

# CRACKING THE CODE: HOW ENGLISH TEACHERS FOSTER READING COMPREHENSION AT BABUN NAJAH BOARDING

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Abstract	Article Information
<p><i>This study explores how English teachers at Babun Najah Boarding School develop students' reading comprehension skills through various instructional strategies. The research seeks to understand the methods they use and how these approaches impact student learning. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, data were gathered through classroom observations and interviews with both teachers and students. The findings reveal that educators employ diverse strategies, such as direct instruction, group discussions, interactive games, multimedia resources, and tailored teaching methods to meet students' individual needs. These techniques help keep students engaged and support different learning styles. However, challenges such as students' lack of confidence and comprehension difficulties were also identified. Teachers responded by adjusting their teaching methods to better support students. The study suggests clearly outlining learning objectives, encouraging student reflection, and integrating more collaborative and technology-driven activities. Overall, the research highlights the importance of dynamic, student-centered instruction in improving reading comprehension and offers valuable insights for enhancing English language teaching in similar educational settings.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Reading Comprehension, Teaching Strategies.</p>	<p><i>Received:</i> 11/02/2025</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> 15/02/2025</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> 17/02/2025</p>

## INTRODUCTION

The process of teaching and learning English involves multiple interconnected elements that contribute to students' overall language proficiency (Lubis.I.H., 2024);(Triwibowo. F.D., 2023). Among the four fundamental language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—reading comprehension plays a particularly critical role in developing students' understanding of written texts (Syaadiah, Arifin, 2020);(Al Aziz &

Gita, 2020). The ability to comprehend and interpret written materials is essential, as it not only enhances academic success but also supports overall language acquisition. However, teaching reading comprehension is often more challenging than teaching other aspects of language, such as grammar and vocabulary, because it requires students to engage actively with texts, infer meanings, and draw logical conclusions (Parhadjanovna, 2023). To address these challenges, teachers must employ effective instructional strategies that align with students' needs and learning styles.

At Babun Najah Boarding School, English teachers play a significant role in shaping students' reading comprehension skills through well-planned lessons, carefully selected teaching materials, and dynamic instructional techniques. The effectiveness of reading instruction largely depends on the strategies teachers use in the classroom, as these strategies influence students' motivation, engagement, and ability to understand complex texts (Hong Li, et.al. 2022). The Indonesian senior high school curriculum emphasizes reading as a crucial component of English language learning, reinforcing the need for effective teaching methodologies. Despite this emphasis, many students face difficulties in comprehending English texts due to various linguistic and cognitive factors, including limited vocabulary, unfamiliarity with text structures, and differing levels of prior knowledge. Teachers, therefore, must adopt diverse strategies to help students overcome these barriers and enhance their reading skills.

Reading comprehension is not merely about recognizing words and sentences; it involves the ability to extract meaning, analyze textual elements, and apply critical thinking skills (Sietske van Viersen, et.al, 2022). Students who struggle with reading comprehension may find it difficult to engage with academic materials, follow instructions, and communicate effectively in English (K.Williams, et.al, 2021). Conversely, students with strong reading comprehension skills can enhance their knowledge, expand their vocabulary, and develop confidence in using the language. Since reading comprehension is an essential part of language proficiency, teachers must equip students with the necessary skills to decode and interpret texts effectively.

In an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, such as Indonesia, students often encounter additional challenges when engaging with English texts. The grammatical structures and vocabulary used in English reading materials may differ significantly from those in students' native languages, making comprehension more difficult. Additionally, students may lack exposure to English outside the classroom, which can limit their ability to understand nuanced meanings within texts. As a result, the role of teachers becomes even more crucial in providing structured and supportive reading instruction that enhances students' comprehension abilities.

1. What strategies are used by English teachers at Babun Najah Boarding School for teaching reading comprehension?
2. How do English teachers implement these strategies in teaching reading comprehension?

Objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the teaching strategies employed by English teachers in teaching reading comprehension at Babun Najah Boarding School.
2. To analyze the implementation of these strategies in classroom settings.

