

The Use of iPad and Applications for English Language Education

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Abstract—This article examines the importance of the iPad use and presents numerous useful applications employed in the field of education, especially in the field of English language teaching and learning. This topic is of great importance as educators and students alike, these days, live in the digital era, which entails new technological advances that may positively benefit the instruction of varied school subjects. Additionally, the use of new technologies (e.g., iPad and educational applications) in the classroom setting may motivate and foster the acquisition of necessary twenty-first century abilities among students. With the aim of achieving the aforementioned objectives, first and foremost the role of digital technologies and m-learning in education is analyzed, since these two aspects have a direct relationship with the main topic of this work. In addition, a conceptualization and main characteristics of the iPad are provided. Then the use of this device in different educational settings at the international level is highlighted. Finally, the use of this device as a didactic tool in the language learning classroom is discussed and a selection of meaningful applications for English language teaching and learning is provided. As educators, in the digital era, is our responsibility to remain constantly updated to provide our students with an education aligned with the new technological advancements and, above all, to enrich their learning inside and outside the classroom. Consequently, this will promote a more autonomous and lifelong learning among our language students.

Index Terms—technology, m-learning, iPad, educational applications, English education

I. INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: A word cloud of the iPad and education (Source: Watters, 2011)

Since the iPad was released in 2010, its use in the classroom has gradually increased throughout the years. The iPad's use for educational purposes has had a greater impact in developed countries around the world. The increasing usage of the device at the classroom setting has sparked researchers' interest for conducting research on the role and benefits of the iPad as a tool for teaching and learning. The use of the iPad and educational applications (apps) can be beneficial in classroom instruction as well as it can support and enhance student learning. In addition, the usage of the device and apps can have a positive impact on the motivation, engagement, and achievement of students at different educational settings, including primary, middle, and high school and institutions of higher education. Moreover, students' literacy skills and 21st-century skills can be developed through the incorporation of the device into classroom instruction. Most importantly, by utilizing the iPad device and educational apps with consistency, we can align our instruction with new ways of learning that our students have access to in today's world. This will help us, as educators, instruct content by using new, different formats.

This article aims to helping teachers of different content-area subjects and, especially, English as foreign language (EFL) teachers become aware of the significant impact that the iPad use, along with effective apps, may have in their classroom instruction. In this work, teachers will learn about the benefits and practical examples of the iPad use in the classroom as well as they will be equipped with lots of apps, which can assist their instructional practice and enhance their students' learning experience. This work then starts with a brief overview of digital technologies and M-Learning because of their close relationship with the iPad device. Next, a conceptualization and main characteristics of the device are provided. Then a detailed description of the iPad use in different educational settings is stressed. Finally, the device use as a tool for language teaching is highlighted, as well as numerous apps aimed at language teaching and learning are presented.

The apps are ideal for teaching and learning English in EFL contexts, which is the second major reason of why this work was brought to light. With this in mind, it is imperative to point out that teachers of English will be equipped with the knowledge and tools needed to provide learning experiences of high quality to their language students who are part of today's globalized world.

II. DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND M-LEARNING

In today's world, it is imperative for teachers to provide students with access to the technologies that will be part of their future world, both in further learning experiences and at work. Therefore, we, as teachers, need to be aware of the key role that digital technologies and M-Learning have in classroom instruction. It may be highly beneficial to have a good understanding of technological, mobile devices since they can be used as tools to enhance teaching, as well as assist and improve student learning (Barone & Wright, 2008; Kharbach, 2011). To begin with, we will explore the concepts of digital technologies and M-Learning because they are closely related to the major topic of this article, which is the use of the iPad and educational applications for the teaching and learning of the English language.

According to Beschoner and Hutchison (2013), the influence of digital technologies and the Internet on literacy practices of the 21st century may influence the types of literacy young children use to read, write, and communicate at the school setting. The scholars suggested a comprehensive definition of literacy in today's educational process; their definition emphasizes the use of multimedia, computer-based print, and technological teaching-learning devices in the classroom, because they can be effective tools for a more updated literacy experience. This definition, as stated by Beschoner and Hutchison (2013), is important for educators to take into account because children "as young as three and four years old frequently see family members using technology, and often use interactive media for a variety of purposes themselves" before they experience formal learning experiences (p. 17). In addition, the nature of literacy is largely impacted by the implementation of the latest technological developments (including the introduction of the iPad) into reading, writing, and communicating activities (Beschoner & Hutchison, 2013; Clements & Sarama, 2003).

