

Digital Game-Based Language Learning in EFL Context: An Analysis of *Genshin Impact* in Indonesian Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

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Recent technological advances have transformed approaches to language learning, with Digital Game-Based Language Learning emerging as a promising field of study. While many studies have examined quiz-based or language-learning-specific applications, limited research has explored the potential of popular open-world games such as *Genshin Impact* for structured EFL learning. This study aims to (1) identify English language skills that can be developed through *Genshin Impact*, and (2) analyze the pedagogical applicability of game elements within a DGBLL framework. A qualitative, descriptive-analytic design was employed, involving classroom observations, interviews with students and teachers, and questionnaire data collection. The study was conducted at a public senior high school in Berau with 10th grade students and English teachers as participants. Data were analyzed through content analysis, including reduction, display, and interpretation of emerging themes. The analysis revealed that *Genshin Impact* supports the development of vocabulary enrichment, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and discourse/pragmatic skills. Beyond language outcomes, the game fosters motivation, engagement, and authentic exposure to English. Teachers and students perceived both opportunities and challenges in integrating the game into formal classroom contexts. The findings contribute to expanding the scope of Digital Game-Based Language Learning research by highlighting the pedagogical potential of a widely played entertainment game. For practice, the study provides insights for EFL teachers and curriculum developers in Indonesia, particularly in rural and remote regions, to harness students' gaming interests for language learning.

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Introduction

Technological innovations in education have significantly transformed the methodologies of language instruction and acquisition. The incorporation of digital tools

has not only broadened access to information but also converted classrooms into interactive and learner-centric environments (David & Weinstein, 2024; Luo, 2024; Parmar et al., 2025). In this setting, digital games have arisen as an effective tool for boosting student motivation, fostering engagement, and offering authentic exposure to language in meaningful contexts (Da-Oh et al., 2023; Reinders, 2017). Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL) highlights the instructional application of games to enhance second and foreign language acquisition (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023). In contrast to conventional classroom activities, games provide learners immersive experiences that necessitate the use of language skills in problem-solving, cooperation, and genuine conversation. They correspond with students' daily digital activities, enhancing the relevance and enjoyment of language acquisition.

DGBLL refers to the intentional use of digital games (commercial and educational) and game mechanics to support second/foreign language learning objectives. DGBLL encompasses a wide range of practices: multimodal narrative games, mobile micro-games, multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPGs), and educational games designed to target particular linguistic skills (Esteban, 2024; Govender & Arnedo-Moreno, 2021; Reinders, 2017). Reviews of the field characterize DGBLL as an intersection of language pedagogy, educational technology, and game studies, where learning is supported through meaningful interaction with game content and with other players (Hanghøj et al., 2022; Hung et al., 2018; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023).

Empirical studies consistently report that DGBLL can increase learner motivation, raise willingness to communicate (Azizah & Warni, 2023; Da-Oh et al., 2023; Reinders & Wattana, 2010), and create opportunities for authentic language use (Pitura et al., 2024; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023); vocabulary learning outcomes are generally positive but vary with study design, target items, and whether instructional scaffolding was present (Abdullah et al., 2025; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Dien, 2023; Xu et al., 2025; Zou et al., 2021). Effects on receptive skills (reading/listening) tend to be positive when games contain rich textual or audio input; effects on productive skills (speaking/writing) are more mixed and often require explicit tasks that push learners to produce language (Wang & Han, 2021). Meta-analytic and review evidence indicates meaningful effect sizes for engagement and moderate effects for vocabulary when proper instructional design accompanies gameplay (Esteban, 2024; Hung et al., 2018; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023).