This research is expected to contribute to the field of English language teaching by providing insights into effective reading instruction strategies. The findings will benefit English teachers by offering practical approaches to improve students' reading comprehension skills. Additionally, the study will help policymakers and educators refine English curriculum guidelines to better align with students' learning needs. For students, understanding these strategies will create a more engaging and supportive learning environment, ultimately leading to improved reading comprehension outcomes.

Furthermore, this research will serve as a reference for future studies focusing on language learning strategies, particularly in boarding school environments where students often face unique challenges in acquiring English proficiency. By examining how teachers at Babun Najah implement various instructional methods, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of best practices in teaching reading comprehension.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Reading comprehension refers to a reader's ability to interpret and make sense of written texts, extracting meaning as intended by the author. Reading is an interactive process in which readers integrate textual information with their prior knowledge to construct understanding (Marianne L. van Moort, et al, 2020). Similarly, K. Rastle (2019) described reading as an act of deriving and attributing meaning to printed or written materials. Essentially, reading involves actively engaging with a text to comprehend its message.

Kolyshko, O.M. (2020) emphasizes that reading serves as a medium of communication between a writer and a reader, allowing the exchange of information. This process requires decoding symbols, identifying patterns, and organizing ideas to grasp the intended meaning. Moreover, comprehension is not limited to recognizing words; it involves cognitive skills such as making connections, drawing inferences, and critically evaluating content.

Effective reading comprehension entails understanding vocabulary, recognizing relationships between concepts, structuring information logically, discerning the author's intent, and forming independent assessments. Fedotova, O (2022) likens reading comprehension to a dialogue between the writer and the reader, facilitated through written language. In this interaction, readers extract meaning by applying analytical and interpretative skills, such as summarizing key ideas, inferring meaning, and evaluating the relevance of information.

### **The Importance of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that enables individuals to process information, expand their knowledge, and enhance their cognitive abilities. It plays a crucial

role in academic success and intellectual growth, allowing readers to engage with diverse texts, improve vocabulary, and strengthen their critical thinking skills. Additionally, strong comprehension skills support effective communication, as they enable individuals to process, interpret, and articulate information more clearly.

Based on the perspectives discussed, reading comprehension can be seen as both a tool for acquiring knowledge and a means of reinforcing and refining ideas. Through reading, individuals not only access information but also deepen their understanding of various subjects. Mastering reading comprehension empowers learners to analyze texts effectively, derive meaning, and develop well-informed perspectives on different topics.

### **Teaching Strategies**

Teaching strategies in education refer to the plans, methods, or series of activities designed to help educators achieve specific learning objectives. A strategy serves as a structured plan that includes various activities aimed at accomplishing targeted educational goals. According to Alfain ,H.B, et al. (2022), a teaching strategy is essentially a teacher's approach to facilitating the learning process in order to achieve predetermined educational outcomes. In other words, teaching strategies encompass the methods educators use to deliver content effectively, ensuring that students grasp the material.

Teachers must carefully implement strategies to strike a balance between the instructional methods they use and the manner in which they apply them. Erich ,Gonzalo, G.C (2024) highlights that teaching strategies serve as tools for educators to select appropriate learning activities tailored to the needs, learning styles, and characteristics of their students. Selecting the right strategy involves considering various factors such as available resources, students' backgrounds, and instructional goals. Planning and structuring a curriculum require thoughtful decision-making to enhance students' learning experiences.

### **Strategies for Teaching Reading Comprehension**

Reading plays a crucial role in the learning process, as it helps students comprehend and engage with instructional content. Since each student has unique learning preferences, teachers must employ diverse strategies to make reading lessons engaging and effective. A well-planned teaching approach can enhance students' interest in reading and improve their comprehension skills.

Nunan (2003) outlined several strategies for teaching reading, which include:

#### **a. Activating Prior Knowledge**

Before introducing a reading passage, teachers can encourage students to recall what they already know about the topic. This can be done through activities such as an anticipation guide, which helps assess students' prior knowledge and prepares them for new information.

