

## Textbooks evaluation by Ur's theory

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### Abstract

The objectives of this study are to: (1) describe the appropriateness of textbooks used by seventh grade junior high school with the criteria of good textbooks developed by Ur's theory, and (2) reveal the strengths and weaknesses of each textbook. This research was conducted using evaluation research. The data was obtained through document analysis and interviewing expert. Ur's theory was used to analyze the data. The objects of this research for analysis were two English textbooks; *WERB* and *Bright* for seventh grade junior high school. The research found out *When English Ring a Bell* meets eight criteria of a good textbook by Ur. They are: objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, attractive layout and visual material, interesting and various topics, the content organization, and graded adequate guidance for the teacher, and readiness of the textbook. *Bright* meets all the criteria of a good textbook. The researcher also found the strength of *WERB* lies in its colorful and attractive layout and the textbook also presents various topics that motivate the students to practice actively. There is teachers' book as guidelines. Meanwhile, the strength of *Bright* lies in clear layout, pictures and illustration, four skills are covered. Its main weaknesses are the dull color of this textbook and no teacher's book is provided. The researcher concludes that *Bright* is better than *WERB*. This book is appropriate with criteria of good textbooks and used by teacher and student. It is available in many bookstores. *Bright* is also compatible in terms of coherence and unity of ideas among units and language content.

**Keywords:** Ur's criteria; evaluation; textbooks

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### Introduction

The purpose of learning English is to achieve the targeted competence. The achievement of the competencies depends on many components, such as teacher, students, media, classroom, infrastructure of school, teacher's instructions, and the availability of the appropriate learning material, and many more. The objectives of teaching and learning will be achieved if all of the components are fulfilled because they are connected each other.

Media is one component which has important roles in teaching and learning especially English. One of media is textbook which is mostly used by teacher as the guidelines in teaching English. The textbook is designed by the government that claimed that the book fulfilled the curriculum's requirement, syllabi and students' needs. In fact, teachers only execute teaching and learning process which is provided in the textbook because they cannot design their own textbook.

According to Cunningsworth (1995), textbooks provide educational text which can be used as source of material for teaching and learning. Textbooks are a major source of providing instructions to the teachers and students. This is why it is stated that textbooks are the backbone of every educational system. Tomlinson (2011) argues that a textbook supplies core materials for a language-learning course and aims to serve what learner and teacher need during a course.

Textbooks help in designing the assessment and evaluation system for the students, shaping the process of classroom teaching and learning (Mahmood, 2011). Dialogues and worksheets are also provided in the textbooks. The teachers do not need to make or design some exercises for the students, if the exercises are available in the textbooks used are qualified and varied.



Since 2014, a new curriculum, which is called the *Kurikulum 2013* or Curriculum 2013, has been applied in all schools in Indonesia. The Curriculum 2013 itself is different from the previous curriculum that is called *KTSP* or School Based Curriculum. The implementation of this new curriculum requires adaptations in various aspects, including the textbooks.

Particular requirements and regulations must be followed by school project to achieve the goals of the 2013 curriculum including syllabus, lesson plans, textbook materials, and teaching strategies in classroom. One of regulations stipulated by the government is Regulation of the Ministry of National Education and Culture (*permendikbud*) number 71 year 2013 article 1. The regulation states that the government provides textbooks for both teachers and students for a course. Based on this policy, all the pilot project schools must use the Curriculum 2013 -based textbooks developed by the government. These textbooks can be easily downloaded from Kemendikbud website.

The objectives of Curriculum 2013, or K-13 for short, are translated in textbook as one of media for the teacher and also students to teach and learn the language. Textbook is expected to have good criteria so it is feasible to be used as a teaching and learning source for teacher and student. The researcher wanted to know whether textbook published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and other publishers are already appropriate with the criteria of good textbook or not. Even though the textbooks are published by the government and publishers, teachers should be able to evaluate and adapt the book, and even supplement it as a source of materials, based to the characteristics of their classes.

The use of textbook is important since it influences much on the learning process in the classroom. A textbook is a teaching material for the teacher and a learning material for the learner. Textbooks are best seen as resources in achieving objectives that have already been set in terms of learner's needs. Furthermore, textbooks provide a readily available source of ELT materials for teachers to focus on doing the real work of teaching.