Genshin Impact is an internationally renowned open-world role-playing game among the diverse array of digital games. The intricate tales, dynamic missions, and comprehensive dialogue systems immerse players in English through many modalities, such as written

texts, spoken dialogues, and contextual activities. The game requires a grasp of intricate narratives, character motives, and engagement with mission directives, all of which promote the application of language acquisition tactics such as skimming, scanning, inferring meaning, and active listening. Moreover, *Genshin Impact* facilitates cooperative gameplay and community engagement, providing learners with opportunity to practice English in authentic conversational scenarios with peers around the world. These features make the game a promising medium for English learning, particularly in the Indonesian EFL context, where authentic language input and learner motivation remain key challenges.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in DGBLL, most research has focused on quiz-based applications and gamified platforms such as Duolingo, Kahoot, or Quizlet (Tiara, 2021; Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023; España-Delgado, 2023; Kazu & Kuvvetli, 2024; Mahbub, 2020; Pham, 2022). In Indonesia, gamification studies have proven to be effective in supporting English language teaching and learning (Ahmed et al., 2022; Hardianti, 2024). Recent studies on *Genshin Impact* mostly focused on the improvement of vocabulary (Dien, 2023; Nuriyah et al., 2024), reading skills (Arfani & Kaniadewi, 2025), and online communication (Azizah & Warni, 2023). Studies on the potentials of *Genshin Impact* and how this game can be applied in a more remote context are not widely discussed. This lack of research is especially pressing in the Indonesian EFL context, where students in rural or remote areas often have limited access to authentic English materials and motivating learning experiences. Investigating how *Genshin Impact* can foster English language skills provides an opportunity to address these challenges while expanding the scope of DGBLL research beyond traditional tools. This study is guided by the following research questions: (1) Which English language skills can be developed through *Genshin Impact*? and (2) How can *Genshin Impact* be applied in the classrooms within the DGBLL framework

This study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. Theoretically, it extends the scope of DGBLL literature by focusing on an underexplored digital game, *Genshin Impact*, and by examining its potential beyond quiz-based or vocabulary-focused applications. More specifically, this study offers implications for English teachers and learners in Indonesia, particularly in rural or remote regions. By demonstrating how *Genshin Impact* can be used as a supplementary tool for language learning, the findings provide recommendations for integrating game elements into classroom practice and for designing more engaging, student-centered learning experiences.

Method

A. Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive-analytic design to investigate the role of *Genshin Impact* in developing English language skills among Indonesian EFL learners. The qualitative approach was chosen to capture participants' experiences, perceptions, and reflections in depth, while descriptive analysis allowed the researcher to identify, categorize, and interpret language-related phenomena emerging from gameplay and related interactions (Mirhosseini, 2020). This design is appropriate because the study seeks to explore not only the linguistic features embedded in the game but also learners' and teachers' perspectives on its pedagogical potential.

B. Research Site and Participants

The research was conducted at a public senior high school located in Berau, East Kalimantan, Indonesia. The site was selected because of its relevance to the study's focus on rural/remote educational contexts, where access to authentic English exposure is often limited. Participants consisted of 10th-grade students who had prior experience playing *Genshin Impact*, as well as two English teachers who were familiar with their learning progress. A purposive sampling technique was applied to ensure that the student participants had meaningful engagement with the game and could reflect on their experiences. In total, 15 students and 2 teachers participated in the study.

C. Data Collection Methods

This study collected the data by interviewing students and teachers and administering questionnaires to students. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five students and two English teachers. The interviews with students explored their experiences, challenges, and perceived language learning benefits of playing *Genshin Impact*. The teacher interviews focused on their perceptions of the game's feasibility as a classroom learning tool and its potential alignment with curriculum goals. A structured questionnaire was administered to 30 students to gather quantitative and qualitative data on their perceptions, motivation, and experiences. The questionnaire included Likert-scale items to measure levels of agreement.

D. Data Analysis

The analysis followed three main stages, such as data reduction, data display, and interpretation. In data reduction, raw data from observations, interviews, and questionnaires were coded and categorized according to emerging themes, such as vocabulary learning, comprehension skills, motivation, and classroom integration. The coded data were organized into tables, charts, and thematic matrices to facilitate comparison and pattern recognition. Lastly, findings were interpreted in relation to the research questions and the theoretical framework of DGBLL.

E. Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the rigor of the qualitative findings, the study applied four key criteria of trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Creswell, 2013). For credibility, The researcher used triangulation of data sources (students and teachers) and methods (interviews and questionnaires) to strengthen the accuracy of the findings. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with a subset of participants, allowing them to confirm, clarify, or refine the accounts of their experiences. Thick description was provided regarding the research site, participants, and learning context to enable readers to judge the extent to which the findings might apply to other EFL classrooms, particularly in rural or resource-limited contexts. The research process was systematically documented, including interview protocols, coding procedures, and decision trails during analysis. This audit trail ensures that the study's procedures could be followed and replicated by other researchers under similar conditions. To minimize researcher bias, direct quotations from participants were incorporated to ground the interpretations in the data. The researcher also engaged in reflexive practices, acknowledging personal assumptions and perspectives that could shape the analysis.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings and discuss the findings in relation to the previous studies or existing theories.

A. Findings

The present study focused on two key aspects of investigation, namely the potentials of *Genshin Impact* to enhance English language skills as well as application in the classroom aligns with DGBLL framework.

1. Identified Language Skills Affected by Genshin Impact

The analysis of participants' experiences with *Genshin Impact* indicates that the game contributes to the development of several key English language skills. These skills are enhanced through both direct interaction with the game content and indirect engagement with its community. The following areas were identified:

a. Vocabulary Enrichment

Playing *Genshin Impact* exposes players to a wide range of vocabulary items, both highly specialized and more general in nature. Game-specific terminology includes words related to elemental powers, weapon types, and quest-related items, which enrich learners' lexical repertoire in niche domains. At the same time, the game's dialogues, menus, and descriptive texts introduce general English vocabulary that is frequently used in everyday

communication. Repeated encounters with these words within meaningful contexts reinforce retention and support incremental vocabulary learning.

Student 1: “At first, I only understood words like *sword* or *fire*, but then I started recognizing new ones like *artifact*, *ascend*, and even everyday words like *quest* or *reward*. It feels easier to remember because I keep seeing them in the game.”

This excerpt highlights how the game simultaneously supports specialized vocabulary acquisition and general word recognition. Students’ engagement with repeated lexical input in context mirrors principles of incidental vocabulary learning, where exposure, frequency, and meaningful use contribute to gradual lexical development.

b. Reading Comprehension through Narratives and Quests

The quest system and story-driven nature of Genshin Impact require players to engage actively with written English texts. Narratives are often elaborate and demand attention to detail in order to understand character motivations, objectives, and cultural references. Players must comprehend and follow instructions embedded in quest descriptions, which fosters skills such as skimming for key information, scanning for details, and inferring meaning from context. These practices mirror authentic reading strategies used in academic and everyday settings, making the game a valuable tool for developing reading comprehension. These are shown in the student and teacher interview excerpts below.

Student 1: “When reading long quests, I have to look for the key words to know the mission’s purpose. It feels like practicing skimming in class.”

Student 2: “I often get confused with unfamiliar terms, but by reading the whole story, I can guess the meaning of words from the context.”

Teacher 1: “Some students who play Genshin *Impact* seem to understand narrative texts in class more easily. They are used to identifying important details in the instructions.”

2. Listening through Character Dialogues

The game provides substantial opportunities for listening practice through its fully voiced character dialogues. Exposure to diverse voice actors introduces players to variations in pronunciation, intonation, and speech patterns, thereby supporting the development of listening comprehension skills. Since players often rely on auditory cues to follow the storyline or complete missions, active listening is required. Furthermore, the simultaneous presence of subtitles enables learners to establish form-meaning connections

between spoken and written language, which facilitates better comprehension and pronunciation awareness. These are represented by the students and teacher interview excerpts as the following.

Student 3: “At first I only read the subtitles, but after some time I could follow what the characters were saying without reading.”

Student 4: “Hearing different characters’ voices helps me get used to English accents. It’s more fun than just listening to recordings in class.”

Teacher 1: “The students who play the game often show more confidence in listening tasks. They seem more familiar with natural English pronunciation.”

a. Pragmatic and Discourse Skills in Online Communication

In addition to in-game features, Genshin Impact encourages interaction within its online player community through forums, chat groups, and cooperative play modes. Such interactions demand pragmatic awareness and discourse management skills, as players must negotiate meaning, request assistance, provide instructions, and engage in collaborative problem-solving. This environment fosters the use of English in authentic communicative contexts, where learners practice turn-taking, politeness strategies, and intercultural communication. These skills are particularly relevant in developing communicative competence beyond grammatical accuracy.