#### **b. Developing Vocabulary Skills**

Teachers can help students expand their vocabulary by encouraging them to deduce word meanings using contextual clues and prior knowledge. One technique is to

identify the part of speech of an unfamiliar word and analyze its surrounding context to infer its meaning.

c. Teaching for Comprehension

Instead of merely testing students' comprehension through questions, teachers can demonstrate how meaning is derived from a text. This may involve reading aloud as a class and discussing interpretations collectively. Encouraging students to explain their thought processes helps deepen their understanding.

d. Enhancing Reading Speed

Fluency-building activities such as repeated readings can help students improve both their reading speed and comprehension. Research suggests that reading a passage multiple times at a faster pace leads to better understanding compared to reading it slowly only once.

e. Confirming Reading Strategies

Rather than solely relying on teacher-led instruction, students should be encouraged to collaborate and share different reading strategies. Guided discussions on effective techniques can help students become more independent readers.

f. Evaluating Reading Strategies

Keeping a reading journal can be an effective way for students to monitor their progress. Additionally, engaging in critical reading activities helps students assess their comprehension skills and refine their strategies over time.

### **Research on Teaching Strategies for Reading Comprehension**

Sree Devi Jasti & A. Pavani (2023) mentioned six important reading strategies that can improve comprehension and make reading more engaging and meaningful:

a. Prediction

Before and during reading, the readers try to guess what will happen next based on clues from the text. This keeps them engaged and stay curious.

b. Making Connections

The readers relate what they are reading to their own experiences, other books, or real-world events. This helps them understand and remember information better.

c. Visualizing

This means creating mental pictures of what is happening in the text. When the readers visualize, imagine the scenes, characters, or events. This makes reading more vivid and enjoyable.

d. Inferencing

Sometimes, writers do not tell the readers everything directly. Instead, the readers have to “read between the lines” and figure things out based on hints in the text.

e. Questioning

Asking questions before, during, and after reading helps the readers stay engaged and think critically.

f. Summarizing

After reading, summarizing helps the readers organize and recall the most important points. Instead of remembering every single detail, they focus on the main ideas and key events.

By using these strategies, reading becomes an active process rather than a passive one. Instead of just seeing words on a page, we engage with the text, making it easier to understand, remember, and enjoy.

Several studies have been conducted on teachers' strategies for improving reading comprehension. Some notable findings include:

Nurmadia Sarjan (2017) examined the strategies employed by English teachers at Junior High School 1 of Wonomulyo. The study found that teachers used scaffolding techniques and the Question-Answer Relationship (QAR) strategy to support students in understanding texts.

Haris, A (2021) explored the strategies used in online learning at the University of Islam Malang. The research revealed that teachers incorporated QAR strategies and reciprocal teaching methods, organizing reading activities into pre-reading, during-reading, and post-reading phases.

Yani, S (2020) investigated the reading comprehension strategies used at SMAN 2 Tualang. The study found that cooperative learning, QAR, reciprocal teaching, and summarizing were effective in enhancing student engagement.

Nurhamid, S (2018) analyzed reading comprehension strategies at SMA 2 Padang Bolak. The study found that activating students' background knowledge and reading aloud were effective approaches. However, challenges such as low student interest, classroom distractions, and lack of motivation were identified. Teachers addressed these issues by motivating students, managing classroom behavior, and providing incentives for academic performance.

These studies highlight the importance of implementing diverse teaching strategies to enhance reading comprehension. This research aims to analyze the most effective strategies used by English teachers in different educational settings, identifying the best approaches to support students in developing strong reading skills.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

In this study, the researchers employed a descriptive research design, as the focus was on analyzing a specific phenomenon within the school environment—namely, the process of teaching and learning English. Since this research aimed to observe and document real-life classroom activities without introducing any interventions or treatments, a descriptive approach was the most suitable. The goal was to present an accurate and detailed account of the teaching-learning process without manipulation.

The research was carried out in two stages. First, the researchers conducted classroom observations to examine the teaching-learning process during Reading Comprehension lessons. This included observing the overall classroom environment, school conditions, and how lessons were delivered. The second stage involved interviewing the English teacher after the observation phase. Through these interviews, the researcher gathered detailed insights into the strategies teachers implemented in their reading instruction.

