



New Pedagogical Tools to Improve EFL Learners' Oral Fluency: From socio-linguistic and Linguistic perceptions

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Abstract

Development in English Foreign Language teaching and learning depends on the use of effective methods and strategies. Hence, the aim of the study is to probe the effect of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools to improve English Foreign Language learners' oral fluency. Our population consists of third year Literature and Civilization students who are divided into control and experimental group, at the department of English, university of Bejaia. We opted for the experimental method to attain our objective. The tools used are both quantitative and qualitative. The results revealed that, the majority of third year Literature and Civilization students are not fluent in English; but expressed positive attitudes.

Keywords: Control and Experimental Group, Oral Fluency, YouTube Non-fiction Videos, Training Program

Introduction

Many researchers have been interested in finding ways and strategies that can enhance EFL learners' oral fluency. The reason goes to the fact that this skill is considered as a complex one. Among the researchers, there is Alonso (2014, p. 147) who admitted that: "*speaking is a demanding skill*". In addition, assessing learners' oral fluency is not an easy task since many factors may arise especially the psychological ones. Accordingly, in the oral expression session, teachers tend to use audiotapes, but rarely use videos in their classroom. According to (Andoh, 2012; Hismanoglu, 2012; Alsied, & Pathan, 2013) bringing technology in the classroom will assist both teachers and learners to create good conditions in order to enhance the teaching and learning processes. In this case, their behavior and attitude will change as a result of changing the traditional way of teaching and learning. However, the majority of researchers probed the role of videos in enhancing the listening skills or culture/intercultural competence, but few investigated how videos can develop EFL learners' oral fluency. In order to fill this gap, and because of our inspiration and curiosity to discover how technology in the classroom can promote the teaching of speaking; thus, we base this study on investigating the effect of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools to improve third year LLCE students' oral fluency, at the department of English, university of Bejaia.

2. Background of the Paper

2.1. Oral Fluency

Oral fluency is the main focus of the present study. Therefore, different definitions have been given to this concept and are presented as follows:

According to the Online Dictionary of Etymology, the word comes from the Latin origin “*fluence*” which means “*abundance*” in the 1620s, then in 1630s, it refers to “*smooth and easy flow*” (of water). This means that the word changes its meaning from year to another. Other definitions are however given by different authors as Hedge (1993) who said that the term fluency gained two different meanings in ELT. First, the term is similar to the one given by Chambers Concise Dictionary which defines fluency as: “*the ability to speak and write a particular language competently and with ease*” (p. 275). Second, it is defined as “*the ability to link units of speech together with facility and without strain, inappropriate slowness or undue hesitation*” (ibid). To comment on these two definitions, we can say that the first has a direct relation with language production, i.e. both speaking and writing are involved, whereas the second is restricted only to speaking which is our main concern.

For Thornbury (2005), spoken fluency requires the capacity to have a store of memorized lexical chunks and a degree of automaticity. For the first, he means a group of words which can be learnt as a unit, whereas for the second one, he means to retrieve them spontaneously without making efforts. To do so, we believe that learners need to practice speaking both inside and outside the classroom.

Along with the definitions, we believe that the one Bartz and Schulz (n. d) give, is the one that best reflects the aim of our investigation. They state that:

Fluency does not refer to absolute speed of delivery, since native speakers of any language often show wide variations in this area. Fluency refers to overall smoothness, continuity, and naturalness of the students' speech, as opposed to pauses for rephrasing sentences, grouping for words and so forth (cited in Ascione, 1985, p. 13).

To comment, we do share the point of view of the two authors because they explained what fluency is and what it is not. This is why we consider it to be more appropriate and adequate to our study in comparison with other definitions.

2.1.1. Approaches of Oral Fluency Development

In order to develop EFL learners' oral fluency, we believe that different approaches have to be considered by the teacher. Nation and Jonathan (2009, p. 157) identified three crucial approaches. We have summarized them as follows:

- **The well-beaten path approach.** This approach is based on the repetition practice of the same material so as learners can perform it fluently. For example, in our case, learners can watch a given video and then repeat what the characters said orally. It is mainly based on memorization.

- **The richness approach.** In this one, learners are supposed to transfer the things they know in different contexts and situations, i.e. to be creative and imaginative. For instance, learners can watch a video and interpret what they see and hear using their own words.

