Evaluation of English Textbooks for Class X Prescribed in BSER and CBSE Schools

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Abstract

In India, the schools are affiliated to Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE) or State Boards of Secondary Education. Every state has its own state board of education with its own syllabus. Variation is found in the syllabi of English at secondary school level of different boards. That is why the textbooks prescribed for the schools affiliated to different boards are also different. This study traced the appropriacy of English textbooks prescribed for class X by CBSE and the Board of Secondary Education Rajasthan, Ajmer (BSER). Data were gathered using checklist from the respondents and were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings show that there are various aspects of textbooks with which teachers are quite satisfied. However, there are areas which need modification or to be supplemented by additional materials.

Keywords: *English textbook; Textbook evaluation; Evaluation scheme.*

Introduction

In India, CBSE, ICSE and various other state boards regulate the norms for school education. Schools of the same state are affiliated to different boards. Sometimes, there are multiple boards within a state. Teachers teach different textbooks and use different teaching materials which ultimately affect the teaching and learning process. This process comprises the teacher, the learner, the classroom, the

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curriculum, materials of instruction and administration (Acero, Javier & Castro,2000). The teaching materials and methodology are important aspects of education for imparting knowledge and it engages both the teachers as well as the students. At the secondary level, teachers of English language teaching (ELT) try to teach all four basic language skills: Listening (L), Speaking (S), Reading (R) and Writing (W) which is assumed to develop good communication skills among the students. Being the formative years of education, it is important to pay attention to students studying in Classes IX and X, where they need to have certain basic competency and proficiency in communication skills.

Though the prescribed teaching materials are different in schools affiliated to different boards, the objectives of teaching English language remain the same. Among various secondary education boards, BSER has prescribed one main course book (First Flight: Textbook in English for Class X) along with supplementary reading for Class X as per the guidelines of National Curriculum Framework (NCF)-2005, whereas CBSE has prescribed one book (Literature Reader: Interact in English) along with two supplementary books (grammar practice, main course-communicative) for Class X. This study aimed at evaluating the English textbooks used in various schools of Rajasthan affiliated to BSER and CBSE for teaching English in Class X by using checklist method. To gauge the level and degree of appropriacy, the parameters used by the teachers who handle these textbooks for evaluating them were (a) aims and objectives, (b) design and organisation, (c) language content, and (d) additional teaching aids.

Theoretical Background: An Overview

Teaching and learning of a language are closely related processes. One is incomplete without the other. According to Dessus, Mandin and Zampa (2008), teaching and learning are causally tightly bound activities, so questioning "what is learning?" might lead to have a closer look about what precisely are the components of teaching—and their underlying principles as well—that can cause efficient learning. Earlier researches focused only on language analysis; only after when the language systemisation was done, learning factors were incorporated in the domain of language teaching and learning (Suharno, 2010, p.48). "The conceptualisation of language teaching has a long, fascinating, but rather tortuous history" (Stern, 1983, p.453). A similar view has been expressed by Brown (1994,

p.52) when he points out "changing winds and shifting sands of language teaching".

Theorists like Skinner, Pavlov, Chomsky, Vygotsky and Piaget have proposed different theories on different aspects about how second language learning takes place. However, the process of learning a language still seems fluctuating. There are different language learning theories such as behaviourism, nativism, cognitivism, etc. Anthony's (1963) model of 'Method' was modified by Richards and Rodgers (1986, p.28) as illustrated in Figure.1. In this model, method

(a) is theoretically related to an approach (nature of language and language learning),

(b) is organisationally determined by a design (objectives, syllabus, role of learner and teacher, activities), and

(c) is practically realised in procedure (technique, practice, actual implementation of teaching in classroom).
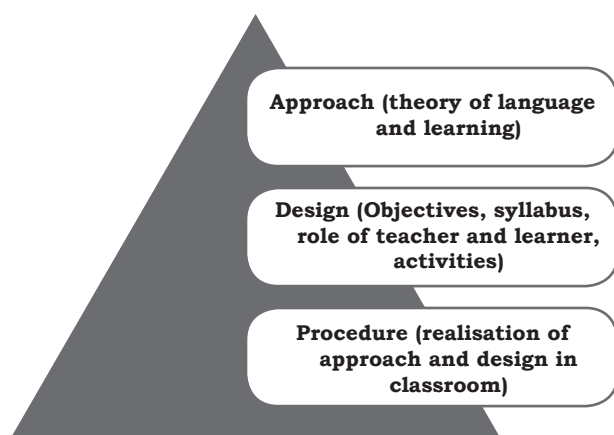

