

## University Students' Attitudes and Perceptions on Learning English with Mobile Apps

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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates university students' attitudes and perceptions toward using mobile applications for English language learning. Conducted at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta with 43 master's students, the research employed a survey to assess various aspects of mobile app usage. Results indicate a generally positive view, with high engagement in listening and multimedia activities, underscoring the effectiveness of mobile apps in these areas. However, there are concerns about content accuracy and the need for improved support for writing skills. Students found mobile apps convenient and enjoyable, suggesting their significant potential to enhance language education. Recommendations include integrating mobile apps more systematically into curricula, focusing on features that support writing skills, and addressing concerns about information reliability. Future research should explore long-term impacts, effective integration strategies, and the role of specific app features in language development

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, the integration of mobile technology into education has emerged as a pivotal trend, reshaping the way students learn and engage with educational content. Smartphones, in particular, have transcended their role as mere communication devices and have become indispensable tools for learning, offering a wealth of opportunities for personalized and flexible educational experiences. This introduction aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the significance of researching university students' attitudes and perceptions towards learning English through mobile applications.

The ubiquity of smartphones in contemporary society has transformed the dynamics of knowledge acquisition and dissemination. As digital natives, today's students are accustomed to multitasking, instant access to information, and global connectivity (Pletka, 2007). This paradigm shift has necessitated a reevaluation of traditional teaching methodologies, prompting educators to explore innovative approaches that leverage the technologies readily available to students (Eaton, 2010). Mobile applications, with their versatility and accessibility, have emerged as potent tools for language learning, catering to a diverse range of needs and preferences.

The integration of mobile technology into language education, known as Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), has revolutionized the way languages are taught and learned. Mobile applications offer learners unprecedented levels of autonomy and flexibility, enabling individualized learning experiences anytime, anywhere (Godwin-Jones, 2017). Furthermore, these applications foster collaborative learning by facilitating online discussions, peer interactions, and access to multimedia resources (Baruah, 2012). The interactive nature of mobile apps, coupled with real-time feedback systems, enhances user engagement and learning effectiveness.

As smartphones continue to evolve, boasting computational capabilities akin to personal computers, their potential as powerful learning aids has become increasingly evident. However, the successful implementation of mobile app-based language learning hinges on understanding students' perspectives and attitudes towards these technologies. Attitudes play a pivotal role in shaping individuals' decisions, behaviors, and levels of acceptability (Bogardus, 1931), underscoring the importance of exploring students' perceptions of learning English through smartphones.

The 21st century has witnessed a paradigm shift in educational approaches, with a greater emphasis on student-centered learning and the role of teachers as facilitators (Pletka, 2007). Research has already explored the utilization of smartphone features, such as SMS, to enhance classroom dynamics and support teacher instruction (Stockwell, 2007). Additionally, studies have investigated the use of smartphones as educational tools (Conole et al., 2008; Rosi Sole et al., 2010; Song & Fox, 2008). However, further investigations into the specific applications of mobile learning are necessary to unlock its full potential.

Examining students' perspectives on the use of technologies in online education is crucial for gaining valuable insights into the effectiveness of these technologies in improving overall learning experiences and student retention rates (Luu, 2021). By understanding learners' perceptions of utilizing mobile applications, educators and instructors can design more effective instructional approaches and enhance teaching practices (Cohen et al., 2022). Furthermore, assessing individuals' attitudes towards educational technology can serve as an indicator of their enthusiasm and intention to utilize these technologies (Al-Emran et al., 2016).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of mobile applications in English language education has gained significant momentum, offering innovative and engaging approaches to language learning. These applications leverage the ubiquity of mobile devices and their interactive features to provide learners with a personalized, flexible, and immersive learning experience. The effectiveness of mobile apps in enhancing language skills and fostering motivation has been extensively explored in numerous studies.

