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TEACHING WORLD ENGLISHES IN THE POSTCOLONIAL WORLD: A CASE STUDY OF PAKISTAN

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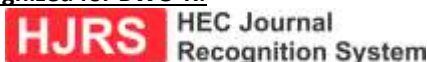
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Abstract

This paper addresses the global challenges of teaching World Englishes in the postcolonial context, focusing on the marginalization of local languages due to the dominant influence of English in Pakistan. The paper explores practical strategies for teaching English critically within the Pakistani classroom. English language educators can enhance their teaching by integrating critical thinking and incorporating local languages and cultural concepts into the prescribed curriculum. Utilizing an action research methodology, the three researchers collaborated on their classroom activities and proposed recommendations for implementing critical pedagogy in English language instruction. This pedagogical framework aims to empower English language teachers to promote discussions that incorporate elements from vernacular languages within their English language classrooms.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, World Englishes, Critical Pedagogy, Pakistani Classroom

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Introduction

The English language and its teaching have threatened the existence of local or smaller languages worldwide. Linguicism (Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, 1986) works as racism, pushing aside the vernacular education in the postcolonial world and in the countries from the outer and expanded circles of English (Kachru, 2006). In this context, the hegemony and power of the English language are principally exercised through the inner circle, the center for English language teaching (Kachru, 2006). Instead of acknowledging the notion of globalized English that is shared and owned by all the English-speaking nations, the English language power works globally through ELT (Rajagopalan, 2004). It emanates from inner-circle countries like the UK, USA, Australia, and Canada, primarily through prescribed curricula and diagnostic tests like IELTS, TOEFL, GRE, and SAT. Textbooks recommended by the educational services, namely the British Council and ETS, also play a major role in promoting teaching for such tests. However, we argue that English should be taught as an International Language with different sets of goals in mind (McKay, 2002).

The macrostructure of the English language, widely discussed and debated by scholars from both the core and peripheral circles, still allows for some influence from the micro level, particularly in English Language Teaching (ELT) within the classroom setting. The discourse highlights that a key reason ELT has proven to be relatively ineffective in Pakistan's education system is the lack of critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) among English teachers. Despite the substantial time and financial investment students make in learning English, ELT in Pakistan has often served as a marginalizing force for many learners (Shamim, 2008). The ruling elites exploit the postcolonial context to promote a class-based educational system that reinforces the dominance of the English language,

thereby excluding the broader population from participating in the power structure.

This paper explores the nuances of English Language Teaching, its role in education, and critiques the reproduction model (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) in Pakistani society. The implication of this study, as the case study of Pakistan, shared by most of the postcolonial and expanding circle countries, highlights the necessity of raising English language teaching quality at the micro-level, i.e., the classroom setting. As Pakistani and English language educators, we believe the task can be accomplished by accepting World Englishes (WE) to help learners comprehend the nuances of education in the English language. We can help the foundation of teaching efficiently by educating English language teachers and making them critically conscious of the Pakistani context. Since the English language is imposed as a necessity by the macro and global needs for learning and communication, we explore ways to incorporate the concept of resistance and critical thinking into ELT practices. This enables the learners to learn quality English and become successful in their language use. They also appreciate their local/regional languages by identifying themselves as proud bi/multilingual in the global scene.

Literature Review

The policy of imperial Britain to enforce, endorse, and execute the influence of the English language in the colonial era was different from country to country. The strategy of the British was to *Anglicize* (Mahboob, 2003) the Indian sub-continent. However, the implications and the results of imposing English proceeded differently than desired (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). The colonial strategy of the British Empire was to transport and use the English language as a tool of power; they dealt with the African and South Asian colonies differently, which resulted in different media of instruction at the schools (Rahman, 1997). In Pakistan, despite the extensive use of the

English language, it is still not the language of the masses and has preserved the status quo and hierarchy in society. Its use and teaching continue to be the most fundamental educational and identity issue for teachers and students. As the English education system in Pakistan is split into multi-tiered schools of private-elite, private, and public school systems, education for and through the English language contrasts at different institutions (Rahman, 2001).