Figure 1: Framework of Method (Adopted from Richards & Rodgers, 1986)

As one theory in isolation cannot address all the aspects of learning, similarly one teaching method cannot be based only on one theoretical approach. "Language teaching is no longer visualised in terms of a single undifferentiated methodological prescription" (Krishnaswamy & Sriraman, 1994, p.105). Mukalel (1998) is also of the view that "teaching English in India has become a complex affair and the problems that arise in our approach to ELT are multidimensional". In other words, the single approach to ELT cannot be a panacea. Except Communicative Language Teaching

(CLT), all the teaching methods like Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Direct Method, Audio Lingual Method, Oral approach, etc have focused only on one or two language skills and do not emphasise on all four skills together (Richards & Rodgers, 1986).

Methods of Teaching English at School Level

English holds the position of second language (L2) in India. It is a compulsory subject in all states. However, it is perceived that the students lack the desired proficiency when it comes to the English language skills even at secondary school level because the students take English merely as a subject. According to NCF-2005, English is one of the subjects in which a large number of students do not fare well, 50 per cent of them fail (as cited in Planning Commission, 2007-2012, p.16).

The teaching methods and materials function as a tool for the betterment of language skills in classroom and can fill this chasm if properly channelised. There is a vast history of evolution of different teaching methods and materials to cater to the need and demand, and thus make the language learning effective and efficient. Different methods -from GTM to Post CLT- are based on different approaches. Kumaravadivelu (2001, p.538) even proposed the concept of Postmethod Pedagogy i.e. Post CLT, "where pedagogy includes issues not only pertaining to classroom teaching and materials, curricular objectives and evaluative parameters but also historical, political and socio-cultural experiences influencing directly or indirectly the L2 teaching".

Schools under BSER broadly follow the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) syllabus. The NCERT has been bringing many changes in curriculum of English, including syllabus, methods and activities for Class IX and X. In 2005, NCERT brought out NCF-2005. NCF-2005 has proposed five guiding principles for curriculum development:

(a) connecting knowledge to life outside the school;
(b) ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods;
(c) enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks;
(d) making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; and
(e) nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

The above stated second principle deals with the changes to be brought in teaching methods which also include teaching materials

and the teacher. In present time, the learning of a language is not only limited to four language skills in isolation but as an integrated whole to achieve communicative competence. Due to this, "the focus is on CLT approach because CLT means little more than an integration of grammatical and functional teaching" (Richards & Rodgers, 1986, p.66). The teachers and the teaching materials are equally important because textbooks might have content but it is the teacher who uses these textbooks. Hence, to have well qualified and trained teachers is very important because it is the teacher who transforms the theory into practice and textbooks help him/her in doing that.

Need for Textbook and Evaluation

"Teachers, students, and administrators are all consumers of textbooks"(Ansary & Babaii, 2002). Textbooks are used not only for English language teaching but for other subjects as well. Textbooks acquire an important position at all levels, be it a school (primary, middle or secondary) or a college. One of the most useful tools an instructor possesses and uses is the textbook (Lamphear, n.d.). Hutchinson and Torres (1994, p.315) opines that, "the textbook is an almost universal element of English language teaching.....No teaching-learning situation, it seems, is complete until it has its relevant textbook".

Textbooks represent the visible heart of any ELT programme, play the double role of teaching material as well as learning material, and serve different purposes for teachers, (Sheldon, 1988; Awasthi, 2006; Garinger, 2002). These points highlight the importance of textbook. O'Neill (1982) says that, "learners who do not work from textbooks may be deprived of orientation. These theorists have argued that the textbooks have an important role to play in English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching, as textbooks make the same easy, efficient, interesting and fruitful. Hence, it is very important that the textbooks selected for the ELT classroom are suitable and in accordance with the need of the learners.