Learners' attitudes and perceptions play a pivotal role in successful language learning (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Research indicates that learners generally exhibit positive attitudes towards using modern technologies, including mobile apps, as language learning tools (Chen, 2013; Barrot, 2016; Wu, 2019; Fu et al., 2019). A positive attitude towards digital technology can facilitate the learning process (Arrosagaray et al., 2019; Faramarzi et al., 2019), and the frequency of using technology for language learning is closely related to learners' positive attitudes (Su et al., 2019).

Mobile applications offer a diverse range of features and functionalities tailored to enhance different language skills. For listening and speaking skills, apps like FluentU and Tri Pro English provide access to authentic audio-visual content and interactive exercises (Fučeková & Metruk, 2018). Apps focusing on reading skills, such as Get Set, Go! Phonics and Learn Languages with Ruby Rei (Wibbu), offer engaging reading materials and comprehension activities (Gou, 2023). Additionally, apps like Google Translate, dictionaries, and YouTube serve as valuable resources for language learning and teaching (Agustina et al., 2022; Gou, 2023).

The incorporation of mobile apps has been found to improve various aspects of language learning, including vocabulary acquisition, motivation, independence, and cognitive skills (Klimova, 2018; Hussein, 2017; Liu & Li, 2010; Ngo & Kim, 2014; Nguyen, 2023). Studies have also demonstrated the effectiveness of mobile apps in enhancing specific language skills, such as listening comprehension, speaking fluency, reading comprehension, and writing proficiency (Naderi & Akrami, 2018; Wang & Han, 2021).

Mobile apps have revolutionized the way languages are taught and learned, providing learners with unprecedented levels of autonomy and flexibility (Godwin-Jones, 2017; Baruah, 2012). They enable individualized learning experiences anytime, anywhere, and foster collaborative learning

through online discussions and social media platforms (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Baruah, 2012).

Pedagogical approaches and design principles play a crucial role in the development and implementation of mobile apps for language learning. The constructivist approach, which emphasizes active engagement, collaboration, and knowledge construction through meaningful interactions, is commonly adopted (Moya & Camacho, 2021). Additionally, considering individual learners' needs, fostering social collaboration, and promoting a lifelong learning mindset are essential principles for the adoption and sustainable use of mobile learning (Fan et al., 2023; Moya & Camacho, 2021).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a survey research design to investigate university students' attitudes and perceptions regarding the use of mobile apps for English language learning. The research was conducted at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, Indonesia, with purposive sampling based on the researcher's observations of students' mobile app usage. The target population comprised 215 master's students enrolled in the English Education Department during the 2022/2023 academic year. Using simple random sampling, a sample of 43 students, representing 20% of the total population, was selected due to practical constraints (Sugiyono, 2009).

Data collection was facilitated through an online questionnaire adapted from Liu (2023), Celik (2014), and Sad and Yakar (2017). The questionnaire consisted of 37 statements categorized into eight groups, assessing various aspects of mobile app usage for English language learning. Participants rated their agreement with each statement using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5) (Cresswell & Guetterman, 2019).

To ensure validity, the questionnaire underwent theoretical validation by experts from the English Language Education program at Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta, assessing content, construct, and language aspects. Construct validity was further established through empirical measurements and hypothesis testing (Thatcher, 2010). Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.99, indicating high internal consistency (Mohajan, 2017).

## **RESULTS**

The research findings provide comprehensive insights into UNY students' perceptions and attitudes towards using mobile applications for English language learning. The results span various aspects of mobile app usage, revealing both positive trends and areas for potential improvement.

General contributions of mobile apps to English learning were evaluated positively by most students.