- **The well-ordered system approach.** For the last one, learners are in control of the language system and can use a variety of efficient and well-connected sentences, i.e. they can use the language automatically and self-correct mistakes.

After considering these three approaches, we can come to the notion that, the second and third approaches, suit better the suggested hypothesis because our main objective is not to make our target population become rote learners but to develop in them the ability to express themselves freely and fluently in English by using their own interpretations, skills, creativity and automaticity. As Slade, (1997) says: "*casual conversation cannot be taught explicitly because it is unstructured*" (cited in McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004, p. 32). This is true because if teachers teach only the rules of the language and not expose their learners to practice what they know in meaningful communication, in this case, they will not be able to speak fluently in English.

2.1.2. Needs Analysis for Effective Speaking

Speaking a language effectively necessitates the knowledge of more than one skill. In fact all of them are interrelated and each one leads to the achievement of the other. These skills can be presented as follows.

- **Linguistic competence.** It can be defined as the mastery of different aspects of language such as grammar, syntax, phonology and vocabulary. According to Richards and Schmidt (1983), linguistic competence helps us understand and express an accurate meaning. This of course is a crucial thing when learning a foreign language because using the wrong word and pronunciation can lead to communication breakdown. In addition, Fulcher (2003) asserts that a person who wants to speak fluently needs to be knowledgeable in terms of grammar, lexis and pronunciation.

- **Sociolinguistic competence.** For Canale, (1983), this competence means "*the extent to which utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic context*" (cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 36). This means that for an EFL learner to be socio-linguistically competent, he should be aware of the social norms of the language studied

by knowing when to speak and how to do it, when to interrupt and apologize and the purpose of talk. According to Harmer (2007), the knowledge of socio-cultural rules helps the person to be considered as a full member of the community. This of course can help the EFL learner be confident and ready to integrate different kinds of discourse especially if he or she is living or studying in the target language community.

●**Strategic competence.** Our investigation in the main literature field related to our study enables us to specify that the strategic competence is the way learners use language in order to solve communication problems. Tavakoli and Dastjerdi (2011), argue that a competent learner is the one who does not give up easily in case of difficulty and tries his or her best to communicate the message by using different strategies. This is an obvious position as the research at hand seeks to integrate these qualities in the population under study thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and decisions.

Bygate (1987) however, identified two communication strategies that learners could use when communicating with others. These are: **the achievement strategies** (e.g. guessing, paraphrasing and cooperation), and the **reduction strategies** (e.g. to avoid using complex utterances). These are, according to us, strategies which might help language learners who are regularly in contact with and use it in different contexts. Because of these strategies' profiles, applying them on our population sample might cause some other hindrances to emerge.

●**Discourse competence.** It refers to the ability to connect sentences together through the use of discourse markers such as: well, in addition, also.... As Thornbury (2005) says: *"The use of discourse markers is important in terms of fluid management of interactive talk; they are used to signal one's intentions, to hold the conversation turn, and to mark boundaries in the talk"* (p. 15).

From this quotation, we admit that, the use of discourse markers can help learners make their speech more organized and understood especially that these items have been implemented in the population sample's prior language learning levels (at secondary schools for instance), and this is worth consider as their language cognitive knowledge.

3.1. Definition and Short Historical Background of YouTube

If we want to define what YouTube is, we can say that it is an online service where every person can watch, download and create videos for free. According to Terantino (2011), this website began on February 14th, 2005 in California and the founders are Steve Chen, Chad Hurley and Jawed Karim (who were employees in PayPal Company) with the domain's name <http://www.youtube.com>. The author added that in 2006, Google purchased YouTube for 1.65 billion. It is classified as the third most visited website on the internet as stated by Alzyoud and Kabilan (2012).

For Alias, Abd Razak, El Hadad, Kunjambu and Muniandi (2013), this website is considered to be one of the efficient online video sharing destinations. We think because of the great deal of interesting videos it contains at its disposal. Moreover, Bonk (2009) defines YouTube as an attractive social medium that helps in the development of the global education (cited in Alhamami, n. d).