The textbooks have to fit with the current curriculum, school's syllabus, along with students' needs, and also the aims and goals of teaching. Therefore, teachers have to carefully and wisely choose an appropriate and ideal textbook which is beneficial for both students and teachers. An inappropriate textbook could possibly make the class boring with uninteresting exercise, become an expensive financial burden for students, or even not match with the learner's knowledge in achieving their needs in learning. Those reasons make the selection of textbook used by teachers become relatively crucial.

This study was designed to evaluate the English textbooks for seventh grade student junior high school. The researcher chose two English textbooks to be evaluated because they are mostly used in teaching learning process at junior high school in Yogyakarta. Besides that, those textbooks are chosen based on several reasons, such as availability of the school library, readiness in printed and download, the appropriateness of the content with basic competence, and the appearance of the textbooks. The first textbook is published by Ministry of Education and Culture of Indonesia entitled "When English Rings the Bell", the second is "Bright an English" for SMP Grade VII published by Erlangga. The researcher evaluated two English textbooks based on Ur's theory for the seventh grade of junior high school. Ur's theory was selected to evaluate the textbooks because it covers all aspects including internal and external aspects of the textbooks. This study was expected to measure the worthiness of certain textbooks which have been used in several schools in Yogyakarta. So, the researcher decided to do the research entitled evaluation on textbooks of seventh grade junior high school according to Ur's theory.

Based on the background, the identification, and limitation of research, the researcher formulated the problem of the research as follows: (1) How is the appropriateness of two textbooks used by seventh grade junior high school with the criteria of a good textbook according to Ur's theory?; (2) What are the strengths and the weaknesses of the three textbooks?

## Literature Review

Harmer (2007) states that English was already well on its way to becoming a genuine *lingua franca*, which is a language used in widely for communication between people who do not share the same first (or even second) language. As we know, English is as a foreign language in Indonesia. English is taught in formal education institution as one of mandatory subject in the education system in Indonesia since its independence, and the development of English language in Indonesia is affected by many factors such as politic, economy, social, science, and technology. Seeing that most technology and science are using English, especially for information deliver, Indonesian government put much effort to prepare its people to be able to use English properly as a medium of communication.

There are four communicative skills that should be known, such as listening, speaking, writing and reading. Humans have to get the competences in that way. In educational institution, teaching learning focuses in understanding and producing certain texts, such as narrative, recount, descriptive, report, and exposition. Through this learning, learners are expected to be able to use English for communication. They are demanded to improve their skills in English, not only to be able to understand English contents passively but also capable of actively use it for communication.

### Textbook

Textbook is defined as a manual of instruction in any branch of study. Textbooks are produced according to the demands of educational institutions. Although most textbooks are only published in printed format, many are now available as online electronic books and increasingly, although illegally, in scanned format. However although there are many modern media that are invented to support teachers and students in teaching-learning process, such as tape recorder, LCD projector, video, and e-book, many school still buy and use printed textbooks and references. It is because of textbook is cheaper and easy to learn. Textbooks are best seen as a resource in achieving aims and objectives that are set in the term of learners needs (Cunningsworth, 1995). Textbook is the most used printed materials for practice in knowledge and it becomes one of many aids to assist the student in acquiring clear concepts of subject matter.

As we know, textbooks are generally used in specified educational context through the country. It refers to materials used in teaching English as subject matter in a specific educational context. Then textbooks are also developed for generalized target groups who use them in both English as well as non-English speaking countries. Graves (2000) notes that a textbook is often used by teachers as the backbone of their courses. In Indonesia, many beginner teachers lack experiences and confidence to prepare their own materials and rely on the textbook to help them in their teaching tasks.

According to Richard (2001), textbooks are used in different ways in language program. Reading textbook might be the basis for a course on reading skill because it provides a set of reading texts and exercises for skill practice. A grammar textbook might serve as a reference book and provide examples as well as exercises to develop grammatical knowledge. A writing textbook might provide model compositions and list of topics for students to write about. A speaking text might serve passages for students to read and discuss. A listening text together with audio cassettes or CDs serves as the primary listening input in a listening course.