Student 1: “When I play co-op, I have to type in English to ask for help or explain strategies. I try to be polite so that other players want to cooperate with me.”

Student 5: “Sometimes we have to solve puzzles together, and I learn how to give instructions in English, like saying ‘press this button’ or ‘go left’.”

Teacher 2: “I find that students who engage in online discussions about the game show more confidence in using English pragmatically. They learn not only vocabulary but also how to communicate appropriately with others.”

3. Pedagogical Applicability of Genshin Impact

The findings from this study indicate that the integration of Genshin *Impact* into English learning contexts strongly aligns with the core principles of Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL). Two main areas of alignment are particularly evident: (a) motivation, engagement, and authentic exposure and (b) the role of interactivity and narrative complexity.

a. Motivation, Engagement, and Authentic Exposure

One of the most prominent outcomes of using Genshin Impact for language learning is the increased motivation and engagement among students. The immersive nature of the game world, coupled with visually appealing graphics and compelling quests, captures learners' interest and sustains their attention. This aligns with DGBLL's emphasis on promoting intrinsic motivation through meaningful and enjoyable activities. Moreover, students are exposed to authentic language input through dialogues, quest descriptions, and system messages that mirror real communicative contexts rather than simplified classroom texts. Unlike traditional learning materials, the game situates vocabulary and grammar within genuine interactions and narratives. This authentic exposure not only enhances learners' willingness to engage with the language but also fosters a sense of purpose in using English to accomplish in-game tasks.

Student 2: "I feel more motivated to learn English when I play the game because it doesn't feel like studying. It feels like an adventure."

Student 3: "Sometimes I stay focused for hours because I want to finish the quests, and along the way I learn new words without realizing it."

Teacher 1: "Compared to textbooks, the game provides students with real English usage. The authentic input makes them more eager to engage with the language."

b. Interactivity and Narrative Complexity

Another significant pedagogical aspect of Genshin Impact lies in its interactivity and complex narrative structure. Unlike static learning materials, the game requires players to make choices, solve problems, and interact with multiple characters and environments. This dynamic engagement stimulates critical thinking and reinforces language use in context. Students must navigate branching storylines, understand character dialogues, and respond appropriately in order to progress, which mirrors authentic communicative situations. The narrative complexity also encourages learners to sustain attention over extended periods and to engage with English in meaningful, goal-oriented ways.

Student 4: "Sometimes I have to read carefully to decide what to do next in the story. It feels like making real choices, not just answering school exercises."

Student 5: "The characters interact in different ways, and I learn how conversations change depending on the situation. It makes the English feel more real."

Teacher 2: "The interactive nature of the game allows students to experience language as part of a dialogue or task, not just as isolated grammar points. This complexity helps them practice both comprehension and decision-making."

Despite these positive aspects, both teachers and students recognized several challenges. From the students' perspective, one difficulty was the high linguistic demand of the game, which occasionally required advanced vocabulary or cultural knowledge that not all learners possessed. Some participants also reported that the fast pace of character dialogues could hinder comprehension, particularly for those at lower proficiency levels.

Student 1: Sometimes the characters talk too fast, and I can't follow everything. I need to pause or replay to understand."

Student 3: "There are many difficult words. I have to check the dictionary or ask friends because some quests use unusual vocabulary."

Teachers emphasized practical barriers, such as the availability of devices, internet connectivity, and time constraints in the classroom. They also raised concerns about maintaining a balance between educational objectives and the game's entertainment value, warning that without proper guidance, students might focus more on gameplay than on language learning outcomes.

Teacher 1: "Not every student has a device that can run the game smoothly, and internet issues make it harder to integrate into lessons."

Teacher 2: "The game is engaging, but it's easy for students to get distracted by playing instead of focusing on the language input. Teachers need to provide structure and clear goals."

