

# THE EFFECT OF TEACHER'S FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

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**Abstract:** The objectives of this study were to find out whether or not there were significant improvements in students' writing achievement after they were taught by using feedback and significant difference between the students who were given feedback and that of those who were not. Investigating the students' perception about teachers' feedback was also the aim of this study. Applying the quasi-experimental research design, this study got involved 94 eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 in the academic year of 2013/2014 as the population and the sample was 40 students who were selected based on their English proficiency test. The data for this study were collected by using a writing test and analyzed by using t-test and percentage analyses. The finding showed there was a significant improvement in the students' writing achievement after they were received teachers' feedback. There was also a significant difference between the students who were given feedback and that of those who were not. The finding also showed that teacher's feedback was perceived very helpful by the students. To conclude, this study showed that teacher's feedback played a very important role in helping students improved their writing performance.

**Keywords:** *teacher's feedback, writing achievement, students' perception on teacher's feedback*

Writing is more practiced in the classroom than in the real life (Zhuang, 2008). Fegerson and Nickerson (1992) states that writing is a skill that is acquired through study. Thus, it is important for English Foreign Language (EFL) students to be familiar with the writing conventions. Harmer (2004)

points out that the purpose of writing is to communicate. Abdalla (2009) claims that learning writing is essential in order to express ideas and thoughts into accessible documents useful to others and reports work in informative, concise, and professional format.

Abdalla (2009) further mentions that effective writing should have the following characteristics. The first is clear objective. The second is good organization, which means that students should consider the logical sequence of the paragraphs according to their importance and relevance to the subject of the writing. The third is clear, brief, and concise writing. The fourth is appropriate language, the choice of words, and complexity of the grammar are tailored to suite the readers. The last is correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Meanwhile, Browker (2007) asserts six stages of writing namely: thinking about the topic, researching topic, planning an essay, writing an essay, revising an essay, and editing an essay. From the mentioned explanation, it can be concluded that writing is a long and winding process.

In the process of writing instruction, students are expected to produce multi-drafts of composition. So in order to have good writing, the teachers of English must guide students step by step in forming good structural sentences and should be trained on how to make a unified and coherent piece of writing. This implies that teachers should give the students stimuli in order to help them explore and organize their ideas for their writing. According to Skinner (1953), the stimuli are called feedback.

Feedback is important because it is useful to the writer (Kumar & Stracke

2007). Although the students themselves can give feedback, teachers' feedback is what most students expect to have (Nafisah, 2008). Nafisah (2008) further explains that some people think that teachers' feedback is more useful than peers' feedback because teachers know more about writing than peers do. By having feedback, the students will learn from comments and become aware of their strength and weaknesses in writing (Nafisah, 2008).

In relation to the role of feedback in writing class, the importance and existence of feedback is not only to correct students' mistakes, but also to show how well they have done in developing their writing (Nafisah, 2008). The neglecting of feedback from the teacher may not only cause students' disappointment, but also their dissatisfaction on their teacher's competence (Ancker, 2000). According to Nafisah (2008), ideally, there should be a two-way communication between the teacher and a student in which both can learn from the discussion. Nafisah (2008) further states that the student can learn from the mistake immediately, while the teacher can learn why the mistake appears and how to treat them in the future.

Gulcat and Ozagac (2004) mention that feedback is given on five elements on the students' writing, namely, structure, vocabulary, organization, content, and mechanics. Structure refers to grammar and word order; vocabulary

covers the appropriate choice of words and idiom; organization concerns with ideas and their logical and coherent language and development; content refers to information about the unity of writing; and mechanics is the area of punctuation and spelling (Gulcat & Ozagac, 2004).