The textbook provides many materials of learning because it helps the teachers and students achieving the goal of learning. The textbook can also be an aid to motivate and stimulate language learning (Allwright, 1981). McDonough and Shaw (2003) state that textbook analysis and evaluation is a practical and useful process because it gives teachers conception into the organizational principles of the materials and helps them to maintain the improvement in the field.

Ur (1996) points out that while in some places textbooks are taken for granted, in others they are not used at all. In a 'compromise' situation, a textbook is used selectively and supplemented by other materials. Textbooks provide a clear framework, guidance and support to the inexperienced teachers. It also makes the learners less teacher-dependent while supplementary or additional materials prepared by the teachers themselves or borrowed from other sources will help them to attract in learning of every learner in a class. The "compromise situation" is essential in an English class as learners in a class may have different levels of linguistic competence.

### **Textbook Evaluation**

Textbook evaluation helps curriculum designers and material developers to consider key issues while designing language courses. In addition, evaluation studies are of particular importance in reexamining the deficient points in the existing materials and enhancing the quality of the materials. In the evaluation process, ideas and suggestions of teachers should be considered on the ground that they are the immediate users of coursebooks and usually have good insights into coursebook usage and classroom dynamics. In summary, it is a fact that evaluation of textbook and other materials is the natural and fundamental part of the teaching and learning process.

In evaluating textbook, evaluation checklist is needed. Cunningsworth (1995) agrees that evaluation checklist should have some criteria referring to the physical characteristics of textbooks such as layout, and organizational and logistical characteristics. Another important criteria that should be incorporated are the needs of the teacher's individual approach and the organization of the curriculum. Moreover, criteria should cover the specific language functions, grammar, and skill contents that are covered by a particular textbook as well as the relevance of linguistic items to the prevailing sociocultural environment (Anshar, Emilia, & Damayanti, 2014; Cunningsworth, 1995; Handayani, 2016). Besides, textbook evaluations should cover criteria that pertain to representation of cultural and gender components. In addition, evaluation should be carried out to the extent of which linguistic items, subjects, content, and topics match up with students' personalities, backgrounds, needs, and interests as well as those of the teacher and institution.

For an English teacher, textbook becomes one of important elements in teaching learning process, thus it needs to be evaluated to see the strengths and weaknesses. Cunningsworth (1995) provides some important criteria to evaluate textbook; they are aims and approach, design and organization, language content, skills, topic, methodology, teachers' book, and practical consideration.

Different from Cunningsworth, Ur (1996) develops another scheme for textbook evaluation as follows: (1) Objectives are explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material; (2) The material should be suitable with the preface of the textbook because it will make the teacher know the content of textbook; (3) Approach should be educationally and socially acceptable to target community; (4) The textbook suits the syllabi and targeted competence of the curriculum by the government; (5) Clear attractive layout; print easy to read; (6) The textbooks might be attractive and have colourful illustrations for younger learners. It is also available in printed book that helps students to read easily; (7) Appropriate visual materials are available; (8) The materials contain illustration and picture that can help the students to understand the topic clearly; (9) Interesting topics and tasks; (11) The topic and task of textbook should be interesting for the students; (12) Varied topics and tasks, so as to provide for different learner levels, learning styles, interests, etc; (13) Clear instruction; (14) Systematic coverage syllabus; (15) Content clearly organized and graded (sequenced by difficulty); (16) Periodic review and test sections; (17) Plenty of authentic language; (18) Good pronunciation explanation and practice; (19) Good vocabulary explanation and practice; (20) Good grammar

presentation and practice; (21) Fluency practice in all four skills; (22) Encourages learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning; (23) Adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy preparation load; (24) Readily available locally.

Textbooks should fulfill the twenty-two (22) criteria of good textbooks mentioned previously because they cover all corresponding aspects including internal and external aspects of the textbooks. In terms of internal criteria are the objectives, approach educational and social topics, tasks, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, content organization, authentic language, instruction, practice in four skills, and test sections. External criteria include layout, visual materials, readiness of textbooks, teacher's book. Measuring a textbook using those criteria will help teachers to give appropriate materials to the students. Those criteria are also very useful for the governments to review the textbooks.