When asked about the feasibility of integrating Genshin Impact into classroom instruction, both groups expressed cautious optimism. Students welcomed the idea of incorporating game elements—such as quests, dialogues, or role-play activities—into lessons, provided that the tasks were structured and guided by teachers.

Student 3: "If the teacher gives us clear tasks, like using quests for role-play, it can be fun and useful. But we still need direction."

Student 5: "I think it would be exciting if parts of the game, like dialogues, were used for reading practice. It's more interesting than the textbook."

Teachers, while supportive of innovative approaches, stressed that full-scale integration of the game into the curriculum may not be realistic due to logistical and curricular constraints. Instead, teachers suggested using Genshin Impact as a supplementary tool rather than a core instructional method.

Teacher 2: “It’s not practical to replace lessons with the game, but we can use it as additional material. For instance, adapting dialogues for listening or reading exercises.”

Teacher 3: “Simulating the game’s online communication in class role-plays could be effective, without needing all students to actually play during lessons.”

In this way, the game’s strengths—motivation, authenticity, and interactivity—could be harnessed without overwhelming existing curricular frameworks.

Supporting the interview results, the questionnaire administered in this study showed these results.

Table 1. Results of questionnaire

No.	Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Genshin Impact helps me enrich my vocabulary	4.2	0.6
2	Genshin Impact helps me understand narrative texts	4.0	0.7
3	Genshin Impact improves my listening skills	3.9	0.8
4	Genshin Impact trains me in online communication	4.3	0.5
5	Genshin Impact increases my motivation to learn	4.5	0.4
6	Genshin Impact makes me more comfortable learning in the classroom	3.6	0.9
7	Genshin Impact improves my reading speed and comprehension	4.1	0.7
8	Playing Genshin Impact helps me practice pronunciation via listening and repetition	3.8	0.8
9	Genshin Impact encourages me to use English outside the classroom	4.2	0.6
10	Cooperative play in Genshin Impact improves my teamwork and problem-solving skills	4.3	0.5
11	Genshin Impact provides authentic exposure to real English use	4.4	0.5
12	Using Genshin Impact for learning is feasible with my current school resources (internet, devices)	3.5	0.9
13	I feel confident recommending Genshin Impact as a learning tool for English	4.1	0.6

The questionnaire results reveal overall positive perceptions of *Genshin Impact* as a supplementary tool for English language learning. The strongest perceived benefit lies in the motivational aspect. Students reported that playing *Genshin Impact* significantly increases their motivation to learn English making it the most highly rated item. This is followed by the perception that the game provides authentic exposure to English in real contexts, as well as opportunities to develop teamwork and problem-solving skills through cooperative play. Similarly, respondents valued how the game enhances online communication, enriches vocabulary knowledge, and encourages English use beyond the

classroom. These findings suggest that learners recognize the game's potential for both linguistic and soft-skill development.

Genshin Impact was also reported to be beneficial for reading speed and comprehension and the students are also confident to recommend *Genshin Impact* as a learning tool. The game was also seen as useful in improving understanding of narrative texts and listening skills. Although respondents acknowledged some contribution to pronunciation practice through listening and repetition, this area appeared to be less impactful compared to vocabulary and motivation.

On the other hand, the lowest-rated aspects concerned the classroom learning experience and feasibility of implementation. While some students felt that playing *Genshin Impact* made them more comfortable in classroom learning, this effect was less pronounced and more varied across responses. The lowest score was observed in the feasibility of using *Genshin Impact* given current school resources, reflecting challenges related to internet access and device availability.

B. Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the growing body of literature that highlights the potential of digital games as effective tools for language learning. Specifically, the role of Genshin Impact in developing multiple dimensions of EFL competence can be mapped onto existing research. The study confirms that Genshin Impact provides rich exposure to lexical items, consistent with findings by Abdullah et al. (2025), Dien (2023), Nuriyah et al. (2024), who reported that digital games enhance learners' vocabulary breadth and depth through repeated, contextualized encounters.