The term M-Learning (or mobile-learning) is a relatively new instructional approach used in the process of teaching and learning at various educational levels around the world. Manuguerra and Retocz (2011) pointed out that M-Learning is concerned with the benefits provided by mobile technologies consisting of "the latest generation of mobile telephones and tablet computers[, which] have the potential to ... change the ways that learning and teaching are carried out, greatly favoring constructivist and collaborative approaches to learning, and flexible and adaptive approaches to teaching" (p. 61). Melhuish and Falloon (2010) noted that it is critical that any definition of M-Learning must refer to the ability of this kind of technology for allowing people to learn within their "own [individual] context when on the move in time and space," which is the major learning affordance provided to students (p. 3). According to the scholars, what makes M-Learning unique within the field of education is that it can support and facilitate learning experiences by means of using one's own device in a situated context.

III. A BRIEF GLANCE AT THE IPAD DEVICE

The iPad was introduced as a touchscreen tablet in 2010, and since then it has been an outstanding success for the Apple company (Godwin-Jones, 2011). As pointed out by Melhuish and Falloon (2010), smartphones, cellphones, tablets, PDAs and laptops were mainly regarded as mobile devices until January 2010. Melhuish and Falloon (2010) added that the introduction of the Apple's iPad was regarded as the latest mobile device that had amazed people in the international online world because it was "a new type of mobile platform that will, at least in theory, offer all the functionality and connectivity of a laptop, with the mobility of a smartphone" (p. 5). Henderson and Yeow (2012) agreed that the weight of standard iPad makes it a lot less heavier than a traditional laptop. In addition, the device does not have any cables attached to it, and the control of it consists mainly of one button. Additionally, as stated by Murray and Olcese (2011), iPad's early success can be attributed to the over 250,000 applications to be run on the device, as well as its interface similar to the iPod Touch and iPhone.

It also imperative to learn about the major characteristics of the iPad Device. In this sense, according to Henderson and Yeow (2012), the iPad's combination of size, light weight, lack of attachments and connectivity makes it "a very portable device for [learners] to hold, operate and use it ... at their own desk, collectively around a table, on their lap or possibly out of class" (p. 3). The iPad and other Apple gadgets are referred to as iOS devices due to their operating system. The iPad has a 9.7 inch screen that displays 1024-by-768-pixel resolution at 132 pixels per inch. The iPad's

data capacity is 16GB, 32GB, or 64GB, and its battery life is up to 10 hours. One of the most important developments that accompany devices with iOS is the concept of iApps and the App Store. iApps are software programs designed to run on the Apple devices. iApps are downloaded from the online App Store; some can be downloaded for free, while others are not free of charge (Ireland & Woollerton, 2010).

In an article by Melhuish and Falloon (2010), the five major affordances of the iPad in relation to its use in the educational setting were described. The scholars wrote about the iPad's portability for learning, referring to its convenient size and weight that makes it suitable as a portable learning device. People who are interested in looking for a computing platform may find the iPad device as an ideal choice. The iPad's affordable access to learning can be helpful towards "digitally-supported learning needs [because of] its relatively low cost in relation to its computing power" (p. 6). The iPad also provides situated learning in the classroom setting due to its interface design, which makes easy even for the youngest learner to use the device. Another key affordance is connectivity and convergence that is concerned with notions that "the connection to supporting infrastructure and peripherals, and the synchronous/asynchronous virtual connection to individuals, learning communities, and environments ... allow learners to create, share and connect with others in authentic learning situations, and to participate in online learning communities" (p. 9). Last but not least, iPads may be used in a collaborative way, but because of its single user logon and personalized choice of applications it provides individualizing and personalizing learning.