### Method

This study belongs to an evaluation research. Babbie (2013) states that evaluation research refers to a research purpose rather than a specific method. The field of evaluation research has become an increasingly popular and active research specially as reflected in textbook, course, and project.

The reason why this study is called evaluation research is because the researcher tried to evaluate *When English Rings a Bell* and *Bright* using good criteria of textbooks based on Ur's theory. Aside from mere research for curiosity, evaluation is also a practice that seeks to enhance the effectiveness of textbooks.

This research was designed to compare two English textbooks for seventh grade junior high school based on Ur's theory. In this study, the researcher tried to gain the representation of worthiness of English textbooks as shown by their strengths and weaknesses.

The data of this study are all of the English learning material presented in those English textbooks. The data are in the form of texts, dialogues, tasks, activities, songs, table, etc. The textbooks that were analyzed contain different chapters of each book.

The first textbook, entitled *When English Rings a Bell* is published by Ministry of Education and Culture. It consists of 8 chapters in 185 pages. It is an English textbook designed for seventh grades junior high school. This book is also designed to support the teaching and learning process based on K-13. Based on the preface of the book, it is designed for students so they can communicate properly in daily conversations.

The second textbook is *Bright (An English Course)*. It is published by Erlangga. This book consists of 12 chapters in 167 pages. It is an English textbook designed for seventh grades junior high school. This book is also designed to support the teaching and learning process based on the 2013 Curriculum. Based on the preface, this book is designed for students to improve their skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing and learn lots of new vocabulary using various activities. The activities also help the students to work on their own and perform in group or pairs.

The researcher chose the two textbooks because the government suggests that teachers use the provided books. Besides, most teachers cannot design their own books. It makes teachers rely on the government-issued book which may serve as supplementary materials in learning process.

In this study, techniques to collecting data are document analysis and interview. Document analysis is based on the checklist. The documents to be analyzed were the three textbooks of seventh grade junior high school. The data from this research were collected through several steps of observation; those are: first, the researcher observed the learning materials, activities, tasks, and dialogues of the two textbooks thoroughly, second, the researcher compared those textbooks according to the criteria of a good textbook based on Ur's theory by using checklist. After those steps, the researcher collected the data and the results

from the instrument table were analyzed and elaborated. The elaboration was added with the interview and checklist which were done by the cooperating English teacher.

The researcher used criteria of textbook according to Ur (1996) to evaluate the textbook. It is important to focus on the match between those criteria. Here is the table formulation that is used as an instrument to analyze those textbooks:

Table 1. Criteria of Good Textbook

No.	Criterion	Important		
		Yes	No	Description
1.	Objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material			
2.	Approach educationally and socially acceptable to target community			
3.	Clear attractive layout; print easy to read			
4.	Appropriate visual materials available			
5.	Interesting topics and tasks			
6.	Varied topics and tasks, so as to provide for different learner levels, learning styles, interests, etc.			
7.	Clear instruction			
8.	Systematic coverage syllabus			
9.	Content clearly organized and graded (sequenced by difficulty)			
10.	Periodic review and test sections			
11.	Plenty of authentic language			
12.	Good pronunciation explanation and practice			
13.	Good vocabulary explanation and practice			
14.	Good grammar presentation and practice			
15.	Fluency practice in all four skills			
16.	Encourages learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning			
17.	Adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy preparation load			
18.	Readily available locally			

In deciding the appropriateness of the textbooks, the researcher ticked in 'yes' column to note the importance in each criterion then the researcher tried to elaborate the answer using description in the right column. If the criteria are not appropriate, the researcher ticked in 'no' column. The researcher also elaborated the description from the expert's judgment.

The researcher analyzed the learning material using the following steps based on Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014) such as:

#### Data Reduction

Classifying and describing the data based on the parts of the English textbooks in relation to Ur's criteria of good textbook by checklist. Identifying the strengths and the weaknesses of the textbooks.

#### Data Display

Selected some pictures, tasks and activities as the supporting evidence whether the content of the textbooks are appropriate with the Ur's criteria of good textbook or not.