This study followed a descriptive qualitative approach, utilizing direct observations and interviews as primary data collection methods. According to Sugiyono (2015), the descriptive method is used to examine the current status of human groups, objects, conditions, thoughts, or events as they naturally occur. This method allowed the researcher to explore teaching strategies in depth, providing a clear and comprehensive picture of how reading comprehension was taught in the classroom.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Observation Result**

Through classroom observations, the researchers identified several strategies teachers used to enhance reading comprehension. These strategies focused on structured lessons, interactive activities, and diverse teaching methods to engage students effectively.

#### **1. Structured Lesson Openings**

Teachers began each lesson with greetings and clear instructions, ensuring an organized start. They also reviewed previous material through questions to reinforce understanding and maintain learning continuity.

#### **2. Lesson Objectives and Summaries**

While teachers did not explicitly state lesson objectives at the beginning, they provided a summary at the end to clarify key takeaways and reinforce learning goals.

#### **3. Varied Teaching Methods**

Teachers employed multiple strategies to cater to different learning styles:

- Direct Instruction– Clear explanations and structured guidance helped students grasp complex concepts.

- Interactive Group Discussions – Encouraged collaboration, critical thinking, and deeper comprehension through peer interaction.
- Language-Based Games – Engaged students with fun activities like ball-throwing and role-playing to reinforce vocabulary and comprehension skills.

#### 4. Effective Use of Teaching Materials

Teachers provided well-structured materials aligned with lesson objectives, ensuring a smooth flow of content. Multimedia tools, such as projectors, flashcards, and visual aids, enhanced engagement and comprehension.

#### 5. Differentiated Instruction

To address students' varying proficiency levels, teachers used a mix of English and the native language. This ensured all students could follow along and understand instructions effectively.

#### 6. Immediate Feedback and Student Participation

Teachers provided real-time feedback during reading exercises, allowing students to identify and correct mistakes. They also encouraged active participation through read-aloud activities and discussions, helping students build confidence and fluency.

#### 7. Clear Questioning and Coaching

By using well-structured questions, teachers kept students engaged and stimulated critical thinking. However, while lessons were conducted primarily in English, there were limited opportunities for students to express personal reflections on the reading material.

#### 8. Encouraging Classroom Discussions

Teachers facilitated group discussions, fostering collaboration and analytical thinking. They also maintained fairness, responding to all students' questions and contributions equally.

#### 9. Lesson Summaries for Retention

At the end of each lesson, teachers recapped the main points to reinforce key concepts and enhance long-term retention.

The observed teaching strategies effectively supported student engagement and reading comprehension development. However, incorporating clearer learning objectives at the start and providing more opportunities for student reflections could further enhance the learning experience. Overall, the use of interactive methods, immediate feedback, and structured materials contributed to positive learning outcomes.

### **Interview Results**

This section presents the findings from the interview, focusing on how the participant felt during speaking class. To maintain confidentiality, initials are used in the transcription.



The first question explored the teacher's approach to teaching reading. According to the participant, the teacher's main goal was to ensure students read accurately and fluently. The process began with displaying a reading text on a projector, followed by a demonstration of correct pronunciation. Students then repeated the text, reinforcing fluency and vocabulary. Through structured practice, the teacher created an environment that strengthened reading accuracy and overall language skills.

The second question addressed teaching strategies. The participant revealed that the teacher primarily used the direct method, which emphasizes immediate interaction and avoids translation. This step-by-step approach helped students recognize and correct mistakes in real time, making learning more effective and improving retention. When asked why this strategy was chosen, the participant highlighted its practicality for error correction and student assessment. The direct method allowed the teacher to monitor pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension instantly, providing immediate feedback and reinforcing good reading habits.

Regarding how to determine an effective reading strategy, the participant noted that rather than having all students read aloud, the teacher strategically selected a few students at a time. This ensured individualized feedback and active monitoring of comprehension and pronunciation. On whether the teacher always used the same strategies, the response emphasized flexibility. The teacher adapted lessons based on classroom dynamics, recognizing that not all students required the same approach. Some lessons focused on reading, while others prioritized vocabulary, writing, or composition.

Vocabulary development was another key focus. The participant shared that the teacher relied on rote memorization, requiring students to learn and recite vocabulary lists. This method helped build a strong foundation in reading fluency and comprehension. When asked whether the chosen strategies impacted students' learning, the participant noted that engagement was crucial. At the Islamic boarding school, where English and Arabic were required, teachers encouraged frequent English use. This approach helped shift students from disinterest to enthusiasm, making reading a more enjoyable experience.