Hence, throughout these definitions of YouTube, we can say that it is one of the easiest website for downloading different kinds of videos in a short period of time, and that the user

should be skilful enough in choosing the right video to achieve the wanted goals. It is from these notions that push us to adopt this technological tool with our target population.

3.1.1. Advantages and Disadvantages of YouTube Videos in FLL and FLT

a. Advantages. The use of videos in EFL classroom can have many advantages for both teachers and learners. They are presented as follows:

- **Seeing language in use.** The first advantage of videos in EFL classroom is that they help learners see and listen to language in its real context. To illustrate, Alimemaj (2010) argues that videos provide an authentic language used by native speakers, as well as all language genres (songs, debates, talks, poems...). This of course can be considered as a good way in order to learn a great deal of vocabulary which is important for developing one's oral fluency. In addition, Burt (1999) says that: "*videos present real language that is not simplified and is spoken at a normal speed with genuine accent*" (p. 2). In this case, EFL learners will know how to react to the difficulties they encounter in speaking by getting used to hearing what native speakers use in their daily life.

Furthermore, Meyers (1999) argues that seeing language in use spurs students' oral production and confidence in their speech (cited in York, 2011). Thus, videos have really important instance and sight for EFL learners since the language they see and hear is a genuine one. Also, Richards and Renandya (2002) argue that by watching videos, learners will know how people initiate, develop and end their conversations. The lack of knowledge of these concepts impinges EFL learners to be fluent in the target language. Moreover, Hannifin (1986) reports that watching a Video enables EFL learners to pay more attention to the language used by native speakers, and heightens their awareness to the subject matter, and in doing so, they will be both competent in terms of the language and the content being taught and learned. (Cited in Fog, Ulfkjaer, & Schlicter, n. d).

- **Cross cultural awareness.** In addition to seeing language in use, videos also develop EFL learners' cultural awareness of the target language. This can be confirmed by Stempleski (1987) who says that: "*through videos, students can see how people in the target culture live, their values, customs, clothing, food and how people in that culture interact with one another*" (p. 6). In this case, learners will gain background knowledge of the language studied which is very important in order to be fluent and in context when speaking. Additionally, videos will help them interpret native speakers' attitudes and reactions to different societal situations, a fact which has been underlined by Cakir (2006, cited in Shahani, Tahriri, & Divsar, 2014). Chan and Herrero (n. d) in their turn point out that videos are considered as vehicles that help learners develop intercultural understanding (cited in Chowdhury, 2014). Accordingly, teachers can help their learners compare between their native culture and the target language one and then draw the similarities and differences about the topic orally.

- **Raising discussion.** Furthermore, videos can be used as means for raising discussion in the EFL class. As stated by Katchen (2003): "*videos can work as a springboard for discussion*" (cited in Watkins and Wilkins, 2011, p. 8). This is actually our main objective in the present study as we are meaning to boost learners' oral fluency through debates and discussions related to the video they actually watched during the experimental procedure. As

well, Cox (2011) says that videos from YouTube help the students comment and ask questions about the video (cited in Al-zyoud & Kabilan, 2012).

- **Motivation.** Besides, watching videos can motivate learners to be engaged in different tasks. Yassaei (2012), states that videos can be effective tools for breaking up the routine and incline the students to study the English language. In doing so, learners will become fluent speakers and autonomous. As well, Joint Information Systems Committee (2002), report that videos are appealing materials that evoke students' emotional reactions and raise their motivation (cited in Hartsell & Yuen, 2006). Thus, videos in EFL classroom are revealed by these researchers to create an enjoyable and motivating atmosphere which can help learners not only contribute the in-class discussions but can be the motive to attendance in EFL classes as the teaching and learning environment becomes more salient and sounder.

As far as the benefits teachers can derive from this implementation in their professional process, we believe that it will help them act as facilitators of knowledge rather than as sources of language input. In addition, they will experience a new way of teaching which can help them measure their weaknesses and strength concerning the traditional teaching process. According to Alwehaibi (2013), videos help to shift from the traditional way of teaching to a more dynamic one. This means that not only teachers who are information and guidance detainers; but, learners too as both are called to work in close connection, and as both of them are also meant to measure and evaluate the extent of their progress.

b. Disadvantages. Despite the aforementioned advantages, we admittedly agree that any technological tool is drawbacks free. The following items, not to list them all are the most important ones which can impede EFL teachers as well as learners to use videos in an EFL classroom.