#### Giving Conclusion

## Findings and Discussion

### The Appropriateness of Textbooks based on Ur's Criteria

Table 2. The Appropriateness of the Two Textbooks based on Ur's Theory

No.	Criterion	Description			
		When English Rings a Bell	Bright		
1.	Objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material	The objectives of this book are appropriate with the basic competence, learning objectives stated under the title of the chapter and the preface.	The objectives of this book are appropriate with the basic competence, learning objective stated under the title of the chapter and the preface.		
		KD 3.1 & KD 4.1	Chapter 1	KD 3.1 & KD 4.1	Chapter 1 & 2
		KD 3.2 & KD 4.2	Chapter 2	KD 3.2 & KD 4.2	Chapter 3
		KD 3.3 & KD 4.3	Chapter 3	KD 3.3 & KD 4.3	Chapter 4
		KD 3.4 & KD 4.4	Chapter 4	KD 3.4 & KD 4.4	Chapter 5,6
		KD 3.5 & KD 4.5	Chapter 5	KD 3.5 & KD 4.5	Chapter 7
		KD 3.6 & KD 4.6	Chapter 6	KD 3.6 & KD 4.6	Chapter 8
		KD 3.7 & KD 4.7	Chapter 7	KD 3.7 & KD 4.7	Chapter 9, 10,11
		KD 3.8 & KD 4.8	Chapter 8	KD 3.8 & KD 4.8	Chapter 12
2.	Approach educationally and socially acceptable to target community	It is acceptable to target students. It is presented in the objectives and activities in each paragraph.	It is acceptable to target students. It presented in the objectives and activities in each paragraph. The approach of <i>Bright</i> is acceptable to students because this book focuses on four skills (listening, speaking, writing and reading). So it can be useful to the students when they want to apply in their daily life.		
3.	Clear attractive layout; print easy to read	The layout is very attractive, colorful, and interesting. It is easy to read.	The layout is attractive and not colorful. The illustrations are not colorful but they are clear. Their sizes are acceptable. It uses drawing and realistic pictures. The prints are also easy to read and understand.		
4.	Appropriate visual materials available	There are many colorful pictures and illustrations to lead the students to the material.	Visual materials are available. They consist of pictures, QR code to scan the listening activity.		
5.	Interesting topics and tasks	The topic is interesting but the task is not interesting. The task focuses on listening and speaking.	In <i>Bright</i> , the topics and task are very interesting. The topics are close to students' environment. (How Are You, Thank You Very Much, Introducing Themselves, Things at School, House, Favorite Animals, describing Things, Lovely Songs).		

6.	Varied topics and tasks, so as to provide for different learner levels, learning styles, interests, etc	The topics are various. The tasks are not various because they do not accommodate the different learners' levels, learning styles and interest. This book focuses on listening and speaking and presents them monotonously.	Topics and task vary and they can be found in greetings, names, and illustrations.
7.	Clear instruction	The instructions are not simple.	The instruction is clear, simple, and understandable.
8.	Systematic coverage syllabus	The content of this book covers the syllabus. It presents the basic competence in each chapter	The content of this book covers the syllabus. It presents the basic competence in each chapter.
9.	Content clearly organized and graded (sequenced by difficulty)	The content is organized. This book is graded clearly. The materials are presented from easy to difficult.	The content of <i>Bright</i> is organized enough and graded from easy to difficult. There are listening and speaking activities (spoken) and reading and writing activities (written).
10.	Periodic review and test sections	There is no periodic review.	There is no periodic review and test sections.
11.	Plenty of authentic language	There is limited authentic language.	There is limited authentic language in <i>Bright</i> .
12.	Good pronunciation explanation and practice	There is no pronunciation explanation and practice. It is because this book focuses on speaking.	The explanation and practices are taken from the recording on QR code in chapter 3 in activity 2, listen to the recording and practice pronouncing the letters.
13.	Good vocabulary explanation and practice	There is an explanation of vocabulary. It is presented in observing and asking questions activity in chapter IV page 60, 62, 70, 73.	There are explanation and practice of vocabulary. It is presented in listening activity in each chapter. In chapter 1, the vocabulary material can be seen from activity 1, 3, 8, and 9. The students can find the meaning of vocabularies using dictionary.
14.	Good grammar presentation and practice	There is no grammar explanation.	The grammar is presented in " <i>You Should Know</i> " section. It is adjusted to the topic or theme in each chapter. The grammar items are: greetings and responses, leave-taking, apology, giving information, asking for information, denying information, asking for information about time, regular, irregular, which one, how many, adjectives, to be (simple present tense), article a, an, and the, countable, uncountable nouns, pronoun, descriptive text.
15.	Fluency practice in all four skills	The practice focuses on listening and speaking. There is a simple reading monologue and writing activity is limited.	The skills in <i>Bright</i> is divided into two parts: (1) listening and speaking activities and (2) reading and writing activities. But listening and speaking have more portions.