To understand effective pedagogical means, we must first recognize the audiences that throng to learn English in the Pakistani classroom. As learning a second language depends on the various contexts, they have different expectations from English. For example, a community-based ESL course located in a small town consisting of adult learners aims at acculturation and assimilation because speakers of different mother tongues require a unique approach to language teaching (this happens in a multilingual/ethnic classroom in Pakistan). A local group's requirements can be different than a group of international students hailing from varied L1 settings who study at a university in an English-speaking country (a personal example of studying English at US schools). However, an Elementary school-aged Pakistani student who speaks, for instance, the Pashto language and attends school in such places as California, Illinois, Florida, and Texas will have different requirements for the learning of English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). As the English learning communities come from diverse settings and languages in Pakistan, it is significant to evaluate the students' needs and their use of English to acknowledge the function of language as an identity and power marker.

Historically, we understand that the role of the English language in postcolonial Pakistan and policy choices has failed to include the national/regional languages in the curriculum. However, the importance of English is also undeniable (Mahboob, 2003). The permanency

of an unchanging policy concerning English, the addition of other regional languages, and better teaching values are some of the solutions to discredit the unfair power advantage of the English Language. In this way, (Mahboob, 2003) proposes that the class system erected based on English education can be broken, and opportunities can be provided to all of Pakistan's social and economic classes. Similarly, during the Indo-Pakistan freedom fight against the British Empire in the 20th century, the role the English language played was to deconstruct and resist colonial rule.

Consequently, Rahman (2001) elucidates the relationship of the various types of language-learning styles to their teaching. This explanation can help us theorize and thus inform our pedagogy. He states four categories of conditions that contextualize the English language learning process in Pakistan. Firstly, English serves the purpose of being a utilitarian language because of its importance and popularity. It also advances our goals for economic growth and upward mobility, which are closely associated with learning English and are also known as instrumental motivation (McKay & Bokhorst-Heng, 2008). Secondly, language issues are usually related to identity issues, and it is used to revitalize the benumbed feelings of ethnicity for resisting the hegemonic powers of the dominant language. This is the consequence of many languages resisting movements that persist under the supremacy of the English language in different communities, including the Pakistani context. It involves teaching local vernaculars to ignite feelings of resistance through one's identity. The aim is predominantly realistic, but there are other components, such as animosity towards the dominant language, that enter into the national narrative, such as the Urdu-Sindhi conflict (Rahman, 1997). Rahman further (1997) argues:

Language teaching and broadcasting of ideology through language embody the dissemination of concepts, ethical systems, and

perceptions of truth, which generate or impact people's worldviews, primarily through language texts. The teaching of language in local contexts pertains to a similar ideological makeup, known as the "rational category." While "Extrarational language-learning" is the knowledge of languages essentially for reasons other than emotional and private reasons, education about the mother tongue is not used in the spheres of emotions. While elements of the extrinsic appear in the forms of language acquisition mentioned earlier, most of this kind of language learning is for pleasure. Hence, the terms "hedonistic" or "pleasure" language-learning may be used for it (p. 55).

In a similar vein, [Canagarajah \(1993\)](#) explains the situation of the politically agitated rural Tamil-speaking population who resisted accepting the English language and its culture. Already threatened by the Sinhali-speaking Buddhist mainstream ways of learning, both politically and militarily, the Tamil population of Jaffna saw the need for English language learning with a cynical eye. The biggest reason they showed their anger, frustration, and rebellion in the form of glosses (in the textbooks) was the absence of their culture. Directly imported from the US, these books offered nothing that the English language learners (ELL) considered their own. Students in Sri Lanka showed their opposition by mocking the culture of the English textbooks. It displayed the resistance of the Sri Lankan students towards English cultural content in the curriculum, and a similar resistance to English can be found in Pakistani language movements in Pakistani society and media.

Relatedly, controversial decisions and choices have been made in favour of those languages (s) that have been used as the medium of teaching in the Pakistani instruction structure. Politics, particularly ethnic politics, has a bigger role to play in a multi-ethnic and linguistic society. Tracking the historical setting of the language politics for the colonist era, the privileged societal class used the hierarchical

power of the languages to remain at the top. The English and Urdu languages have been employed to preserve the status quo of the influence of language. By superseding Urdu in the route to English medium education, the class system within the languages has still prevailed since freedom in 1947. As English maintains its position as a dominant language and serves as a gateway to influential circles, we recognize the significance of the English language and its teaching within the framework of the Pakistani education system ([Rahman, 1997](#)).