- **Time constraints.** According to Puhfahl and Rhodes (2003) using videos in EFL classroom is time consuming. We almost share their point of view, because looking for the videos that can be compelling and motivating for the learners is not so easy and preparing adequate and appropriate in-class activities need a great deal of commitments from the teacher and EFL learners' ability to engage and satisfy such activities and inquisitiveness.

- **Limited software.** Another disadvantage of videos as cited by Allan (1985) is the limitation of the software. She asserts that, "*the problem with the new technology is that the hardware is always ahead of the software, and without the right materials it is difficult to exploit the resource to the full*" (p. 47). Actually, if we do not have good software, we cannot use the video effectively in the classroom; thus, we strongly believe that the ground for such implementation has to be available and well structured.

- **Passive viewing.** As well, Brophy (2007) states that using videos can result to a passive learning process. We think that this can happen if the learners are not aware about the purpose of watching the video. Hence, it is up to the teacher to make his or her learners understand the fact that watching a video at home is not the same as in the classroom. In the classroom, video watching is purposeful as the EFL learners are directed and guided towards developing their ability to express themselves in English. Our view can be shared by Davies and Pearse (2000) who say that: "*if learners are to participate willingly in class, they must understand what is expected from them*" (p. 13). In doing so, they will be ready both cognitively and

linguistically in the task they are assigned to accomplish and will be able to more productivity. Tovmasyan (n. d) stresses on the fact that the use of videos in EFL classroom should not be a passive activity.

• **Fear of technology.** According to our prior gathered data, we think that teachers who had a poor experience in using videos in their classrooms might be the main factors in raising anxiety and negative attitude towards technology. This can be because of their lack of adequate preparation to the tool's implementation in class, no prior planning to introduce this material, fear of any negative peer and learners' attitudes, and no familiarity to this new pedagogical material in class. This has been confirmed by Russell and Bradley (1997) who pointed out that some teachers expressed negative attitude towards the use of ICT because they lacked confidence and knowledge (cited in Andoh, 2012).

Consequently, we believe this can be solved through an awareness to use educational technology-based materials and mostly for which objectives to use them. In addition, we need to set a systematic plan which includes all the criteria needed for a successful use of these technological tools such as YouTube videos in EFL classroom. In this context, Lewis (2009) says:

"It is important to understand the basics of technology to give you the confidence to make informed choices for your classes, to choose the most appropriate tools for your students and the language learning goals you set" (p. 89).

In doing so, teachers will become digital skilful users and able to face and do with any problem they may encounter while using YouTube videos as pedagogical tools.

4. Methodology

4.1. Research Questions

The following questions are the ones we would like to answer:

1. Is speaking difficult to acquire? If yes, what makes it difficult?
2. How can YouTube videos boost EFL learners' oral fluency?
3. Has this strategy proved beneficial?
4. What are the attitudes of both teachers and students towards using it in the oral expression session?

4.2.Hypothesis

Third year LLCE students will improve their oral fluency if their teachers integrate YouTube videos in oral expression.

4.3.Aims of the Study

Learning a foreign language entails not only the ability to read and write; but, it requires the capacity to speak appropriately and fluently to get the message across. To achieve this, EFL learners need a great deal of practice, commitment, and motivation. Thus, throughout the present study we aim at:

1. Enhancing LLCE students' oral fluency.
2. Developing LLCE students and teachers of oral expression's positive attitudes towards them.
3. To prove that the use of YouTube non-fiction videos is an effective method in oral expression session.

4.4. Method, Tools and Data Analysis

Since the present study investigates the effect of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools to develop EFL learners' oral fluency; thus, we opted for the experimental method to attain this objective. It is considered to be the best method for testing **cause** and **effect**; however, its disadvantage is that it cannot test abstract variables like **motivation** and **anxiety** (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007; Griffee, 2012). For the data collection tools, we have relied on observation, questionnaires, interview (unstructured) and students' evaluation checklists. As far as our participants are concerned, they consist of third year LLCE students, teachers of oral expression and teachers of civilization, at the department of English, university of Bejaia. Concerning the students, they are divided into two groups (G¹=32 students, G²=33 students), which means the population contains 65 students. In our random sampling, we have two subgroups composed of subgroup A, G 1 (12 students), and subgroup B, G 2 (12 students). The first is the control group, and the second one is the experimental. The data are analyzed using frequencies, percentages and descriptive statistics.