A. *The iPad Use in Different Educational Settings*

After a conceptualization and major characteristics of the iPad were provided, along with an overview of digital technology and M-Learning, we will now discuss the iPad's use in the classroom from a perspective that the device can be used as a tool for teaching and learning. The release of the iPad in 2010 caused Touch technology to have more serious implications on the field of education. This means that the introduction of this technological device has led academics from different parts of the world to consider the potential use of the product and educational applications in the teaching-learning process. There are many benefits of the iPad use at different educational levels due to the notion that teachers can greatly take advantage of the device to assist teaching and facilitate learning in the classroom (Nooriafshar, 2011).

At the university level teaching staff are eager to find ways of using the iPad to assist their instruction. For instance, Futhey (2010) of Duke University observed that the iPad was going to "herald a revolution in mashing up text, video, course materials, [and] students input" (as cited in Nooriafshar, 2011, p. 2). The use of the iPad at the schoolwide level has improved productivity because teachers are finding ways to do things paperlessly; these practices save the district money and teachers time (Foote, 2012). Foote (2012) noted that educators can use the iPad in a variety of ways, such as scanning an assignment and saving readings as PDFs, posting these things and other materials on their websites, having students open documents in a PDF reader on their iPads, and requesting students to write directly onto a PDF file, save it, and then email it back for feedback and grading. Moreover, the iPad in the educational process can stimulate creativity due to the camera, video camera, and the apps, which can be used for creative storytelling, video production, collaborative projects, and many more. Most importantly, one of the clearest examples of the iPad use in practice in today's classroom is its utility in the discipline of American Sign Language (ASL). Because ASL curriculum primarily involves visual aids the device makes an invaluable tool toward more effective student learning (Foote, 2012).

As pointed out by Ireland and Woollerton (2010), there were reports in the press indicating that universities were embracing the iPad for classroom use. In this respect, Ireland and Woollerton (2010) commented about the iPad usage at the college level in three different countries. Students are supplied with iPads upon their entry in several US universities. In different parts of the country, the Australian school system is trying to bring the iPad into their classrooms; for example, in the Victoria State, there are eight schools that were provided with 500 iPads with the purpose of trying them out and evaluating their usefulness in the classroom. In the U.K., teachers are exploring the potential applications of the iPad for classroom instruction. In addition to the implementation of the iPad into education at the worldwide level, the iPad use in the classroom may be key in hopes of developing students' 21st century skills (Murray & Olcese, 2011). In order to promote the key development of 21st century skills that support collaboration, Murray and Olcese (2011) developed a database that included the collaborative status of iPad applications. In their work, the researchers described the collaborative potential inherent in applications. It was also stated that multiple users could create and share material simultaneously through the use of apps, as well as they provided an opportunity for multiple users to work on the same document at the same time through the use of Google Documents.

Ireland and Woollerton (2010) held the view that the impact of the iPad in today's educational world has created an interest in researchers towards investigating what the future holds for the iPad usage in education, and, more importantly, the impact that the device has on individual teachers and institutions as well. Ireland and Woollerton (2010) pointed out that it was not difficult to imagine how the iPad could revolutionize the classroom in years to come. In order to have a better idea of how the device can shape the instructional practice, the authors included in their work the device's six main developments intended to lead future changes at school. Among the described main developments, the following ones stood out: Learners will be able to control audio and video material. Playing material will be an individual activity not a group one. Students will decide how long they want to listen to material, when to stop, when to replay, and where to focus on the material for comprehension of details. Students will be able to download, upload, and

share things via Wi-Fi and web pages. Learners will be able to become authors of innovative, multimedia work using intended apps for this work.

In a case study regarding the adoption and use of iPads in a primary school conducted by Henderson and Yeow (2012), it was found that the iPad's web browsing function was the most commonly used among senior students' learning activities. The use of the iPad allowed students to research topics on the Web, which gave students an opportunity to expand their understanding of the topics learned in class. In addition to its web browsing functionality, students used Apple's Pages to type up what they learned through their little research work with their iPads. By attaching the iPad to a projector, students were able to employ Apple's KeyNote (similar to Microsoft Power Point) to share key information with their peer classmates (Henderson & Yeow, 2012). Additionally, the scholars stated that e-books were used in the classroom for teaching; for instance, teachers read pieces of a novel to students every day through the iPad's iBook application. Students also employed the iBook application for engaging in individual and collaborative reading. Textbooks in PDF format were loaded onto the children's iPad, which gave them easy access to a source of multiple references for individual learning and further practice beyond the classroom. Application games were also used by senior students to help reinforce their learning in mathematics.