"Educational researchers have continuously pointed out the lack of research centring on textbooks and their role in teaching practice, and have called for more studies in this area" (Fan & Kaeley,1998). Sheldon (1988) also supports the textbook evaluation as textbook selection involves not only educational but administrative (higher authorities, publishers, markets) decisions also. Evaluation would bring all the points like teaching objectives,

teaching criteria and the learners need in picture which would help managerial or teaching staff in selecting the textbooks. Evaluation enables teacher development through helping in giving instructions, lesson preparation, engaging the students in activities and professional empowerment. Tomlinson (2001) contends that textbook evaluation is an applied linguistic activity through which teachers, supervisors, administrators and material developers can make sound judgments about the efficiency of the materials for the teachers using them.

Textbook Evaluation Scheme

"The literature on the subject of textbook evaluation is not very extensive" (Sheldon, 1988, p.240). Before 1970 there were very few studies on textbook evaluation (Awasthi, 2006, p.5). Systematic research on textbook evaluation gained momentum only when theorist like Rivers (1968), Williams (1983), Cunnigsworth (1984), Grant (1987) and Sheldon (1987) raised their strong voices for textbook evaluation. Since the selection of textbooks depends on several factors like economic condition, social structure, native/ non-native status of the learners, etc., scholars have proposed many ways of textbook evaluation. There has to be proper and chronological steps in the process of evaluation. Though there can be no global list of criteria to be applied to all learning and teaching environments without considerable modifications (Sheldon,1988, p.242), still most of the standardised evaluation checklists contain similar components that can be used as helpful starting points for ELT practitioners in different contexts (Litz, 2005, p.9). In the field of ELT textbook design and analysis, theorists like Williams (1983), Sheldon (1988), Brown (1995), Cunningsworth (1995) and Harmer (1996) feel that evaluation checklists should have some criteria related to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, organisational, and logistical characteristics. Hence, evaluation criteria for different textbooks are guided by related factors only, for which specific evaluation scheme is needed.

Researchers (Ansary and Babaii, 2002; Block, 1991; Breen & Candlin, 1987; Chastain, 1971; Cowles, 1976; Cunningsworth, 1995; Dauod & Cele-Murcia, 1979; Davison, 1975; Ellis,1977; Garinger, 2002; Harmer,1996; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Littlejohn, 1998; McDonough & Shaw, 2003; Rivers, 1968; Tucker, 1975; Williams, 1983; Sheldon,1988; Skierso, 1991; Ur, 1996) have proposed eminent textbook evaluation schemes. Similarly,

Agrawal, Chakraborty, Gollapudi, Kannan and Kenthapadi (n.d.) are on their way of building a diagnostic tool for doing pure empirical/quantitative study on textbook evaluation. All these models are used in different contexts and criteria depending upon the need of evaluation.

The Objectives and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to assess the extent of appropriacy of the main English textbooks of Class X taught in various schools affiliated to BSER and CBSE. For this purpose, the present study tried to explore the answers for the following research questions:

1. Are the BSER affiliated school teachers satisfied with English textbook of Class X?
2. Are the CBSE affiliated school teachers satisfied with English textbook of Class X?
3. Is there any difference among BSER and CBSE affiliated school teachers' opinion on the English textbook of Class X?

Method

The data were collected from 30 schools of three tehsils of Jhunjhunu district in Rajasthan of India selected by stratified random sampling method. A checklist was used to evaluate the textbooks' appropriacy and differences in opinion among teachers. The reliability coefficient of the checklist was found to be 0.926. Face validity and content validity were assessed by experts and accordingly changes were made. A five point scale was used in the checklist where five meant 'to the greatest extent'; four meant 'to a large extent'; three meant 'to some extent'; two meant 'just barely' and one meant 'not at all'. The evaluation criteria suggested by Cunningsworth (1995) seems to encompass many items of the checklist used in the study under the four categories of aims and objectives, design and organisation, language content and additional teaching aids.