To grasp the impact of ethnic politics in Pakistan, it is essential to explore the development of the English language in educational institutions. The education system is the main deciding factor in the quality of the English language taught at each institution. It is broadly categorized into three tiers: the private elite, private, and the public school system. The *lower* English and fee-based hierarchical schools offer low-quality English language teaching ([Rahman 2001](#)), where the teachers' agency is impeded by the ill-equipped teachers' training programs and the lack of theoretical tools to inform their ELT practices.

As a solution, [Manan et al. \(2015\)](#) talk about the importance of the mother tongue in early childhood. The authors propose a model of using the mother tongue in early childhood education and including home literacy. Their model not only includes the mother tongue in English language education but also emphasizes the support of second language learning by employing the concept-making process by using the first language. The importance of policymakers as stakeholders is fundamental, and the inclusion of mother tongue education is best served by an inclusive policy for vernacular education with English language teaching.

Critical Pedagogy in ELT and the Role of Teachers

With many other pedagogical methods, the English language teaching has also been

familiar with the concept of critical pedagogy (CP) for over five decades now, ever since the enthusiasts of CP have invested in its ideologies and applied effects (Fairclough, 1993; Benesch, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2001; Pennycook, 1999; Canagarajah, 2005). In terms of its application, critical pedagogy is practiced through two traditions by English language teachers. First, critical pedagogy exposes the hidden roles of power in society that are enacted through our daily discourses (Foucault, 1972). In most of the former British colonies, like Pakistan, the English language continues to be the language of power, where critical pedagogy is appropriated through its teaching. Second, due to the close relationship of critical pedagogy with English language teaching (ELT), it is essential to incorporate criticality in the pedagogical aspect. This makes it necessary for an educator to be aware of the core philosophy and extensive purposes of critical pedagogy.

Álvarez, Calvete, and Sarasa (2012) discuss one such critical pedagogical method that can inform the ELT teachers of Pakistan to teach effectively through their respective contexts. Alvarez et al. (2012) adopted a method to teach critical media literacy in their class of adult English as a Second or Foreign Language learners (ESL/ EFL), with language proficiency ranging from post-beginners to the highly advanced. We replicated this method in our undergraduate class to develop critical media literacy among students and help them understand ideas related to race, ethnicity, class, religion, and education. And how language is used to unveil the political, economic, and social issues in the learning and teaching of the English language. The activity spanned 10 hours of class time with a total of two hours of meetings per class. In the class, the movie *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008) was shown using the following method.

Classroom Activity: Employing Critical Thinking

Slumdog Millionaire (2008), a remarkable film directed by the renowned British

filmmaker Danny Boyle, has received acclaim for its impactful and authentic portrayal of contemporary Indian society. However, it has also faced criticism for its essentialist and stark representation of poverty and crime. At the National University of Modern Languages in Islamabad, students were tasked with watching this moving film before class, immersing themselves in the complex layers of its storyline.

The film acted as a catalyst, motivating undergraduate students to investigate India's turbulent path toward independence and to study the various political, social, ethnic, religious, and linguistic intricacies that shape the country. The movie effectively underscored the growing divide between the wealthy and the poor, as well as illuminating the stark differences between the educated elite and the masses struggling to survive.

Following the screening, an engaging discussion took place, with students working collaboratively in small groups to navigate a carefully designed guide prepared in English by their instructors. This guide provided crucial insights into the societal context that the protagonist relied on to tackle the challenging questions presented on the television game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*. The hero's touching life experiences became essential for understanding the lessons from the "University of Life," as the guide encouraged students to critically reflect on the connection between destiny, shaped by socio-political and economic forces, and the protagonist's Islamic beliefs that influenced opportunities for personal choice and autonomy.