As indicated by Northrop and Killeen (2013), the increasing interest of the iPad usage at the school setting has created opportunities to incorporate technology into early literacy skill development. By having access to the iPad device and other technological devices, teachers can take advantage of such opportunities to connect school and home learning activities. By the same token, incorporating technology into the classroom is a critical way to promote understanding of 21st-century literacies; such initiative is largely supported by the International Reading Association (Northrop and Killeen, 2013). In addition to that, Northrop and Killeen (2013) believed that if the iPad and its apps were used effectively towards high quality literacy instruction, they offered additional ways for young students to practice early literacy concepts and skills. The scholars recommended teachers to use an instructional framework aimed at providing kids with effective instruction through the iPad use in the classroom, which involved ensuring "that students are actually learning, not just pushing buttons and going through the motions on the app" (p. 536). Their framework also involves making sure that students performed tasks at their appropriate level of development. In the suggested framework, teachers need to explain and model the activity, and then learners engage in guided and independent practice. Teachers must scaffold and guide students' understanding of the material. The framework then involves making adjustments and providing feedback. Learners will be enabled to internalize and operate the reading processes and strategies taught (Northrop & Killeen, 2013).

Manuguerra and Retocz (2011) wrote that students expressed a desire for different forms of communication and more diverse, updated learning methods. In this way, educational institutions need to suit well to the new ways of learning of today's students, so teachers must instruct the same content in new, varied formats. Their study results show that students learned best when technologies were integrated into the curriculum, enhancing student learning experiences. In their study, the researchers explored the use of the iPad as a tool to communicate with students, produce video lectures, and grade assignments.

Manuguerra and Retocz (2011) explained that through the adoption of the iPad, the presentation and communication during lectures changed significantly. Lively and spontaneous presentations were experienced by the students. For instance, with the use of the iPad students were able to add notes to slides in real time, and record note, graph or formula given during the lecture. As a result, students' interest in the participation of lectures was reported to be higher, as well as students felt safer in this kind of learning experience because they were able to access key information in detail later. In addition, by using the iPad as a source for recordings, distance students benefited from the complete lecturing experience, in the same way as if they were in class sessions. Moreover, Manuguerra and Retocz (2011) suggested that by utilizing the features of the latest technological devices, teachers can have helpful tools to keep track of and grade students' work. It was pointed out that "the use of the iPad allows lecturers to have a very quick, efficient and sustainable workflow in their marking of student work" (Manuguerra & Retocz, 2011, p. 64). In doing so, the study participants were asked to submit their work electronically. Instructors were able to easily access the papers on their iPads, without having to print them out for grading. These apps allowed them to handwrite, attach notes, insert images, and even record audio feedback. Instructors returned the students' marked assignments by email directly from the app used.

McClanahan, Williams, Kennedy, and Tate (2012) conducted a research project that included the use of the iPad as the vehicle for intervention with a fifth grader, Josh, who struggled with reading. Josh, who had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), was reported to read on a second grade level. By designing lessons that combined iPad applications and activities downloaded to the iPad from the Internet, Josh was instructed key concepts on reading comprehension, such as sorting out main idea and details, understanding sequence, and making inferences. The researchers' work also discussed the particular aspects of the iPad that made the difference for Josh's reading experience, and the most important was reported to be the device's manipulative touch screen. Josh was seemed to be excited to read on the iPad. The researchers concluded that the device impacted the student in many positive ways. It helped him focus his attention, make progress in his reading ability, and become more metacognitive-oriented in his reading. The study also showed that Josh gained one year's growth in reading over the course of six weeks. The study participant also gained in confidence and had control upon his own learning. Most importantly, as a result of the iPad

usage, Josh had an improved attitude toward his overall schoolwork and toward himself as well. It was observed that generalizations to other struggling readers with ADHD cannot be made; however, Josh's successful experience should be used to give serious consideration about and conduct further research on the use of the device with exceptional student population.

B. The iPad Device as a Tool for Language Teaching and Learning

There are several different reasons why the Apple's iPad should be used in language learning and teaching. The notion that many educational institutions are moving toward an instruction that significantly employs the iPad and other tablet devices is an exciting experience for language teachers and learners alike. According to Raine (2013b), the iPad device is becoming an indispensable tool for English language learners across the world because of its multiple advantages for language classroom instruction. The author held the view that there are numerous advantages if language learners use an iPad in the English classroom setting.