4.5. Description of the Training Program

The experiment took only three weeks because of many constraints that we encountered (see appendices, 5, 6 and 7). We followed three stages: **pre-viewing**, **while-viewing** and **post-viewing**. In the first stage, we explained the objective behind watching the video; in the second stage, students were required to listen carefully and take notes as a way to prepare themselves for oral practice; in the third stage, it was a whole class discussion and debate; we added role play in the third session. At the end of the session, students were given an evaluation checklist to evaluate the video, their speaking and give their opinion about how they find its use in oral session (see appendix 8). The first video was about obesity in America and it took only 7 minutes and 56 seconds so as to allow the students have a great deal of discussion (see appendix 9). The second video was about stronger self-esteem and it took 8 minutes and 3 seconds. The third video was about immigration in America and it took 5 minutes and 49 seconds. In this latter, students were required to make discussion and role play related to the topic. The choice of the themes were made through asking some students in the experimental group, informally, about the videos they like and the majority of them prefer videos about social issues and this is why we have opted for obesity, self-esteem and immigration as major social issues we live nowadays.

5. Results and Interpretations

Question 1: Is speaking a difficult skill? If yes what makes it difficult?

To this question, we can say **“Yes”** and the things that make it difficult are being reported by our respondents (LLCE students and teachers of oral expression) like: students' psychological factors and disabilities, students' cultural differences, interests and level, lack of pedagogical equipments and tools and linguistics incompetence. All these elements can be overcome if students practice speaking inside and outside the classroom regularly, as well as encouraged to participate and perform various and rich tasks using motivated techniques and strategies. In addition, we think that in the classroom, there should be more practice of output than input; because in fact, knowledge is everywhere not just at school, there are books,

internet and different means which they can rely on to cultivate and enrich their culture of the language; what they really need is the application of those elements in the classroom.

Question 2: How can YouTube non-fiction videos boost EFL learners’ oral fluency?

We have got an answer to this question thanks to the teachers’ interview in which we arrived at an understanding that the strategy can develop learners’ oral fluency through following the three stages of viewing: **pre-viewing**; **while-viewing** and **post-viewing**, and here, in the last stage, students are required to personalize the topic by relating it to their life experiences and background knowledge. In addition to this, more practice should be devoted at this stage so as to allow students practice more their speaking for example: making the whole class to discuss about the video, doing pair/group work and role plays. Moreover, the objective of watching a video should also be emphasized in order to make learners ready for oral practice. To illustrate, Altman (1989) states that: “*Video materials must be chosen not primarily for their inherent artistic value but for their ability to fulfil a particular function in a particular course*” (p.110). To interpret it in another way, we can say that, YouTube videos can enhance students’ oral fluency through the design of effective communicative activities with the statement of specific objectives and classroom management. Similarly, Gezezin (2014) says that for video materials to be used successfully to promote students’ oral fluency, teachers have to use them creatively.

Question 3: Has this strategy proved beneficial?

To some extent, “**Yes**” and this has been confirmed by the students’ evaluation checklists, the teachers’ interview as well as the teacher’s comments while doing the experiment. Also, we find it beneficial since it has enriched our knowledge of how to implement the suggested hypothesis in oral session. More importantly, we developed a positive attitude towards the use of technology in education in which we hope it will be part of the syllabus in all the modules so as to motivate the students and create a better learning environment. Our view is shared by (Mayoral, Tello & Gonzalez, 2010; Canning, 2000) who admitted that their students find learning English language with YouTube videos more useful and constructive. These are shown in the tables bellow:

Table 1. Analysis of Students’ Evaluation Checklist (Video 1)