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis on Participants' Perceptions of General Contribution of Mobile Apps in English Learning

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I download and use English learning applications on my smartphone	37.50	29.17	14.58	6.25	12.50	3.73	1.36
I do activities on English learning websites on my smartphone	33.33	29.17	18.75	8.33	10.42	3.67	1.31
I watch English tutorials on my smartphone.	43.75	37.50	14.58	4.17	0.00	4.21	0.85
I do English vocabulary activities on my smartphone	39.58	35.42	8.33	10.42	6.25	3.92	1.22
I do English listening activities on my smartphone	50.00	33.33	6.25	8.33	2.08	4.21	1.03
I do English pronunciation activities on my smartphone.	25.00	37.50	22.92	4.17	10.42	3.63	1.21

A significant majority (66.67%) reported downloading and using English learning applications on their smartphones. Even higher engagement was observed for watching English tutorials (81.25%) and performing listening activities (83.33%) on smartphones. These findings suggest that mobile apps are particularly effective for audio-visual learning activities, aligning with research indicating the benefits of multimedia in language acquisition (Mayer, R. E., 2009).

Reading and writing practices using mobile apps showed varied levels of engagement.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Perception Toward Reading and Writing Practice Using Mobile Apps

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I blog in English through my smartphone.	20.83	27.08	18.75	20.83	12.50	3.23	1.34
I comment on English websites through my smartphone.	29.17	22.92	31.25	12.50	4.17	3.60	1.16
I read English e-books on my smartphone.	43.75	35.42	12.50	6.25	2.08	4.13	1.00
I read English content on international forums on my smartphone.	39.58	43.75	10.42	2.08	4.17	4.13	0.98

While activities such as reading English e-books (79.17%) and engaging with English content on international forums (83.33%) were highly popular, there was more diversity in opinions regarding activities like blogging in English through smartphones (47.91% agreement). This variability indicates that mobile apps may be more effective or preferred for certain types of reading and writing activities compared to others.

Listening and speaking practices through mobile apps received exceptionally positive feedback.

Table 3. Descriptive Analysis on students' perceptions regarding the listening and speaking practice using mobile apps

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I watch videos in English on my smartphone.	64.58	22.92	10.42	0.00	2.08	4.48	0.85
I listen to English songs on my smartphone	75.00	12.50	4.17	2.08	6.25	4.48	1.11

I watch serials, movies, news etc. with subtitles on my smartphone to improve my listening skills.	52.08	25.00	12.50	6.25	4.17	4.15	1.13
I speak to foreigners in English on social media through my smartphone.	45.83	29.17	10.42	8.33	6.25	4.00	1.22

An overwhelming majority of students reported watching videos in English (87.50%) and listening to English songs (87.50%) on their smartphones. This high engagement with multimedia content underscores the potential of mobile apps to provide immersive language learning experiences (Kukulska-Hulme, A., & Shield, L., 2008).

Students generally found mobile apps simple and convenient to use, with learning through these apps perceived as enjoyable.

Table 4. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Perceptions or Understanding Regarding Using Mobile Apps

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I find using mobile apps to be simple and convenient	43.75	37.50	16.67	0.00	2.08	4.21	0.87
Learning english with mobile apps is enjoyable.	37.50	39.58	18.75	2.08	2.08	4.08	0.92
I feel that I can easily understand the content provided by mobile apps	35.42	41.67	18.75	4.17	0.00	4.08	0.85

I am willing to invest time and effort to better utilize mobile apps for learning.	33.33	41.67	14.58	8.33	2.08	3.96	1.01
I expect to use mobile apps frequently for learning in the future.	41.67	29.17	20.83	6.25	2.08	4.02	1.04

A large proportion of participants (81.25%) agreed that using mobile apps is simple and convenient, and 77.08% found learning English with mobile apps enjoyable. This positive attitude towards mobile app usage is crucial, as learner engagement and motivation are key factors in successful language acquisition (Dörnyei, Z., 2005).

The research also explored students' attitudes towards using mobile apps for specific language learning purposes

Table 5. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Attitudes Toward Using Mobile Apps Practice

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I use mobile apps to increase my interest and motivation in learning English	39.58	35.42	14.58	8.33	2.08	4.02	1.04
I use mobile apps to improve my English communication skills	33.33	43.75	12.50	8.33	2.08	3.98	1.00
I use mobile apps to improve my English reading and writing abilities (e.g. proofreading).	31.25	43.75	12.50	10.42	2.08	3.92	1.03

A significant proportion of students reported using mobile apps to increase their interest and motivation in learning English (75.00%), improve communication skills (77.08%), and enhance reading and writing abilities (75.00%). This multifaceted use of mobile apps demonstrates their versatility in supporting various aspects of language learning.