The quest system and narrative-driven elements of the game foster authentic reading strategies such as skimming, scanning, and inference. This aligns with Arfani & Nita Kaniadewi (2025), who found that narrative-heavy games can strengthen learners' reading comprehension skills in EFL contexts. While the game provides exposure to voice-acted dialogues and sound-based cues, findings from this study suggest that listening development was less prominent compared to vocabulary and reading. This partly contrasts with Pitura et al. (2024), who observed positive listening gains from game-based learning, suggesting that further scaffolding may be required to maximize listening benefits in Genshin Impact. Online interaction and cooperative play modes in Genshin Impact facilitated pragmatic awareness and discourse management skills, echoing the conclusions of Azizah & Warni (2023), Taguchi (2024), who demonstrated that multiplayer digital games foster learners' pragmatic competence and intercultural communication strategies.

The strong motivational effect of *Genshin Impact* echoes earlier research emphasizing the role of game-based environments in fostering learner engagement and sustaining interest in language learning (Esteban, 2024; Reinders, 2017; Zhou, 2024). Motivation is often cited as a critical factor in second language acquisition, and the present results suggest that game immersion provides a powerful affective boost (Kirkwood, 2023; Reinders, 2017). Additionally, the authentic exposure to English and vocabulary enrichment in *Genshin Impact* identified in this study align with studies showing that games supply rich input in meaningful contexts, allowing learners to acquire new lexical items naturally (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023). In *Genshin Impact*, the use of narrative quests, dialogues, and item descriptions serves as an authentic source of linguistic input, confirming the value of games as informal learning environments (Chowdhury et al., 2024; Vnucko & Klimova, 2023).

On the other hand, this study also highlights practical barriers, particularly in terms of internet access and device availability. This finding resonates with concerns raised by earlier research in EFL contexts, where infrastructural limitations often hinder the integration of technology-based learning tools (Belda-Medina & Calvo-Ferrer, 2022; Belda-Medina & Poveda-Balbuena, 2024). Moreover, the relatively modest impact on classroom comfort suggests that while games are effective in informal settings, their pedagogical integration still requires careful planning and teacher support.

Overall, these findings suggest that *Genshin Impact* has significant potential as a complementary tool for English language learning, especially for enhancing motivation, vocabulary acquisition, and collaborative communication. However, its classroom application may be limited unless infrastructural challenges are addressed, and pedagogical frameworks are developed to bridge informal game-based learning with formal instruction.

Conclusion

This study explored the role of *Genshin Impact* in supporting English language development among Indonesian high school students. The findings indicate that the game fosters several key skills, including vocabulary enrichment, reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and pragmatic/discourse competence through both in-game interaction and participation in online communities. The integration of narrative-driven tasks, voice-acted dialogues, and cooperative gameplay provides learners with authentic contexts for practicing English. These results also demonstrate the potential application of *Genshin Impact* within the Digital Game-Based Language Learning (DGBLL) framework. By

enhancing motivation, engagement, and exposure to real language use, the game serves as a complementary resource to traditional instruction.

While the study provides valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. The sample size was relatively small and restricted to one school, limiting the generalizability of findings. The scope of analysis was qualitative and descriptive, which allowed for rich insights but did not establish causal relationships between game use and language development. Additionally, technological limitations in the research site constrained the extent to which gameplay could be systematically observed.

The results of this study carry several implications for EFL teaching and learning, curriculum development, and educational policy. First, the strong motivational impact of *Genshin Impact* suggests that game-based learning can be effectively utilized as a supplementary tool to sustain learner engagement. Teachers can incorporate game-related activities, such as vocabulary tasks, quest-based reading exercises, or group discussions of in-game narratives to leverage the intrinsic motivation fostered by gameplay. Second, the evidence that the game provides authentic exposure to English and supports vocabulary development implies that games can function as a form of informal learning environment. This highlights the importance of extending language practice beyond the classroom. Teachers may encourage learners to draw connections between in-game experiences and classroom lessons, thereby promoting integrated learning. Finally, this study suggests a need for teacher professional development in technology-enhanced language learning. Teachers should be trained not only to use games as supplementary tools but also to design tasks that align in-game experiences with curricular goals. Such pedagogical scaffolding can maximize the benefits of game-based learning while addressing potential challenges.

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