Criteria	Questions	Yes	%	NO	%	NA	%	Total	
								N	%
1- Evaluation of the video	a- Did you find the video interesting?	12	100	0	0	0	0	12	100
	b- Did it motivate you?	11	91.6	1	8.33	0	0	12	100
	c- Was the language difficult?	2	16.6	8	66.6	2	16.6	12	100
	d- Was it well designed?	12	100	0	0	0	0	12	100
	e- Did you learn something from it?	11	91.6	1	8.3	0	0	12	100
2- Evaluation of speaking	f- Does the video help you improve your oral Fluency? If no, would you please say why!	10	83.3	2	16.6	0	0	12	100
3- Opinion about the use of YouTube videos	g- Do you find the use of YouTube videos in oral session beneficial and instructive?	12	100	0	0	0	0	12	100

Table2. Analysis of students' evaluation checklist (Video 2)

Criteria	Questions	Yes	%	No	%	Total	
						N	%
1- Evaluation of the video	a- Did you find the video interesting?	8	80	2	20	10	100
	b- Did it motivate you?	6	60	4	40	10	100
	c- Was the language difficult?	2	20	8	80	10	100
	d- Was it well designed?	10	100	0	0	10	100
	e- Did you learn something from it?	7	70	3	30	10	100
2- Evaluation of speaking	f- Does the video help you improve your oral Fluency? If no, would you please say why!	5	50	5	50	10	100
3- Students' Opinion	g- Do you find the use of YouTube non-fiction videos in oral session beneficial and instructive?	10	100	0	0	10	100

Criteria	Questions	Yes	%	No	%	Total	
						N	%
1- Evaluation of the video	a- Did you find the video interesting?	12	100	0	0	12	100
	b- Did it motivate you?	12	100	0	0	12	100
	c- Was the language difficult?	1	8.3	11	91.6	12	100
	d- Was it well designed?	11	91.6	1	8.3	12	100
	e- Did you learn something from it?	12	100	0	0	12	100
2- Evaluation	f- Does the video help you improve	12	100	0			100

n of speaking	your oral Fluency? If no, would you please say why!				0	1 2	0
3- Opinion about the use of YouTube videos	g- Do you find the use of YouTube videos in oral session beneficial and instructive?	12	100	0	0	1 2	100

Table 3. Analysis of students’ evaluation checklist (Video 3)

Question 4: What are the students and teachers’ attitudes towards using it in the oral expression session?

Concerning the students and teachers of civilization, they all had a positive attitude; whereas, for the teachers of oral expression, only one of them who expressed a negative opinion because he or she thinks they are not really useful. We think that, in order to judge whether a given material is good or not, it has to be first experimented to see if it has attained the wanted objective or not.

6. Conclusion

The present study investigated the role of using YouTube non-fiction videos as pedagogical tools to develop EFL learners’ oral fluency. To reach this objective, an experimental method has been used, and data have been collected both quantitatively (the use of questionnaires and evaluation checklists) and qualitatively (the use of interview and classroom observation). Findings showed that students, teachers of oral expression (except for one), and teachers of civilization showed a positive attitude towards the new strategy we implemented. In addition to this, students’ evaluation checklists revealed that this type of technology helped them develop their oral fluency; except in the second session, in which half of them reported “No” due to many factors such as inhibition, language incompetence...etc. However, because only three weeks have been devoted for the experiment we cannot, to some extent, say that our hypothesis has thoroughly been confirmed. The limitations of the study can be summarized below:

- The use of questionnaires and interview as data collection tools cannot give us a real picture about people’s attitudes and actions since most of them may not take it seriously.
- Finding interesting video on YouTube was a very challenge for us because we have to take into account many principles such as: students’ age, interests, level...). In addition, we have to prepare each time a lesson plan which is also not easy since it needs careful design and reflections.
- Some factors like students’ motivation which influenced our results could not be controlled.
- Only three weeks was devoted for the experiment, which is not sufficient in order to confirm or disconfirm our hypothesis.
- The number of students is only 24; thus, the results cannot be generalized to the whole population (65).

For the implications, teachers need to design various and meaningful communicative activities; set the goals behind using YouTube non-fiction videos in oral session; guide students with video teaching instructions; encourage them to watch the video before coming

to the classroom; raise their motivation and self-esteem, and give them opportunities to expose projects in the auditorium. The new strategy we implemented would be more successful if it was used for a longer period of time. Thus, we suggest future researchers to lengthen the duration of the experiment for at least a whole year to have time to analyze and interpret the data.

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