Table 6. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Perceptions Toward Mobile Apps Advantage

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I think using mobile apps can help me improve the quality of my learning	39.58	39.58	18.75	2.08	0.00	4.17	0.81
I believe that mobile apps can provide me with access to learning material from anywhere	50.00	35.42	12.50	0.00	2.08	4.31	0.85
I think using mobile apps can help me enhance my learning abilities	43.75	33.33	20.83	2.08	0.00	4.19	0.84

Regarding the perceived advantages of mobile apps students strongly believed that these tools could improve the quality of their learning (79.16%), provide access to learning materials from anywhere (85.42%), and enhance their learning abilities (77.08%). This perception of mobile apps as flexible, accessible learning tools aligns with the broader trend towards mobile learning in education (Sharples, M., Taylor, J., & Vavoula, G., 2007).

Table 7. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Perceptions Toward Mobile Apps Downsides

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I think using mobile apps may have issues with plagiarism or information leakage.	22.92	45.83	22.92	2.08	6.25	3.77	1.04
I think mobile apps responses may contain some inaccurate information.	12.50	37.50	39.58	8.33	2.08	3.50	0.90
I think using mobile apps is not helpful for my English learning.	18.75	8.33	22.92	27.08	22.92	2.73	1.41

However, the study also revealed some concerns about the use of mobile apps for language learning. Issues such as potential plagiarism and information leakage (68.75% agreement) and the possibility of inaccurate information (50.00% agreement) were noted by some students. These concerns highlight the need for critical evaluation skills when using mobile apps and the importance of developing reliable, accurate content in educational apps.

Table 8. Descriptive Analysis on Students' Perceptions Regarding Adverse of Mobile Apps

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
I have difficulty in focusing on my English classes because of my smartphone	12.50	10.42	29.17	35.42	12.50	2.75	1.19

I can't spare enough time to study English as I can't leave my smartphone	14.58	14.58	29.17	31.25	10.42	2.92	1.22
I am distracted to class because of my smartphone	6.25	25.00	22.92	27.08	18.75	2.73	1.22
I prefer idling with my smartphone to studying English	8.33	20.83	41.67	18.75	10.42	2.98	1.08
I forget English language contents quickly because I can access them easily through my smartphone	12.50	18.75	25.00	29.17	14.58	2.85	1.25
Instead of using my own sentence, I prefer using ready contents from the internet	12.50	20.83	25.00	31.25	10.42	2.94	1.21

The research also explored potential adverse effects of mobile app usage. While there were some concerns about distractions and time management issues related to smartphone use, the majority of students did not perceive these as significant problems. For instance, only 22.92% of students agreed that they have difficulty focusing on English classes due to their smartphones. This suggests that while the potential for distraction exists, most students feel capable of managing their mobile app usage effectively for learning purposes.

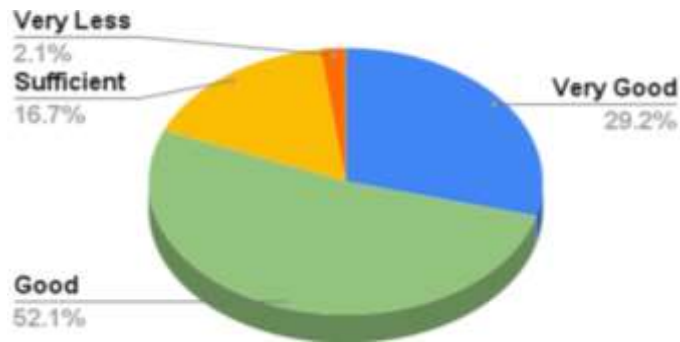


Figure 1. Profile of Student’s Perspective Attitudes Towards the Use of Mobile Apps

Figure 1 provides an overview of students' attitudes towards mobile app usage, with the majority falling into the "Good" (52.1%) or "Very Good" (29.2%) categories. This overall positive perception is encouraging for the continued integration of mobile technology in language education.