Student reading abilities varied, with some excelling while others struggled. The teacher addressed these differences by assigning reading texts and tasks that encouraged regular practice, helping students build fluency over time. Additionally, motivation extended beyond the classroom. The teacher encouraged students to read stories they found interesting, memorize vocabulary, and use dictionaries daily to reinforce learning. To further improve reading skills, the teacher assigned students to find and read news articles, particularly on trending topics like elections. Despite restrictions on digital access, students could still access newspapers, ensuring they engaged with real-world texts. This approach not only enhanced comprehension but also developed critical thinking and vocabulary.

The interview also highlighted common challenges in teaching reading. The participant noted that the teacher sometimes spoke too fast or used complex language, making it difficult for students to follow along. Additionally, student engagement was a persistent issue—some students lacked motivation, fell asleep in class, or resisted reading tasks, which

could be discouraging for the teacher. To support struggling students, the teacher took an individualized approach—identifying specific difficulties and offering tailored solutions. For those uninterested in reading, shorter texts were provided to maintain engagement. This adaptive strategy acknowledged that some students preferred listening or speaking over reading and adjusted lessons accordingly.

The teacher also emphasized vocabulary mastery as a foundation for reading success. Students were encouraged to memorize vocabulary, improving not just reading skills but also pronunciation and speaking ability. Finally, the interview concluded with reflections on the biggest challenge in teaching reading—maintaining student engagement and accommodating different proficiency levels. The teacher stressed the importance of a flexible, student-centered approach, using diverse strategies to ensure that all learners, regardless of their starting point, had the opportunity to improve.

The interview provided valuable insights into the teacher's structured yet flexible approach to teaching reading. By emphasizing fluency, vocabulary development, and interactive strategies like the direct method, the teacher created an engaging learning environment. Real-world content, such as news articles, further enhanced reading comprehension, while vocabulary reinforcement ensured long-term retention. Challenges, including varying student abilities and motivation levels, were met with adaptable teaching methods. Ultimately, the teacher's goal was to foster a supportive and responsive classroom where all students could gradually build confidence and proficiency in reading.

## **DISCUSSION**

The English teachers at Babun Najah Boarding School employed a range of strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension skills. Observations revealed that these strategies combined both traditional and interactive teaching methods, aiming to actively engage students and deepen their understanding of reading materials.

One of the primary strategies was direct instruction, where teachers provided clear explanations and structured lessons to ensure a logical progression of learning. This approach was particularly effective when introducing new or complex topics, as it helped students build a solid foundation in reading comprehension.

In addition to direct instruction, teachers encouraged interactive group discussions. By allowing students to share their thoughts and interpretations of the text, these discussions fostered critical thinking and collaborative learning. Students were able to clarify their understanding by listening to their peers, making this strategy highly effective in reinforcing reading skills.

Language-based games were another key element in the teaching process. Activities such as word puzzles and role-playing not only made learning more enjoyable but also helped reinforce vocabulary and comprehension in an engaging way. These games provided students with a relaxed and interactive environment, increasing their motivation to participate in reading activities.

Teachers also utilized multimedia and visual aids, such as projectors, flashcards, and pictures, to present reading materials more effectively. These tools helped break down complex concepts and made lessons more visually stimulating. The incorporation of multimedia proved particularly beneficial for students who struggled with traditional text-based learning.

Another important approach was differentiated instruction, where lessons were adapted to cater to students' varying proficiency levels. By alternating between English and the students' native language when necessary, teachers ensured that all learners could grasp the material, regardless of their language background. Providing immediate feedback was also a crucial strategy. During reading activities, teachers corrected errors in real time, allowing students to learn from their mistakes instantly. This continuous feedback loop was essential in helping students refine their pronunciation, fluency, and comprehension skills.

The implementation of these strategies at Babun Najah Boarding School followed a systematic and student-centered approach. Each lesson typically began with a structured introduction, where teachers greeted students and briefly reviewed previous lessons. This practice helped reinforce prior knowledge and provided continuity in learning.