The respondents in this study included teachers from thirty schools, comprising 15 BSER affiliated and 15 CBSE affiliated schools, and their responses have been analysed using Excel and SPSS programmes to derive the findings. The data were subjected to descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (Independent Sample t-test) to arrive at final results and conclusions drawn.

Results

Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations based on frequency of BSER and CBSE affiliated schools' teachers responses for all four categories on various checklist items for textbook evaluation. The findings in the table are described below.

Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Responses from BSER and CBSE Affiliated School Teachers (N=15 for All Items)

		BSER		CBSE	
SN	Items for Evaluation	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Parameter 1. Aim and Objectives					
1.	The book deals with the current aims and objective of teaching English as a second language	3.6	1.121	3.27	0.884
2.	The material is audience specific	3.6	0.828	3.47	0.834
3.	The specific communicative aims or objectives are indicated in connection with teachable and individual units	2.93	1.033	3.47	0.915
4.	The content, exercises and activities of textbooks meet the individual differences among students	3.47	0.834	2.93	0.799
Parameter 2. Design and Organisation					
5.	All the four skills (L,S,R &W)are integratively introduced in the book	3.73	0.799	3.6	0.91
6.	The language proficiency is appropriate for the students	3.8	0.941	3.4	1.056
7.	The language presentation, organisation of content is simple and right for learners and teachers	3.87	0.915	3.73	0.799
8.	There is a list of new vocabulary	3.73	1.033	3.2	1.014
9.	The coursebook have communicative activities	3.87	0.834	3.6	0.986
10.	The visuals (photographs, line drawings, cartoons) are reasonably well produced and attractive	2.87	0.915	2.87	1.246
11.	The content is appropriate to learners' needs	3.6	1.121	3.53	0.743
Parameter 3. Language Content					
12.	There is a balance between subject-specific language items (grammar, vocabulary, discourse structure) and operational skills and strategies in language use	3.27	1.033	3.27	1.28
13.	The learning activities have outcomes or products which will help learners to evaluate their performance	3.47	0.99	3.67	0.816

14.	The language content relate and engage the learners' knowledge system, i.e. the knowledge of the world that they bring with them	3.07	0.884	3.47	0.834
15.	There is sufficient material of genuine interest to learners	3.73	1.163	3.13	0.834
16.	Grammar is introduced implicitly throughout the book	3.27	1.033	3.2	1.014
17.	The units include material for pronunciation work	2.6	0.986	2.33	0.816
18.	The units deal with any aspects of discourse	3.2	1.014	2.53	1.125
19.	All four skills are adequately covered	3.47	1.187	3	0.845
20.	The listening material is set in a meaningful context	3.53	1.506	2.6	0.986
21.	There are specific strategies for conversation or other spoken activities, eg debating, giving talks	3.2	1.014	3	0.926
22.	Reading passages and associated activities are suitable for your students' levels, interests, etc	2.87	1.246	3.2	0.775
23.	There is a focus on the development of reading skills and strategies	3.47	1.187	3.53	0.99
24.	The subject matter is appropriate (interesting, challenging, topical, varied, culturally acceptable, unlikely to date)	3.8	0.941	3.6	0.91
25.	Attention is given to the language resources specific to the written form, such as punctuation, spelling, layout, etc	3.47	1.187	3.27	1.1
26.	Learners are encouraged to review and edit their written work	4.13	1.06	3	0.845
Parameter 4. Additional Teaching Aids					
27.	Main book contains any audio/visual material like CD	2.4	1.404	2.6	1.502
28.	Mainbook is provided with supplementary materials	3.47	1.06	2.47	1.125
29.	Mainbook is supported by another book for practice other than supplementary book	2.47	1.06	2.93	1.163
30.	The available supplementary book and workbook for practice is sufficient for students	3.27	1.163	2.8	0.775
31.	Course book contains teachers' manual or book	3	1.414	2.6	1.502
32.	The materials are sufficient to motivate both teachers and students	3.2	1.32	3.2	0.941

Note: 1 = Not at all, 2=just barely, 3=to some extent, 4=to a large extent, 5=to a great extent

Aims and Objectives

There are four aspects, i.e. items 1-4 covered under this category for textbook evaluation. The teachers of BSER and CBSE were satisfied with item one and two, i.e. aim and objective of teaching English and audience specificity respectively. There was no difference in their opinion for these two items. They felt that textbook covers these two aspects. For item three and four, i.e. communicative activities and content and exercises addressing the individuality of the students respectively, difference in opinion of teachers of BSER and CBSE was observed. The teachers of BSER were not satisfied with item three but satisfied with item four, whereas the teachers of CBSE were not satisfied with the item four but satisfied with item three.