As a result, the guide introduced fundamental principles of critical pedagogy, discussing the notion of oppression as expressed by Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). Within their small groups, students passionately debated the ethical implications of the producer's choice to cast young, non-professional child actors. Despite

the director and producers' assurances regarding the ongoing education and welfare of these children, disturbing concerns arose about the realities faced by many of them, who returned to lives steeped in poverty once filming concluded.

These class discussions also examined significant directorial decisions involving the use of Hindi and Hinglish, uncovering complex dynamics in the realms of global and local language issues, as noted by researchers [Schwarz and Ray \(2005\)](#). Additional topics discussed in the classroom included the transformative and liberating potential of education and knowledge. In a collaborative spirit of reflection, the class undertook a comprehensive review of the resources and limitations of the Pakistani education system, generating thoughtful recommendations for policy reforms and innovative educational strategies that could pave the way for a brighter future. An example of such an approach is discussed below, where the concept of replacing one method with another has been challenged.

Post-Methods in Teaching English

[Prabhu \(1990\)](#), in his work "There Is No Best Method- Why?," addressed some fundamental philosophical concepts, including the notion of whole truth. Nietzsche and post-modernists argued that absolute truth does not exist and that we create our versions of truth. This perspective on developing teaching methodologies echoes the idea of human agency. Teachers, as agents, in the words of Henry Giroux, are "intellectuals" (1998), and in this era of post-methodology, they bear significant responsibilities, which can help improve teachers' situations and enhance the profession's respect. Prabhu suggests that a teacher's feeling of acceptability is a more crucial aspect than the specific methods they choose. A heightened sense of acceptability is likely to correlate with a more engaged and reflective teacher, who may be more effective than one who rigidly follows a method. To

grasp the essence of this philosophy, we reflected on our teaching methodologies and referred to our 'reflective notes' to compare our classroom practices. We believe plausibility involves teachers' understanding of their teaching approaches. Teachers need to work with subjective notions about how their teaching can lead to the intended learning outcomes. They should question, "How plausible is it that my teaching can affect learning?" A teacher with a strong sense of plausibility engages in action research and possesses a critical awareness of their responsibilities. Similarly, [Kumaravadivelu \(2001\)](#) elaborates on pedagogical alternatives, such as *particularity*, *practicality*, and *possibility*. He asserts the need for "a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, sociocultural, and political particularity" (p. 544). His proposals reject the disconnect between those theorists tasked with developing teaching methods and the practitioners who implement those methods. Instead, his *post-method pedagogy* encourages teachers to collaboratively practice their theories and derive their theories from their practices. Ultimately, it also highlights the difficulty of separating students' language needs from their community responsibilities while reminding teachers of their social obligation to contribute to the character development of their students in the classroom.

[Kincheloe and McLaren \(1994\)](#) argue that educators should empower their students by enhancing their awareness of social superstructures and helping them resist injustices. This study illustrates how fostering critical consciousness among TESOL professionals can challenge dominant narratives. Although teachers did not fully participate in the process, they eventually devised a course of action in the classroom through insights gained from readings and discussions on critical issues.

Trans-Culturality: Using Local Cultural Concepts in the English Classroom

Schools that host multicultural student bodies require an environment, teacher training programs, and pedagogies that foster trans-cultural competence. Trans-cultural competence (Meyer, 1991) can enhance student cohesiveness by cultivating an understanding and accommodating atmosphere in the classroom. In our English classroom at NUML, which comprises multicultural and multi-ethnic students, we've had the chance to engage our students as co-researchers rather than mere participants in research. By transcending the limitations of mono and intercultural notions, the so-called "Transcultural level," according to Meyer, occurs when "the learner is capable of assessing intercultural differences and solving intercultural problems by appealing to principles of international cooperation and communication that respect each culture's rights, allowing learners to develop their identities *within a framework of cross-cultural understanding*" (1991). This approach not only fosters a supportive learning community but also enhances students' tolerance for diverse cultural values.