16.	Encourages learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning	The material is presented implicitly. It cannot help the students to become independent in learning.	The students can learn the materials by themselves because the instruction is very clear to understand. They can become independent learners at home or at school.
17.	Adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy preparation load	There is a teacher's book which can be a guide for the teacher.	There is no teacher book to guide the teacher in teaching English.
18.	Readily available locally	It can be downloaded, copied, and printed.	<i>Bright</i> is available in many bookstores.

### The Strengths and Weaknesses of *WERB* and *Bright*

There are the strengths and weaknesses of the two English textbook. They are presented below: First, One of the strengths of *WERB* lies in the objectives of the textbook, which are clear because they are stated on the first page of each chapter. They are also the implementations of and compatible with the 2013 Curriculum. This textbook presents various topics, the language style that is used to this textbook is compatible with the students' level, and this textbook motivates the students to practice English actively. Those are the strengths of *WERB*.

The weaknesses of *WERB* are the textbook does not provide adequate explanation about grammar items related to the material, there is no list of new vocabulary that is related to the material, the level of difficulties in this exercises and activities are still low, this textbook does not provide clear instructions in every task and exercise in order to help the students understand what to do, and the pictures of characters used as examples in some activities are monotonous and too childish. There is no material related to the social and cultural contexts presented in this textbook.

Second, The strengths of *Bright* are the availability of various topics, tasks and exercises in the textbook, the objectives of the textbook are clear because they are stated on the first page of each chapter. They also serve as the implementations of and compatible with the 2013 Curriculum, there is an authentic reading and listening skill that can be used by target students in learning listening skill, the language style is easy to understand by the students, language that is used in conversation corresponds with the students' level. The weaknesses of *Bright* are the inadequacy of vocabulary in term of quantity and this textbook does not present pronunciation items, such as individual, sounds and word and sentence stresses.

### Conclusion

Based on the results, it was concluded that: *When English Ring a Bell* meets some criteria of a good textbook by Ur. They are: objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, attractive layout and visual material, interesting and various topics, the content organization are graded, adequate guidance for the teacher, and readiness of the textbook. *Bright* meets all criteria of a good textbook by Ur. They are objectives explicitly laid out in an introduction, and implemented in the material, approach educationally and socially acceptable to target community, clear and attractive layout; prints are easy to read, appropriate visual materials are available, interesting topics and tasks, varied topics and tasks, different learners' levels are accommodated, superb learning styles, interests, clear instruction, systematic coverage syllabus, contents are clearly organized and graded (sequenced by difficulty), periodic review and test sections, plenty of authentic language, good pronunciation explanation and practice, good vocabulary explanation and practice, good grammar presentation and practice, fluency

practice in all four skills, encourages learners to develop own learning strategies and to become independent in their learning, adequate guidance for the teacher; not too heavy preparation load, readily available locally.

The researcher concluded that *Bright* is better than *WERB*. *Bright* fulfills all criteria of good textbooks based on Ur's theory. This book is suitable for uses by teachers and students. It is available in many bookstores. *Bright* is also compatible in terms of coherence and unity of ideas among units and language content.

Based on the results, it was obtained that: The strengths of *WERB* lie in the colorful and attractive layout and there is teachers' book as the guidelines. The weakness of *WERB* is that grammar item is presented in the dialog directly. The strengths of *Bright* lie in the clear instruction of each activity. The students are also encouraged to independently learn from the materials. The weakness of *Bright* is there is no teachers' book.

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