Design and Organisation

The mean values given in Table 1 for all the seven aspects covered under this category describe that the teachers of BSER and CBSE were satisfied with all the aspects except one, i.e. item 10, integration of visuals in textbook. The teachers of both boards were not satisfied with this aspect. The table also represents that there was no difference in opinions among teachers of BSER and CBSE for all the aspects covered under this category.

Language Content

There are fifteen aspects, i.e. items covered under this category. From the means and standard deviations value as presented in Table 1, it has been found that the teachers of BSER and CBSE have almost similar views for all the aspects. They were satisfied with all the aspects which means that textbook fulfils and fits in the category of language content except one aspect, i.e. inclusion of materials for pronunciation work. The teachers of both boards were not satisfied with this aspect which means that textbook lacks appropriate pronunciation materials. There was also very little variation for one or two aspects. Like, for item 20, i.e. setting of listening material in meaningful context, the teachers of BSER were satisfied whereas the teachers of CBSE were not satisfied up to the mark. For item 22, the level of reading passage and the activities associated to those passages given in the textbook, the teachers of BSER were not satisfied with this aspect covered by the textbook whereas the teachers of CBSE were satisfied with this

aspect, which shows variations in the teachers' opinion of BSER and CBSE for this aspect.

Additional Teaching Aids

There are six aspects covered under this category. The findings showed that the teachers of BSER were satisfied with all the aspects except item 27 and item 29. In contrast, the teachers of CBSE were not satisfied with all the aspects under this category except one, item 32. The differences in the mean value of responses of teachers of BSER and CBSE for three aspects reflects that there is a high variation in the teachers' opinion of both boards and their dissatisfaction under this category which means that the textbook does not fulfill the required criteria for this category. In the open ended response most of the respondents complained that there were no sufficient materials on pronunciation and audio/visual aids.

Differences in Responses among BSER and CBSE Affiliated School Teachers

Since there were not much differences in the means revealed for BSER and CBSE affiliated school teachers for all the four categories included in the study, Independent Sample t-test was employed in order to ascertain the statistical significance of the minute differences between BSER and CBSE teachers' responses towards all the four categories in terms of their suitability and appropriateness in Indian ESL setting known to them. Table 2 and 3 contain the results.

Table 2
Standard Error of Mean Difference in the Responses Related to Two Boards

Parameters	Board	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Aim and Objectives	BSER	15	3.4	0.82808	0.21381
	CBSE	15	3.2833	0.68051	0.17571
Design and Organisation	BSER	15	3.64E+00	0.555562	0.143446
	CBSE	15	3.42E+00	0.677559	0.174945
Content	BSER	15	3.37E+00	0.741456	0.191443
	CBSE	15	3.12E+00	0.597455	0.154262
Additional Teaching aids	BSER	15	2.97E+00	0.845624	0.218339
	CBSE	15	2.77E+00	0.771002	0.199072

N= Number of respondents

Table 3

Significance of Difference in the Responses Related to Two Boards

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
F	Sig.	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower		
Aim and Objectives	Equal variances assumed	0.716	28	0.11667	0.27674	-0.45022
	Equal variances not assumed		26.987	0.11667	0.27674	-0.45118
Design and Organisation	Equal variances assumed	0.51	28	0.219048	0.226235	-0.24437
	Equal variances not assumed		26.965	0.219048	0.226235	-0.24518
Content	Equal variances assumed	0.455	28	0.248889	0.24586	-0.25473
	Equal variances not assumed		26.789	0.248889	0.24586	-0.25576
Additional Teaching aids	Equal variances assumed	0.913	28	0.2	0.295468	-0.40524
	Equal variances not assumed		27.764	0.2	0.295468	-0.40547