Taking into consideration the importance of teacher's feedback, the researcher conducted this present study, aiming at answering these following questions: (1) Was there any significant improvement in the writing achievement of the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 before and after being taught by using feedback?, (2) Was there any significant improvement in the writing aspects of the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 before and after being taught by using feedback?, (3) Was there any significant difference in the writing achievement between the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 who are given feedback and those who are not given feedback and (4) What did the students think about the use of feedback?.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study applied one of the quasi experimental designs, the pre-test and post-test nonequivalent groups design. The experimental and control groups were given a writing test as a pre-test and post-test. Therefore, the students in the experimental group was given the treatment using feedback while the

control group was not given any treatment. This study was conducted for 17 meetings including pretest and posttest. The researcher applied the treatment (in form of feedback) to the experimental group through the teaching and learning activities conducted for three days in a week (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) at 1pm after the school hour. Each meeting consisted of 2 x 45 minutes.

## **Teaching Procedures**

The researcher taught the students how to write a topic sentence, supporting sentences, a concluding sentence, unity, coherence, punctuation, and spelling. The researcher also asked the students to discuss with their friends the aspects of the writing that mentioned above.

To give the feedback, the researcher gave some comments both on the student's ideas, logical, coherent, language and also the student's ideas of supporting sentence, for example: (a) Can you be more specific about "....."?, (b) Do you have an example for this? and (c) Why...?.

## **Population and Sample**

The population of this study was all the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 in the academic year of 2013-2014. The number of population was 94 students. The researcher selected the sample by giving an English Proficiency Test which includes grammar, vocabulary, and reading

comprehension to the ninety four students of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 in the academic year of 2013-2014. Based on the students' score, the researcher categorized it into high score (81 – 100), average score (61 – 80), low score (41 – 60), and poor score (< 40), and then randomly selected forty students. After that, the researcher divided them into two groups, experimental group and control group. Each group consisted of 20 students.

### **Data Collection**

The researcher gave the test to the students twice; at the beginning (pretest) and at the end of the study (posttest). The test was writing test in which the students were asked to write a descriptive paragraph (150 - 200 words) on a given topic. To measure the students' writing motivation, the researcher distributed a questionnaire to the experimental group.

### **Instrumentation**

#### ***Validity and Reliability***

The content validity for writing tests was used. It refers to the degree to which the items in the test reflect the intended domain. In this study, to know whether the topics of writing tests given were valid or not, the 2013 curriculum and experts judgment were considered.

To check the reliability of the students' tests, inter-rater reliability was used. It is the extent to which two or more individuals (rater) agree with the consistency of implementation of rating

system. There were two raters involved in scoring the writing tests. The raters were chosen based on some criteria: they were those who already held master degree, had more than 7-years teaching experience, and obtained at least 550 TOEFL score.

### **Data Analysis**

To find out whether or not there was a significant difference on the students' writing between the experimental group and the control group, the researcher used independent sample t-test. Meanwhile, paired samples t-test was used to compare the average scores of writing achievement gained by the experimental group students in the pretest with the average scores of writing achievement gained in the posttest. To run the analysis the researcher used Statistical package for Social Science (SPSS) 17. Then, regression was used to find out the contribution of the writing aspects to the improvement of the students' writing achievement. The result of the questionnaire was analyzed by using percentage analysis and interpreted in accordance with the third problem of the study.

## **FINDING AND INTERPRETATION**

### **Descriptive Statistics**

The result of the mean scores of the students' writing achievement based on aspects of writing showed that the mean scores of experimental group

(51.80) was higher than the mean scores of control group (36.15).

**Table 1. Mean of Aspects of Writing Of Experimental and Control Groups (N=40)**

Aspects of Writing	Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Structure	Experimental	20	12.15	2.433
	Control	20	6,00	1,522
Mechanic	Experimental	20	2.55	.510
	Control	20	2.40	.502
Vocabulary	Experimental	20	10.50	1.538
	Control	20	7,75	1,251
Content	Experimental	20	15.70	1.093
	Control	20	10.45	1.223
Organization	Experimental	20	10.90	1.713
	Control	20	9,55	1,46
<b>Total</b>	Experimental	20	<b>51.80</b>	<b>4,043</b>
	Control	20	<b>36,15</b>	<b>2,237</b>

### Results of Statistical Analysis

The statistical analyses were applied to know whether or not there were significant improvement in the students' writing achievement after giving a treatment by using feedback. To answer the research questions, the researcher used four statistical analyses in this study namely paired sample t-test, independent sample t-test, multiple regression analysis (stepwise regression), percentage analysis.