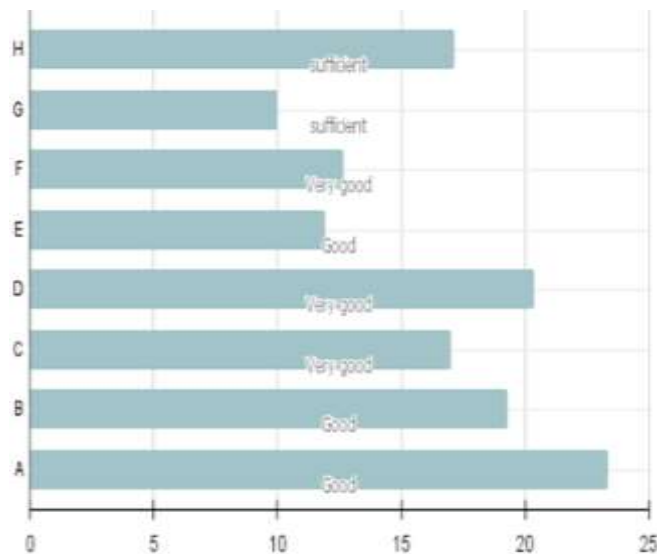


Figure 2. Average Score of Aspects of student’s Perspective Attitudes Towards the use of Mobile Apps

Figure 2 breaks down the average scores across different aspects of mobile app usage. The highest scores were observed for general contribution (23.35) and perceptions or understanding of using mobile apps (20.35), while perceptions about downsides and adverse effects scored lower. This nuanced view suggests that while students generally appreciate the benefits of mobile apps, they are also aware of potential challenges.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the role of mobile applications in English language learning among UNY students. The results reveal a generally positive attitude towards mobile apps, with high engagement across various language learning activities. This aligns with the growing trend of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) and its potential to enhance language education (Chinnery, G. M., 2006).

The high engagement with listening and multimedia activities, such as watching videos and listening to songs, underscores the effectiveness of mobile apps in providing rich, interactive content. This supports previous research highlighting the benefits of multimedia in language acquisition (Mayer, R. E., 2009).. The preference for these activities may be attributed to their ability to provide authentic language input and create an immersive learning experience. App developers should continue to focus on providing high-quality multimedia content to cater to this preference.

However, the more varied responses to writing activities, such as blogging, indicate a potential area for improvement in mobile app design. While mobile apps seem to excel in supporting receptive skills (listening and reading), they may be less effective in promoting productive skills (writing and speaking). This discrepancy aligns with previous research suggesting that mobile apps may be more suited to certain types of language learning activities (Stockwell, G., 2010). Future app development should focus on creating more engaging and effective tools for practicing writing skills, possibly through interactive writing exercises, collaborative writing platforms, or innovative feedback mechanisms.

The positive perceptions of mobile apps' simplicity and convenience align with the theoretical view that mobile technology can facilitate personalized, learner-centered education (Pegrum, M., 2014).. The ability to access learning materials from anywhere is particularly valuable in language learning, where consistent exposure and practice are crucial. This flexibility could potentially lead to increased learning opportunities outside the traditional classroom setting, supporting the concept of ubiquitous learning (Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M., 2009).

The reported use of mobile apps to increase motivation and interest in learning English is a significant finding. Motivation is a key factor in successful language acquisition (Dörnyei, Z., 2005), and the ability of mobile apps to enhance this aspect of learning could have far-reaching implications for language education. The gamification elements often present in language learning apps may contribute to this motivational aspect, making the learning process more enjoyable and engaging (Figueroa, J., 2015).