The results of Levene's Test used to compare the two groups' variances for all four categories indicate that alpha value (p) is greater than .05 for all the four categories. This indicates that there is no statistical significant difference between the two group of teachers' responses for all the four categories, which confirms the equality of variances for all the four categories. It can also be noted from the above analysis that more or less they have similar views regarding their satisfaction or dissatisfaction level on almost all items of the checklist. The major difference was observed between both groups' opinion for items 22, 28 and 32. Teachers from both groups were dissatisfied about lack of materials on pronunciation and audio-visual aids.

Discussion

The study shows that most of the teachers of BSER affiliated schools were satisfied with the textbook prescribed for Class X in terms of fulfilling the aims and objectives of teaching English, audience specificity and meeting the individual differences. However they also felt that the textbook did not specify the communicative aims and objectives of teaching a particular unit.

The teachers of BSER affiliated schools were quite satisfied with language proficiency and communicative activities dealt in the textbook. They were also satisfied with content and language presentation in the textbook. However the respondents felt that the integration of all the four basic language skills has not been achieved. They also opined that the visuals used in the textbook lacked good and attractive production. Majority of them were of the view that the textbook did not provide list of new vocabulary items.

So far as the language content of the textbook was concerned, teachers of BSER affiliated schools were quite satisfied. However, they find the materials on pronunciation and the level of reading passages and the activities associated to those passages quite unsatisfactory. In case of additional teaching aids the satisfaction level of BSER affiliated school teachers' was quite low.

In case of CBSE affiliated schools, teachers were not fully satisfied with the textbook prescribed for Class X in terms of fulfilling the aims and objectives of teaching English, audience specificity and meeting the individual differences.Regarding aspects of design and organisation of the textbook, teachers of CBSE affiliated schools felt that language presentation and organisation of content is simple and right for learners and teachers. The content was appropriate to the learners' needs and also the basic language skills have been introduced in an integrative manner. The course book provided communicative activities. However, teachers have not been fully satisfied when it comes to the appropriateness of language proficiency and the list of new vocabulary items in the textbook prescribed.

In response to the language content, teachers expressed satisfaction that the subject matter used in the textbook was quite appropriate and they relate to the learners' knowledge. They also expressed that the textbook focused on the development of reading skills and strategies and the learning activities provided in the book helps learners to evaluate their performance. However, majority of

the respondents were of the view that the textbook did not cover all the four skills adequately.

Teachers of CBSE affiliated schools, like the teachers of BSER affiliated schools, showed their dissatisfaction over the additional teaching aids provided along with the main course book. No significant difference between the responses of the teachers of BSER affiliated schools and teachers of CBSE affiliated schools was observed in this study.

In addition, referring to the blurb of the textbooks it has been noticed that though both the boards prescribe the same aim and objectives of teaching English at the secondary level, they provided different teaching and learning materials. BSER has prescribed one main course book and one supplementary book whereas CBSE has prescribed one course book as Literature Reader and two supplementary books for practice which may affect the level of exposure and practice level. Though the CBSE has prescribed more books but it has been observed that the teachers leave it up to the students to use those additional materials on their own.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper reported the findings of the evaluation of textbooks prescribed for Class X by two different education boards in India, BSER and CBSE, based on teachers' responses in terms of their satisfaction level as well as opinion differences. The results have shown that teachers from both the groups have different level of satisfaction on various aspects of textbooks prescribed. The results also indicated the need for taking practising teachers' feedback and accordingly the books must be revised. It can also be said that involvement of larger group of practising teachers while preparing a textbook may help in overcoming such problems in the future. Based on the findings of this study following recommendations are made:

1. Communicative aims and objectives of a teaching unit may be clearly specified. Adequate coverage and integration of all four basic language skills need to be done. Sufficient materials on pronunciation practice may be provided.
2. Level of reading passages and the activities based on them should meet the learners' need. Additional teaching aids may be provided.
3. Teachers' feedback may be considered important in preparation of textbooks.

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