### Normality Test

Before analyzing the data, the researcher measured the normality of the test. The data can be said as normal value if the probability (p) value is 0.05 or higher than 0.05 (Priyatno, 2008).

In determining the normality of the data, one sample of Kolmogorov-Smirnov of the SPSS was used. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of pretest result of the writing score in the experimental group showed that significance was 0.200 ( $> 0,05$ ), meanwhile it was 0.200 ( $> 0,05$ ) in experimental group his means that the data obtained were considered normal.

On the other hand, pretest and posttest result of the writing score in the control group showed that significance were 0.086 ( $> 0,05$ ) and 0.102 ( $> 0,05$ ). Since 0.200, 0.200, 0.086 and 0.102 were higher than 0.005, it could be concluded that the data obtained were considered normal. Tabel 2 shows the result of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

**Tabel 2. Result of the Normality of the test (Kolmogorov-Smirnov)**

		Writing Achievement pretest score of Experimental Class	Writing Achievement pretest score of Control Class	Writing Achievement posttest score of Experimental Class	Writing Achievement posttest score of Control Class
N		20	20	20	20
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	39,4000	36,9750	51,8000	36,1500
	Std. Deviation	2,61373	2,07412	4,04384	2,23666
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	,116	,181	,152	,177
	Positive	,116	,181	,152	,177
	Negative	-,113	-,139	-,118	-,104
Test Statistic		,116	,181	,152	,177
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		,200 <sup>c,d</sup>	,086 <sup>c</sup>	,200 <sup>c,d</sup>	,102 <sup>c</sup>

- a. Test distribution is Normal.
- b. Calculated from data.
- c. Lilliefors Significance Correction.
- d. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

***Homogeneity of Variances Test***

Tabel 3 and 4 present the result of the homogeneity of variances test of writing achievements in both group. Based on the result, the significance level of Levene’s test was 0.326 for pretest and posttest in experimental group. Meanwhile the significance level of Levene’s test for pretest and posttest in control group was 0.836.

**Table 3. Test of Homogeneity of Variances (pre and post-test Experimental Class)**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
,988	1	38	,326

**Table 4. Test of Homogeneity of Variances (pre and post-test Control Class)**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
,043	1	38	,836

Table 5 and 6 present the significance level of Levene’s test for post-test in both groups in terms of writing was 0.095. Meanwhile, the significance level of Levene’s test for pretest in both groups in terms of writing was 0.257. Since all the p-values of the homogeneity test exceeded 0.005, it could be stated that the data of writing test were homogeneous.

**Table 5. Test of Homogeneity of Variance (writing achievement)**

Score	Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Posttest	2,925	1	38	,095
Pretest	1,327	1	38	,257

***Result of Paired Sample t-test in Experimental Group***

Tabel 7 presents the result of paired sample t-test and independent sample t-

test. In terms of writing test in experimental group, the mean score of students' writing pretest was 39.40, and the mean score of students' writing posttest was 51.80. Then, the mean difference of pretest and posttest in experimental group was 12.40. It means that there was meaningful improvement between pretest and posttest of writing achievement for this experimental group. Furthermore, the value of t-obtained was 12.933 at the significance level of 0.000 with degree of freedom(df) 19, and the critical value of t-table was 2,093. p-value was 0.000

lower than alpha value 0.05 ( $0,000 < 0,05$ ). Since the value of t-obtained was higher than the critical value of t-table, in which  $12.933 > 2.093$  and  $0.000 < 0.05$ , it could be concluded that the teacher's feedback could improve the students' writing achievement. Then, there was also improvement in five aspects of writing in experimental group, the improvement was as follows: t-obtained content = 12.622, organization = 2.270, structure = 8.640, and vocabulary = 5.686 ( $> t$ -table 2.093).