In his work, Raine (2013b) recommended EFL teachers that their students should employ iPads in the classroom for twenty varied reasons. The following reasons are among the most important ones: students can write reports with text, photos, and magazine-style formatting, which develop learners' communication skills; students can record themselves speaking, and then assess their own performances; students can check their pronunciation with Siri and the voice-to-text functionality provided by iOS; students can both view and produce podcasts, and share their knowledge, experience, opinions, advice, and questions with other English learners; students can engage in extensive reading by accessing articles on the Internet; students have access to L1-L2 and L2-L2 dictionaries, which include text-to-speech pronunciation support and word-in-context excerpts; students can take advantage of the big number of English language games and utilities in the App Store; individual students can access media as many times as they like in order to ensure comprehension, rather than having a single source of audio or video controlled by the teacher; students can edit and reedit every piece of work they produce, which involve drafting, re-drafting, and using continuously their English knowledge and skills; and students can take advantage of vocabulary learning applications, such as Anki and Quizlet.

Anderson's work (2011) included why it is a good idea to use the iPad in the English classroom; he pointed out that the use of the device can make learning the target language more interesting, fun, and effective. Specifically, his work focused on how iPads could be used for English language instruction through the use of apps. The same author (2011) indicated that "all choices to do with technology in the classroom should be directly linked to the benefits that it will bring to the students and how it will improve learning" (para. 1).

IV. EDUCATIONAL APPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

This article now highlights helpful and interesting apps that can be used inside and outside the English language classroom setting. In this regard, Anderson (2011) presented several examples of how these three iPad apps can be used in the English class: Kindle app, Puppet Pals, and Comic Life. The author noted that by having an iPad and the Kindle app, English learners would be able to read anywhere and take advantage of the very helpful dictionary features that the app has. For instance, when learners do not know the meaning of a vocabulary word they can automatically look it up. This involves autonomous learning because students can find on their own the meaning of unknown English words in a convenient manner rather than having to ask for help to their teacher. Besides, students can highlight words and passages as they do in hard copy books. In addition to these benefits for students, there are different several free novels English teachers can use for lesson plans, and they can request students work on out-of-classroom reading. Regarding Puppet Pals, the author commented that controlling characters on the iPad, adding narration, choosing different backgrounds, and among other things can be easily done. Among one of the greatest uses of the app is that students are likely to act out scenes from plays, novels, and poems, which further enhance students' knowledge of reading texts. By using Comic Life, the last app, students can creatively produce their own comics. The app has a lot of templates, so students do not need to spend much time selecting the look of the comic; they can focus on the writing production, which is the essential characteristic of the app.

In an article by Wolff (2011), some of the most useful iPad tools for EFL teachers are discussed as well as the ways teachers used the device, in and out of the classroom, were described. According to Wolff (2011), EFL teachers mainly use the device as an in-class reference tool, as well as it is used for the presentation of class content, face-to-face interaction with students, and for the teachers' own professional development. By learning how to use iPads to their fullest potential, EFL teachers can provide a more enriching learning environment for English learners. By using the iPad in the English language instruction, enthusiasm and excitement among students can be sparked as well.

Now, let's have a look at Wolff's (2010) list of collection of useful apps for the field of teaching English; the apps on his list can certainly be also used in several different school subjects. The suggested apps are divided into three groups; apps that can be used inside and outside the classroom; however, some apps can be utilized both during class sessions and beyond the classroom. The third group of apps are aimed at teacher professional development. Most of the apps are free of charge, while others can be purchased at lower cost. For classroom use, teachers can employ Evernote, Evernote Peek, Notability, Keynote, Wikipanion, Dictionary.com, iTunes U, and Facetime. While Dropbox, Dragon Dictation, and Google Translate for iOS can be utilized outside the classroom. With regard to professional development, teachers may employ Midori, iBooks, Newsstand, and Miscellaneous iPad Tips/ Resources.