However, the concerns raised about content accuracy and potential plagiarism highlight important considerations for both app developers and educators. These issues underscore the need for developing critical digital literacy skills among learners (Godwin-Jones, R., 2018). As mobile apps become increasingly integrated into language education, it's crucial to teach students how to evaluate information sources, use digital resources ethically, and develop their own voice in the target language.

The relatively low concern about smartphone-related distractions is an interesting finding, contrasting with some previous research suggesting that mobile devices can be a significant source of distraction in educational settings (Kuznekoff, J. H., & Titsworth, S., 2013). This could indicate that UNY students have developed effective strategies for managing their device usage, or that the benefits of mobile apps for language learning outweigh potential distractions. Further research could explore the strategies students use to manage potential

distractions and how these could be incorporated into app design or educational practices.

The overall positive attitude towards mobile apps for language learning, as evidenced by the high proportion of "Good" and "Very Good" ratings (Figure 1), suggests that these tools have significant potential to enhance language education. However, the variability in responses across different activities and the noted concerns also indicate areas for further development and research.

The breakdown of average scores across different aspects of mobile app usage (Figure 2) provides a nuanced view of students' perceptions. The high scores for general contribution and understanding of mobile apps suggest that students are comfortable with and appreciate these tools. However, the lower scores for perceptions about downsides and adverse effects indicate that students are also aware of potential challenges. This balanced perspective is encouraging, as it suggests that students are critically engaging with these tools rather than accepting them uncritically.

These findings have several implications for language education and mobile app development. First, they suggest that mobile apps should be considered a valuable complement to traditional language learning methods, particularly for enhancing listening and reading skills. Second, there is a need for improved features supporting active language production, particularly writing skills. Third, app developers should continue to focus on user-friendly interfaces and enjoyable learning experiences, as these aspects seem to contribute significantly to positive perceptions and engagement.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings suggest that educators should consider integrating mobile apps into their teaching practices, particularly for activities related to listening, reading, and vocabulary development. However, they should also be aware of the potential limitations, particularly in supporting writing skills, and may need to supplement mobile app use with other teaching methods in these areas.

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into students' perceptions and usage of mobile apps for English language learning. The overall positive attitude towards these tools suggests that mobile apps have significant potential to enhance language education. However, the variability in responses across different activities and the noted concerns also indicate areas for further development and research.

Future studies could explore more specific aspects of mobile app usage in language learning, such as the effectiveness of different app features for various language skills or the long-term impact of mobile app usage on language proficiency. Additionally, investigating how to best integrate mobile apps into formal language curricula could provide valuable insights for educators and policymakers.

As mobile technology continues to evolve, it's likely that its role in language education will only grow. By addressing the challenges and building on the strengths identified in this study, mobile apps can become even more effective tools for supporting language learners in their educational journey.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### Conclusions

This study has provided valuable insights into the perceptions and attitudes of UNY students towards using mobile applications for English language learning. The findings reveal a generally positive outlook, with students appreciating the convenience, accessibility, and engaging nature of mobile apps for language learning. Particularly high engagement was observed in listening and multimedia activities, suggesting that mobile apps are especially effective in these areas. However, the research also highlighted some concerns, such as potential issues with content accuracy and the need for improved support for writing skills. Despite these challenges, the overall positive perception indicates that mobile apps have significant potential to enhance English language education, offering flexible and personalized learning experiences that align well with contemporary educational trends.

### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made. First, educational institutions and language educators should consider integrating mobile apps more systematically into their English language curricula, particularly for activities related to listening, reading, and vocabulary development. Second, app developers should focus on enhancing features that support active language production, especially writing skills, to address the current limitations in this area. Additionally, efforts should be made to improve content accuracy and develop students' critical digital literacy skills to address concerns about information reliability. Future research could explore the long-term impact of mobile app usage on language proficiency, investigate effective strategies for integrating mobile apps into formal language instruction, and examine how different app features contribute to the development of specific language skills. By addressing these areas, the potential of mobile apps in English language education can be more fully realized, leading to more effective and engaging learning experiences for students.

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