**Table 6. Result of Students' Writing Achievements (Pretest and Posttest Scores) of Experimental Groups**

Variables	Score		Std. Dev	Mean Dif	t-obtain	t-table (df:19)	p-value
	Posttest	Pretest					
Writing Achievement	51.80	39.40	4,043	12,400	12,933	>2,093	0,000
			2,613				
Content	15.70	12.90	1,093	2,800	12,622	>2,093	0,000
			1,046				
Organization	10.90	10.10	1,713	,8000	2,270	>2,093	0,035
			,447				
Structure	12,15	6,000	2,093	6,150	8,640	2,093	0,000
			1,521				
Vocabulary	10,50	7,850	1,538	2,650	5,686	>2,093	0,000
			1,268				
Mechanics	2,550	2,550	,5104	0	0	2,093	0
			,5104				

***Result of Paired Sample t-test in Control Group***

As shown in Table 8, in terms of writing test in control group, the mean score of students' writing pretest was 36.975, and the mean score of students' writing posttest was 36.150. Then, the mean difference of pretest and posttest

in control group was -0.825, Furthermore, the value of t-obtained was 3.776 at the significance level of 0.000 with degree of freedom(df) 19, and the critical value of t-table was 2,093. p-value was 0.001 lower than alpha value 0.05 was lower than the critical value of t-table, in which 3.776

> 2,093 and  $0,001 < 0,05$ . It means that there was a meaningful difference between pretest and posttest of writing achievement for this control group. Meanwhile, there was also difference in five writing aspects in control group,

the difference was as follows: vocabulary  $t$ -obtained = -1.000, mechanics = -1.831, content = -0,691, and structure = -1.710 ( $< t$ -table 2,093) were not significant, but organization = 2.854 ( $> t$ -table 2,093) was significant.

**Table 8. Result of Students' Writing Achievements of Control Group (N=20)**

Variables	Score		Std. Dev	Mean Dif	t-obtain	t-table (df:19)	p-value
	Posttest	Pretest					
Writing Achievement	Posttest	36,15	2,2366	-,82500	-3,776	$>2,093$	0.001
	Pretest	36,97	2,0741				
Content	Posttest	10,45	1,2236	,12500	,691	$<2,093$	0.498
	Pretest	10,32	1,7035				
Organization	Posttest	9,550	1,1459	-,60000	-2,854	$>2,093$	0,010
	Pretest	10,15	,48936				
Structure	Posttest	6,000	1,5217	,10000	-1,710	$<2,093$	0,104
	Pretest	6,100	1,4011				
Vocabulary	Posttest	7,750	1,2513	-,10000	-1,000	$<2,093$	0,330
	Pretest	7,850	1,2680				
Mechanics	Posttest	2,400	,50262	-,15000	-1,831	$<2,093$	0,083
	Pretest	2,550	,51042				

***Result of the Independent Sample t-test of Writing Aspects***

There were five aspects of writing, the independent t-test was also conducted too see whether or not there were significant difference between the writing aspects of the posttest of experimental and control group. Tabel 9 showed the result of the independent sample t-test.

From the result of writing aspects, the value of  $t$ -obtained of writing aspects between post-test in both groups such as, content was 14.310, organization was 2.929, structure was

9.582 and vocabulary was 6.200 ( $> t$ -table  $df:38 = 2.043$ ) are significant with the significant level ( $p$ -value)  $0.000 - 0.006 < 0.05$ . but mechanics was  $0.936 < 2.043$  ( $t$ -table  $df:38$ ) with the significant level  $0.355 > 0.05$ , not significant. Although not all of the significant values (0.000) was less than 0.05, it could be concluded that the students' writing achievement improved significantly after being taught by using feedback.



**Table 9. The Result of Students' Writing Achievements between Experimental Group and Control Groups (n=20)**

Variables	Class		Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	t-obtain	t-table (df:38)	p-value
Writing Achievement	Experimental	51,800	4,043	15,65	15,145	>2,024	.000
	Control	36,150	2,236				
Content	Experimental	15,700	1,093	5,25	14,310	>2,024	.000
	Control	10,450	1,226				
Organization	Experimental	10,900	1,713	1,35	2,929	>2,024	.006
	Control	9,5500	1,145				
Structure	Experimental	12,150	2,433	6,15	9,582	>2,024	.000
	Control	6,0000	1,521				
Vocabulary	Experimental	10,500	1,538	2,75	6,200	>2,024	.000
	Control	7,7500	1,251				
Mechanics	Experimental	2,5500	,5104	0,15	,936	<2,024	.335
	Control	2,4000	,5026				