The concept of *melasma*, or hospitality, extends beyond relatives and friends to encompass strangers. Sir Olaf Caroe, a prominent British historian of the Pashtuns, observes, "Offering hospitality to a guest is a matter of national honour, to the extent that the reproach for being inhospitable is that one lacks Pakhto [Pashtun cultural code], making them a despicable person" (1964). Consequently, it plays a vital role in the culture and can be integrated into educational environments such as the classroom. Parker Palmer asserts, "Good teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young, benefiting the host [teacher] even more than the guest [student]." Viewing teaching from the perspective of a host with a welcoming demeanour involves embracing and including

students within the learning community of the classroom.

In the conceptual context of "hospitality," the Autobiography, Biography, and Cross-Cultural comparison, the ABC's model (Schmidt, 1999) includes four major components that can be useful for ESL/EFL teachers in a culturally diverse classroom.

1. Autobiography is scripted in detail by individual contributor and includes significant lifetime happenings related to hospitality and the classroom environment.
2. Interviewing classmates who have written their biographies.
3. Multicultural investigation of resemblances and variances amongst the living narratives recorded by the participants (Spindler & Spindler, 1987) with their sharing of personal discomforts and positive affect identifying.
4. Know, what, Question, Learn (KWQL) chart to be posted for the whole class discussion. The chart modification for classroom practice.

Students become more proactive, sociable, curious, disciplined, intellectual, and creative, and have a higher rate of academic achievement and higher self-esteem through:

- a) Teachers become attentive to a student's feelings, emotions, and reactions.
- b) Professional performance varies with the use of a student's thoughts in the course of learning.
- c) The teacher's empowering and inspiring role
- d) Enabling pedagogically ethical teachers' conduct
- e) Conflict prevention
- f) Creation of a welcoming classroom

The proposed teaching methodological concept is an endeavour to form cultural cohesiveness among students hailing from different cultures. In the trans-cultural model, the cultural assets of various backgrounds will be included, in my case, a Pakistani (Pashtun) cultural trait, to introduce an idea that can *assure bond formation among students*,

irrespective of what cultural background constitutes the body of students in the classroom. Through the funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 1994) that they bring to an ESL class, they are encouraged to appreciate each other's contributions and help increase their understanding of various cultural knowledge.

Rethinking Teaching: Implications

As the final comment, we would say that there is a greater need to rethink the practices of teaching. We do not want mere facilitators or moderators for the job who could only steer a class in the desired direction. Instead, we need teachers with thinking abilities and subjective opinions, real human beings, not lifeless robots. The post-method is not a method but an attitude towards pedagogy. It is an attitude where we change our lens to look at things, to critique what we already are, and to aspire for what we could become as teachers.

As a Pashto speaker and ethnically Pashtun, learning English throughout our life and teaching it to a variety of audiences of students, we have faced a dilemma that challenged our identity and competence at the same time. Pakistan is the story of divisions, creations, and identity shifts in terms of linguistics, ethnicity, and religion, keeping class stratification aside for a while (Shackles quoted in Simpons, 2007). In Pakistan, the English learning communities come from different backgrounds and languages, so it is important to assess the learners' needs and their use and acceptance of language as a power and identity. For example, most have no writing or grammar learning experience in their native languages. Will it not be difficult for them to make sense of many phrases or rules? Or it might take them longer, as we see in school when they cannot make sense of the language they are learning. The other point is the absence of appreciation of home literacy at schools. Various children have literacy levels different than the literacy that is appreciated in

schools. Important questions to ask for further research purposes could be: How can we teach students English who have no school literacy in their first languages? What is the goal for the learner? What does it mean to be native to a language? We need to deconstruct the myth of native language capacity and help empower students to have a stronger and more meaningful bond with the learning process.

The English language has its process of evolution, and many factors have contributed to its global supremacy. The phases of colonization in Africa, Americas and Asia, and then later, the effect of globalization accelerated the spread of the language. As the need to learn the English language increased, it created the need for English Language Teaching. In such a context, the emphasis should be on improving the ELT rather than putting pressure on the learners to perform. Teaching English is a political project (Pennycook 1989, cited in Rahman), and to engage in such a process, there is a great demand for English language teachers to be critically aware of their job. The teachers also have to be acutely conscious of their learners as a part of the speech community rather than treating them individually. As compared to transplanted learners, learning English as a speech community by the learners helps demystify the myth of native speakers' abilities in English (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). The discrediting of the myth of native-like competence can reduce the pressure on English Language Learners (ELL).

