0.000 and is smaller than  $\alpha = 0,05$ . It indicates that Ho is rejected which means the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) gives impact simultaneously on the Work Safety (Y) with the error level of 5%.

**T-testing**

After implementing simultaneous F-testing, the analysis is then continued with T-testing to test partially each independent variable: the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) over the dependent variable Work Safety (Y). The proposed hypothesis is:

Ho:  $\rho_1 = 0$  the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language is in accordance with the placement country (X1) and does not affect partially over the Work Safety (Y).

Ha:  $\rho_1 \neq 0$  the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language is in accordance with the placement country (X1) and affects partially over the Work Safety (Y).

Ho:  $\rho_2 = 0$  the Communication Intensity (X2) does not affect partially over the Work Safety (Y).

Ha:  $\rho_2 \neq 0$  the Communication Intensity (X2) affects partially over the Work Safety (Y).

Testing Criteria:

If  $t_{count} > t_{table}$  or  $t_{count} < -t_{table}$  or p-value  $< (\alpha = 0,05)$  Ho is accepted.

If  $t_{table} \leq t_{count} < t_{table}$  or  $t_{count} < t_{table}$  or p-value  $\geq (\alpha = 0,05)$  Ho is rejected and Ha is accepted.

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	22.269	6.503		3.424	.001
	X1	.222	.083	.267	2.684	.009
	X2	.640	.0171	.372	3.743	.000

#### d. Dependent Variable:Y

Partial testing on the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language in accordance with the placement country (X1) over the Work Safety (Y) results in t (X1) of 3,684 with the error probability: p-value (Sig) = 0.009. The value t (X1) = 3,684 is bigger than  $t_{table} = 1,984723$  (at  $\alpha = 0,05$ ). This shows that Ho is rejected and shows that the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language in accordance with the placement country (X1) affects partially over the Work Safety (Y) with the error level of 5%.

Partial testing on the Communication Intensity (X2) over the Work Safety (Y) results in t(X2) of 4,743 with the error probability: p-value (Sig) = 0.000. The value t(X2) = 4,743 is bigger than  $t_{table} = 1,984723$  (at  $\alpha = 0,05$ ). It indicates that Ho is rejected and means that Communication Intensity (X2) affects partially over Work Safety (Y) with the error level of 5%.

Based on simultaneous and partial testing, the multiple linear regression equation is as follow:

$$Y = 32,269 + 0.322 X_1 + 0.740 X_2 + e$$

Where:

Constant  $b_0 = 32,269$ : the mathematics price of the score Y if the score  $X_1 = \text{score } X_2 = 0$ .

Regression coefficient  $X_1: b_1 = 0,322$ ; if the score X1 increases by one unit, at the condition of constant X2 score, then Y score tends to increase by 0,3222 unit.

Regression coefficient  $X_2$   $b_2 =$

0,740 ; if the X2 score increases by one unit, at the condition of constant X1 score, then Y score tends to increase by 0,740 unit.

#### Discussion

As stated in the abstract, the focus for this research was to establish how the knowledge of a foreign language and the competence in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) contributed to the safety of Indonesians working abroad. In the process, we examined Indonesian workers abroad to establish their knowledge regarding foreign languages and their competences in the use of cellular phones as media for communication contributed to their safety while at work.

From the findings in regard the value  $F = 32,485$  is bigger than  $F_{table} = 3,090187$  (at  $\alpha = 0,05$  and  $df1 = 2$ ;  $df2 = 97$ ) or is equal to p-value = 0.000 and is smaller than  $\alpha = 0,05$ . This indicates that Ho is rejected which means the Ability to Communicate in Foreign Language (X1) and Communication Intensity (X2) simultaneously influence Work Safety (Y) with the error level of 5%. While, the partial T-testing of each variable which include ability to communicate in a foreign language (X1) and communication intensity (X2) over the dependent variable which is work safety (Y) partially affect individual work safety.

Based on the calculations, it is therefore, clear that TKI's ability to



communicate in foreign language in accordance with the placement country and their communication intensity in utilizing cellular phone as the media are of great impact on their work safety throughout their period of work and stay over-seas. This is in-line with the argument of Cargile and Giles (1997) who have noted that language is a powerful social force that does more than conveying intended referential information.

Over all, the impacts from both variables are significant, meaning that both are proven to have impacts over TKI's work safety at their work sites. The percentage gained, as illustrated before, is affected by only 47% of the ability to speak foreign language and communication intensity using cellular phone. The remaining 53, 30% of work safety is affected by other variables excluded in this research. Interview is performed to both TKI as respondents and related officers dealing with TKI departure such as BP3TKI. Other things that may affect the safety of the workers at the work sites are also included as consideration such as: Indonesia's applicable Act regarding TKI protection, agreement or memorandum of understanding agreed by Indonesia and other countries to which the workers are sent to work, labor regulation applicable in the placement country, training and counselling before sending the workers to the placement country, and the knowledge and skills of the workers itself that may help them finishing the jobs in the placement country.

Partially or separately, it can be seen that each variable also affects the work safety of the workers. Based on statistical calculation, the ability to speak in foreign language in accordance with the placement country gives small contribution over the work safety of the

workers compared to the communication intensity using cellular phone. It can be described from the result of regression equation:  $Y = 32,269 + 0.322 X_1 + 0.740 X_2 + e$ . The equation shows that if the TKI's foreign language ability increases by one unit, their level of work safety tends to increase by 0,322 unit. If the TKI's communication intensity using cellular phone increases by one unit, their level of work safety tends to increase by 0,740 unit. Therefore, it can be seen that TKI's communication intensity using cellular phone has more impacts on their work safety compared to their ability to speak foreign language in the placement country. Based on the interview with the TKI who becomes research respondent, the ability to speak the language of the placement country does help them to understand the orders given by their superordinate, the ways in doing the jobs, the applicable regulation, and the communication made with their boss, colleagues, and the people around their work sites. However, many of the workers do not fluently speak the language used in their work sites but they have no major difficulties in their work since they understand a little of what are said or instructed through the body languages shown. Due to that, TKIs are still able to perform the job quite well. Basically, foreign language mastery in accordance with the placement country is quite important.

However, based on their assessment, it is more important the communication intensity using cellular phone, particularly when it is related with their work safety at their work sites. By having and utilizing the device for communication, they feel safer because they can contact any related party, either family or authorized officers, for any unwanted situations at the work sites. In conclusion, based on the experience

and opinions of the TKIs as respondent, communication intensity using cellular phone is more affecting and more important for their work safety during working in the work site compared with the ability to speak the language.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research result, it can be concluded that the ability to speak the language of the placement country and the communication intensity using cellular phone simultaneously or partially are felt to have significant impacts on TKIs work safety in the work sites. Simultaneously or overall, the influence of both variable is 41,70%, meaning that it is in the low category. The remaining 58,30% of the TKI's work safety is influenced by other variables excluded in this research. From the two independent variables, the ability to speak the language of the placement country and the communication intensity using cellular phone, the higher influence felt by the respondents is the later that it is said to have more contribution than the former.

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