Unlike conventional teaching methods that emphasize stating objectives at the beginning, teachers at Babun Najah opted to summarize key takeaways at the end of the lesson. This reflective approach allowed students to consolidate their understanding and grasp the main points more effectively. The direct instruction method was implemented through clear explanations and modeling. Teachers often displayed reading texts using projectors, demonstrating proper pronunciation before having students repeat the text. This repetition-based technique built students' confidence and fluency over time. As their skills improved, the complexity of reading materials was gradually increased to maintain a challenging yet supportive learning environment.

Group discussions played a crucial role in reinforcing reading comprehension. Teachers divided students into small groups and facilitated conversations about the text. By asking open-ended questions, they encouraged students to think critically and articulate their ideas. These discussions not only improved comprehension but also helped students develop communication skills in English. To make lessons more engaging, teachers incorporated language games such as word puzzles and role-playing. These activities connected reading lessons to real-life contexts, making learning more interactive and memorable. Collaborative exercises also encouraged teamwork and problem-solving, further enhancing students' engagement with the material.

The use of multimedia and visual aids enriched the learning experience. Teachers frequently used projectors to display texts, while flashcards and images helped simplify difficult concepts. These tools made reading more accessible and appealing, particularly for students who found traditional reading methods challenging. Differentiated instruction was another key component of the teaching process. Teachers adjusted their approaches based on students' abilities, offering additional support to those who struggled while providing more

advanced tasks for proficient learners. This adaptability ensured that every student had an opportunity to improve their reading skills at their own pace.

Providing immediate feedback during reading exercises was essential in reinforcing correct pronunciation and comprehension. Teachers actively monitored students' progress, correcting errors as they occurred to prevent the reinforcement of mistakes. Regular questioning techniques were also employed to maintain student engagement and encourage active participation.

Finally, the classroom environment was designed to immerse students in English. Teachers encouraged constant communication in the language, helping students build confidence in reading and speaking. By creating an English-rich atmosphere, students naturally developed their reading skills through continuous exposure and practice.

The findings indicate that the English teachers at Babun Najah Boarding School employed a diverse range of strategies to enhance reading comprehension. These strategies—ranging from direct instruction and group discussions to language games, multimedia use, and differentiated instruction—ensured that students remained engaged and motivated throughout their learning journey. By providing immediate feedback and fostering an immersive English-speaking environment, teachers created a supportive space where students could develop their reading skills with confidence. The flexibility of their teaching methods allowed them to cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels, ultimately ensuring a more effective and enjoyable reading experience for all students.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study provides valuable insights into the strategies and challenges faced by English teachers at Babun Najah Boarding School in teaching reading comprehension. The findings reveal that teachers employed a combination of instructional methods, including direct instruction, interactive group discussions, language-based games, and multimedia resources. These approaches not only enhanced student engagement but also contributed to a deeper understanding of reading materials. Additionally, the use of differentiated instruction, immediate feedback, and a supportive classroom environment ensured that students of varying proficiency levels received the guidance they needed to improve their reading skills.

A key focus of the teachers' approach was vocabulary development, which was reinforced through both rote memorization and exposure to real-world materials, such as news articles. By connecting language learning to real-life contexts, students were encouraged to think critically and apply their comprehension skills beyond the classroom. Structured lesson activities further helped address the diverse learning needs within the classroom, providing both struggling and advanced students with targeted support.

Despite these effective strategies, teachers also encountered challenges, including maintaining student motivation, addressing different levels of comprehension, and overcoming students' reluctance to participate. To navigate these obstacles, teachers

demonstrated adaptability by adjusting their instructional methods and materials to better suit students' needs. Encouraging students to practice reading both inside and outside the classroom and fostering a bilingual learning environment helped sustain their motivation and confidence in English.

Overall, this research highlights the significance of a dynamic, student-centered approach in teaching reading comprehension. The ability to modify strategies, provide timely feedback, and create an inclusive learning environment played a crucial role in the success of the instructional process. Moving forward, incorporating clearer lesson objectives at the beginning of each session and allowing more opportunities for student reflection could further enhance the effectiveness of reading comprehension instruction. By continuously refining teaching methods, educators can create an engaging and supportive learning experience that empowers students to become more proficient readers.

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