When it comes to learning grammar in a second language, it is not always a pleasant experience for students. Learning this important aspect of a second language can actually be boring if only traditional methods are used in today's language classroom. The use of iPad apps may be an effective alternative to teach young students grammar, as opposed to the widely used grammar-translation approach in more traditional classrooms (Pappas, 2013). Pappas' work (2013) provided an extensive list of iPad Apps intended to provide students with fun and interesting ways to learn grammatical structures. The author stated that the apps on his list can be utilized by both English teachers and parents. In order to make an effective use of the apps, parents need to possess English knowledge and use the apps as opportunities for giving further practice on the English language to their children. Pappas' list (2013) includes free apps mostly, and they are as follows: Actions Words, Comparative Adjectives, Grammar Game Free, Grammar Jammers Primary Edition, Grammar Wonderland (Elementary) Lite, Jumbled Sentences, MobiLibs, My Grammar Lab, Practice English Grammar 2, Same Sound SpellBound, and Using I and Me Fun Deck. In addition to the grammar practice the apps can provide learners with, these can help improve key major language skills, such as listening and writing.

Raine's work (2013a) presented the top ten apps for EFL instructors. The author commented that his top ten list was created out of the apps used in his own teaching career as well as apps employed by other teachers of English. The recommended list includes the name of each app along with a short description of its major characteristics. According to Raine (2013a), the most helpful apps for contemporary English language teaching and learning are the following: Dropbox, iWork, Notes, PDF Expert, Notability, Socrative, Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, TeacherKit, PlanBook Touch, and GradeBook Pro.

In Hill's terms (2012) the iPad makes a wonderful tool for language learning because students can employ applications that enhance their learning experience in many ways. Hill (2012) created a work that was exclusively concerned with ways in which teachers and learners can use the iPad device for improving the teaching and learning process of the English language. The author provided over ten apps, along with practical applications, and helpful advice on how to utilize the target group of apps consistently. Therefore, a selection of these helpful apps from Hills' work (2012) is presented below along with key details.

The first app selected is LearnEnglish Sports World issued by The British Council. This app is a free sports-themed, hidden object and word game app for the iPad. In LearnEnglish Sports World, players have to find the hidden sports objects and earn medals while learning about sport events. Second, the Wordflex Touch Dictionary app uses a sort of mind-mapping technology to turn word entries into dynamic trees that can be moved, shaped, rearranged, saved, and shared with touch gestures. This app is ideal for creating word posters for English learners. Third, Dynamic English Lessons 3 is an app that helps students learn some of the most common idioms by means of interactive games and practical examples. Next, English Grammar in Use: Activities HD offers a great library of fun grammar exercises, which are aimed specially at intermediate English learners. This app also has sound and extra support across all key topics. Conversation English HD was another app selected because it allows English students to practice and improve their English language skills through 20 conversational lessons. The Animal Idioms and Metaphors app provides 75 useful and popular idioms and metaphors that relate to animals. Each metaphor includes explanations, helpful everyday examples, fun facts and animal sounds. Lastly, Terminology: A Browser for the English Language is an app that is both a dictionary and a thesaurus. By using this app, English learners can easily explore words and phrases (including more and less specific terms) and be directed to the Web for further assistance.

V. CONCLUSIONS

It is evident that the use of the Apple's iPad device and educational apps may have a crucial role in today's classroom instruction, because they both can greatly enrich the teaching-learning process of different content-area subjects and, especially, English language lessons. Therefore, we, as teachers, serving learners of the 21st century must be aware of the many benefits behind an effective use of the iPad device and apps over the course of our students' overall learning and language learning. As mentioned above, students' learning experiences as well as their motivation, engagement, and achievement may be enhanced by incorporating the device and the key educational apps (highlighted in this article) into the classroom. Therefore, it is our responsibility to keep updated with the best practices that include the latest technological advances, so that our classroom instruction can be more responsive to our 21st-century students' needs, likes, and interests that are commonly shaped these days by the growing scale of technology. By having students experience and become familiar with the latest technological advances for educational purposes, it is a critical way to enable them to better function in and contribute to the world awaiting for them beyond the classroom, as well as it is a great way to promote autonomous and lifelong learning. As a matter of fact, these goals are achievable, as our students will be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills to take control of their own learning by means of the implementation of meaningful technology-based instruction, which is a must in today's globalized world.

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