### Students' Perception toward the Use of Feedback

As shown in Table 10, the students' responses on the first question revealed that 55% (11 students) preferred to have feedback that focuses on the structure aspect which covered structure/grammar, punctuation, and spelling, and 45% (9 students) preferred to have a feedback in content and organization aspect which covered meaning and ideas. It could be concluded that the feedback that focuses on the structure aspect which covered structure/grammar, punctuation, and spelling was more helpful to the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin I to write better in English,

The students' responses for the the second question showed that 35% (7 students) and 35% (7 students) considered structure/grammar and

mechanic aspects as the important aspects to give feedback, while 10% (2 students) considered word choice, 10% (2 students) content, and 10% (2 students) organization. From the results, it was concluded that the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin 1 had different views regarding the feedback on their writing.

The students' responses for the the third question showed that most of the students agreed to write if their writing is corrected by the teacher and the teacher also gives feedback to their writing. These showed that they need teacher's feedback for their writing. This suggests that the students' perception toward the use of feedback was positive and feedback is important for them to write better in English. This has answered the third problem of this study.

**Table 10. The Results of the Students' Responses from the Questionnaire**

No	Questions	Number of student	%
1	According to me, feedback for my writing are preferred in:		
	a. Structure aspect	11	55%
	b. Content and organization aspect	9	45%
	TOTAL	20	100%
2	What writing aspects do you consider more important to give feedback?		
	a. Content	2	10%
	b. Organization	2	10%
	c. Structure/grammar	7	35%
	d. Vocabulary/word choice	2	10%
	e. Mechanics	7	35%
	TOTAL	20	100%
3	I want to write if my writing will get feedback from the teacher		
	a. Agree	9	45%
	b. Strongly agree	11	55%
	c. Disagree	0	0%
	d. Strongly disagree	0	0%
	TOTAL	20	100%

### **Interpretation of the Study**

Generally, the results of this study showed that the whole sample (N=20) who were given feedback made a progress on writing achievement. This was supported by the result of the paired sample t-test conducted for the experimental group in which the result of the mean score of posttest on the writing achievement was higher than that of pretest. It was caused by the use of the feedback technique.

In learning process, the researcher gave some comments to the students' writing in form of praises, questions, and advices both on the student's ideas, logical, coherent, language and also the student's ideas of supporting sentence. The results showed that feedback affected much on the

improvement of the students' writing. Feedback helped the students to enhance their writing achievement, feel confident, and have high motivation to write and make a better improvement in writing performance. It was in line with Nafisah (2008) who found that the advantages of feedback on student's English writing can be seen, firstly, from the global and textual aspects of student's writing by having good organization, and second, from student's positive attitude towards feedback in which students are not afraid of making errors in the surface level. However the students seemed to need more than seventeen meetings of practices before they were ready for the test.

Teacher's feedback also enhanced the five aspects of writing, namely, content organization, structure/grammar, vocabulary/word choice, and mechanics. The aspects of writing were also improved. However, the aspect of mechanics showed no significant progress in the experimental group. The possible explanation for this is because the students almost always forgot to give comma or fullstop after writing a sentence. This gives an indication that the students did not give full attention to the use of punctuations such as comma and fullstop in writing. They are probably not aware that comma and fullstop play a very important role in writing. It was in line with Bartolozzi (2001) who argues that writing needs more practices since it is not natural but must be learnt. The more it is practised, the more skillful the students are. If the students were exposed and trained more on how to make a unified and coherent piece of writing, they would have a better improvement.

The results of independent sample t-test of writing achievements showed that there was a significant difference between the posttest in experimental and control groups, suggesting that the use of feedbacks could enhance the students' writing achievements. It was in line with Nafisah (2008) who states that the importance and existence of feedback is not only to correct students' mistakes, but also to show how well

they have done in developing their writing

The result of the stepwise regression analysis of writing achievement showed that structure and organization gave more contribution to the improvement of the students' writing achievement. It was in line with Zacharias (2007) who found that students preferred feedback that was specific since this kind of feedback would facilitate students in the revision process. The students in Zacharias' study also showed a high preference for feedback which focused on language. They often complained that feedback on content tended to be general and sometimes contradictory to students' ideas.