However, "English is as firmly entrenched in the domains of power in Pakistan as it was in 1947" (Rahman, 2003), so there is a power structure within the country that upholds the postcolonial thinking about the English language. Our teaching has to rethink and deconstruct the colonial mindset and teach English with a new perspective of English as a world language. It has not just remained as schooling learners in linguistic skills, training them in churning out a five-paragraph essay,

responding appreciatively to novels, plays and poems or creating their own in the like manner" (Morgan, 1997). It is the time when the teachers inform them about the socio-political and cultural perspective of English and help them think meta-cognitively about the process of learning, not just learning a language, but anything new.

Conclusion

Dedicated EFL/ESL teachers who practice *critical conscientization* (Freire, 1970) can implement effective teaching strategies. In the context of English language instruction, educators must address the unspoken expectations tied to the learning process. Teachers who are critically aware should examine and comprehend the diverse needs of their English-learning audience. For numerous students, English serves various purposes; at times, it is primarily for gaining employment, while at other times, it may be for test preparation. These educators also need to recognize the importance of understanding the broader societal implications of the English language. The educational system must prepare the younger generation to incorporate political and sociocultural contexts into our teaching narratives, which can aid both students and teachers in making informed choices and prevent education from being treated as a commodity. In this context, the modern idea of 'English for communication' is somewhat vague and inadequate, as it views English merely as a common tool within a non-problematic integration process, which is, in fact, a misleading notion.

The absence of democratic values and global citizenship is a significant gap in the educational landscape of Pakistan, particularly regarding the role of English in promoting such values. The hegemonic elite from the 'inner circles' dictate the concept of democracy and proper behaviour in a modern global context, thereby marginalizing underrepresented communities. Therefore, as critical ESL educators, it is crucial to reassess our

positioning within the classroom regarding current discussions about teaching English as a representation of globalization and internationalization. Reflecting on our careers as ESL educators leads us to consider how to include marginalized individuals in educational practices and curriculum development. We are concerned about the limited exposure of Pakistani educators to critical theories and information related to language education. Nonetheless, in this paper, we recognize our agency as educators to address the gaps requiring our active involvement. Among our responsibilities is the curriculum, where we can incorporate critical evaluations of educational perspectives by first engaging in self-reflection and then modelling behaviour for others.

Critical learning embodies the belief in harmony, collaboration, and the efficacy of collective resistance as a means to achieve cohesion among diverse groups, holding the view that teaching English for a better world is achievable. Failing to provide essential psychological, sociocultural, and economic harmony will result in unsuccessful English language learning. Students should not be blamed for their challenges; rather, the responsibility lies with the system that enables such learning. Consequently, presenting an ostensibly neutral discourse in English language instruction is tantamount to indoctrination, which deprives students of the opportunity to consider various avenues. Critical EFL/ESL educators engage in ongoing reflection and resist the limitations imposed on their teaching while seeking ways to challenge inequitable and inhumane practices through open discussions with students and fellow teachers. However, the critique must also encompass how factors such as race, gender, class, power, identity, and other social markers within English Language Teaching influence the perceptions and experiences of both teachers and students concerning the active and passive roles and potentials of the English language globally.

Critical EFL/ESL teachers in Pakistan need to undergo personal transformation, firstly by continually learning through practitioner research, such as self-reflection. Even after completing accredited teacher education programs, they must maintain reflexivity to unpack the current understanding of TEFL/TESOL and reconstruct it innovatively. Secondly, teachers should grasp the importance of enhancing the relationship between themselves and their students to appreciate the students' intuitive understanding. Thirdly, educators must empower themselves and create opportunities for their students to engage in a meaningful, critical dialogue that benefits society in a dialectical fashion. This practice will effectively encourage the notion of knowledge and language as instruments of change and collaboration rather than as fixed entities. Instilling critical thinking in our students through English instruction can raise their awareness of their environment and foster demands for social justice and equity for all. Teaching both skills and content in English Language Teaching is a matter of dedication rather than simply a method, and educators can assist their students in becoming agents of positive change.

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