As previously explained in data collection, after administering the posttest to the experimental group, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to be filled out. The questionnaire consisted of three questions which referred to students' perception in experimental group on the use of feedback in writing.

In relation to their responses to the questions, the students' perception toward the use of feedback was positive, most of them stated that feedback was very helpful to write better in English.

A closer look on the students' responses for the first question in the questionnaire (See Table 6) showed that eleven out of twenty eighth graders of

SMPN 3 Banyuasin I preferred having feedback in structure aspect which covered structure/grammar, punctuation, and spelling to feedback in content and organization aspect which covered meaning and ideas. The possible explanation for this is that feedback on structure aspect helped them see their mistakes and their ability in English writing. Second, they said that feedback in structure/grammar aspect was important to have a good English writing. Third, they said that if they had feedback in structure/grammar aspect, their writing was good enough to read by others. It was in line with Zacharias (2007) who claims that students preferred feedback that is specific since this would facilitate the students in the revision process. Zacharias' study (2007) also showed that the students had a high preference for feedback which focused on language; they often complained that feedback on content tended to be general and sometimes contradictory to student ideas. Compared to feedback on content, feedback on language was considered more helpful (Zacharias, 2007).

The result of the students' responses of the second question that asked what writing aspects the students considered more important for their teacher to give feedback showed that most of the students considered structure/grammar and mechanics as the important aspect to give feedback.

It means that the students, the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin, have different views regarding the feedback on their writings. Ancker (2000) and Diab (2006), who disclose the discrepancy between teachers' belief and student's expectation, state that teacher agree not to put grammar correction on importance, while students believe that it is more important than other features since they need to know what is wrong and what is right as well as avoiding the same mistakes in the future. It could be said that to avoid such miscommunication, it is better for both teacher and students to negotiate in the beginning of the lesson about the type of feedback they would like to have.

Furthermore, the result of the students' responses for the third question showed that many of the eighth graders of SMPN 3 Banyuasin I agreed to write if they get feedback from teacher in their writing. All of the students gave responses strongly agree and agree, showing that they need feedback. It showed that the students thought that feedback was important and they also were motivated to write if their writing got feedback. It was in line with Nafisah (2008) who found that there should be a two-way communication between the teacher and a student in which both can learn from the discussion. Nafisah (2008) further states that the student can learn from the mistake immediately, while the teacher

can learn why the mistake appears and how to treat them in the future.

### **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Based on the findings, there were several conclusions in this study. First, the feedback, which is given on the student's English writing, was very useful. The students who were given feedback got better scores than those who were not given feedback. It can be seen from the mean score of the posttest in the experimental group was higher than the mean score of the posttest in the control group. Second, the result of the independent sample t-test showed that there was a meaningful difference in writing achievement of the students who were given feedback and those who were not given feedback. Third, the results of the questionnaire showed that feedback was very helpful for the students to write better in English, feedback helped them see their mistakes and their ability in English writing. It helped them to write better in English writing, it motivated them to write better and more, and it taught them how to have a good English writing.

This study offers some suggestions to all English teachers: First, the English teacher should use various teaching strategies in order to improve student's writing skill and writing achievement. One of them is by giving feedback after they wrote a composition since the importance and existence of feedback is not only to correct student's

mistakes, but also to show how well they have done in developing their writing.

Second, the English teacher should be able to motivate the students to write better and more by providing a constructive feedback, which aims to help students not only to understand specific problems with their writing, but also to develop a critical approach that can be applied in their future writing situations.

Finally, this study was not perfect yet. The result of this study showed that from five aspects of writing, the mechanics aspect had no significant progress. This indicates that the students should have been exposed and trained more about punctuation since it plays a very important role in writing. Therefore, the researcher suggests to other researchers to have more meetings and focus on the use of punctuations in writing.

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