EFL students' views on Edulastic as a school final summative e-assessment tool

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Abstract

Online platforms have gained widespread acceptance in educational assessment in a post-COVID world, with Edulastic as one of the choices. This research aims to explore students' perspective of Edulastic as the e-assessment tool, and the obstacles they experience while using this platform during school final summative assessment. The data were gathered using semi-structured interviews with six 12th graders of a private school in the town of Purwokerto, Indonesia. The data were processed qualitatively using thematic analysis. The results show that the participants had positive thoughts of Edulastic. It assists them by doing English assessments comfortably attributable to its flexibility and practicality. It also supports a system that prevents cheating among the students. However, they faced challenges with it due to inadequate equipment, including the device's battery life issue, insufficient memory capacity and poor internet connectivity. To sum up, besides having a positive perception of the e-assessment, the students also experienced unavoidable problems before and while working on the e-assessment. The result of the study suggests Edulastic platform is a smart choice for educational institutions implementing online summative assessment despite technology infrastructure support constraints.

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Introduction

Technological innovation in the twenty-first century has created the potential for new approaches to learning teaching processes and assessment (Singh & Gokool, 2018). Among the outcomes of technological advancements is the availability of educational applications that are used extensively and practically at any level of education (An-Nisa et al., 2021; Zuhriyah & Pratolo, 2020). In the EFL/ESL learning landscapes, the incorporation of digital technology has increased over the last few decades. However, obstacles emerged in optimal application of technology as a result of the indispensable nature of modern technology in language instructional contexts (Momeni, 2022).

The technological advancement in school settings as mentioned above coincided with the global epidemic. The epidemic shifts learning methods from face-to-face to online and virtual learning, replacing traditional learning and teaching techniques with websites or online platforms like Zoom or Google Meet (Iskandar et al., 2021). This situation ultimately forces teachers and students to be able to operate digital tools that are capable of supporting online teaching and learning systems. In addition to the online learning and teaching system, student assessments, which are an essential process, are also held online at each student's home because traditional assessments are not possible. As a consequence of this unexpected problem, teachers, students, and education authorities and institutions must all learn how to provide online assessment as an alternative technique of assessing students' competence (Momeni, 2022).

Online assessment or e-assessment can be considered as a new way of assessing students through the use of a website, online platform or application. It employs ICT and follows a similar design procedure to traditional assessments. It is seen as an essential component in the educational context and the most significant benefits of e-assessment are the flexibility in terms of time and location (Baleni, 2015; Singh & Gokool, 2018).

When educational institutions were permitted to provide classes both online and offline after the covid outbreak subsided, the implementation of online assessments continued and expanded. An increasing number of platforms have been used to assist students and teachers with online assessment systems. Google Classroom, Formative, Edulastic, Socrative, Edmodo, Quizizz, Kahoot, and Schoology are a few examples of online platforms and application tools that might be able to be used as learning media and assessment tools.

Online assessment provides educators with additional benefits including auto-correction, quality feedback, validity and reliability, economic and environmental benefits, and practical and enjoyable conversation (Khairil & Mokshein, 2018). Therefore, teachers and educational institutions should learn more about platforms that can support assessment systems online. Utilizing Edulastic can be an alternative platform and tool to conduct an e-assessment. This platform offers a variety of accommodations for users and innovative features that can give them benefits. Ironically, according to a study by Cekiç and Bakla (2021), Edulastics showed its low popularity in comparison to other platforms and tools of similar type. Further, they argued that this is most likely attributed to few studies on the use of this particular platform that they identified through a database of two of the world's largest indexers, Web of Science and Scopus. Therefore, this study, that attempted to investigate the perceptions of EFL students toward Edulastic as an e-assessment tool and identify the challenges the students faced during the online school final summative assessment via the tool in an onsite class setting in an Indonesian context, is worth conducting. More concisely, the present study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What are the EFL students' views on Edulastic platform as the e-assessment tool in school final summative assessment?

2. What are the students' challenges in using Edulastic platform as the e-assessment tool in school final summative assessment?

Upon receiving feedback on the implementation of Edulastic as e-assessment tool in EFL teaching and learning from the students' perspective, educators may gain a more thorough comprehension of the tool and its implementation, which can assist in identifying areas for improvement in terms of usability, functionality, and overall user experience. Though many academics have already explored this area of interest, it is believed the present study adds to the current range of information from various contexts and encourages further discussion and future research.

Literature Review

School Final Summative Assessment

Kusaeri and Suprananto (2012) describe assessment as a systematic procedure that includes activities to collect, analyze, and interpret information that will be

used to make conclusions about the qualities of a person or object. In the world of education, this information is to determine how far students achieve the learning objectives that have been set, in terms of knowledge, attitudes, and skills. Damilola (2020) claims that ten types of assessments are commonly used to assess including summative assessment as a sort of evaluation that is used at the end of a unit, course, or program to assess student competencies. In the words of Nurhadianti and Pratolo (2020), summative assessment is used to measure and summarize all the students have learned and often occurs after following a course or a unit of instruction. Qu and Zhang (2013) emphasize that summative assessments grade students at the end of their coursework, evaluating their results against various benchmarks or requirements, including paper assignment, final assignment, and final exam. Moreover, it is commonly used to assign scores or evaluate if students have achieved specific learning objectives (Fulcher, 2010).

In Indonesia, school final summative assessment is the term that has been used as a substitute for the term school final examination since 2023 (Singgih, 2023). School final summative assessment generally can take various forms, including final written tests, final verbal tests, practical assessments, mid-term examinations, presentations, portfolios, and research projects. The outcomes of summative assessment at the end of educational level become one of the bases for the teachers to calculate the value of the report card which will determine the increase in students' grades at the next level. However, the school final summative assessment is only conducted in the form of a written test and aims to assess 6th grade (of elementary/primary school) students, 9th grade (of junior high/primary school) students, and 12th grade (of senior high/secondary school) students to determine the students' passing grade of graduation to the next level of education. In the context of the present study, the summative assessment constitutes an English test for 12th grade students conducted using e-platform.

Online Assessment

Conducting assessments in the digital era has transformed the way educational institutions carry such out, moving away from traditional paper-based tests (PBT) and toward online platforms. The online assessment has been implemented throughout the last few years. After the outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020, the educational world started conducting assessments and examinations online to replace traditional

paper-based assessments. Online assessment is the use of technological tools to assess students' learning outcomes, typically through a learning management system (LMS) or other online platforms (Zhai et al., 2020). It gives feedback, encourages additional study, and assists students in improving their performance in an online educational setting (Weleschuk et al., 2019). The online assessment also provides advantages other than giving feedback such as reduced paper usage, decreased security issues, and greater flexibility in test time and location (Khan & Khan, 2018).

Online assessment comes in variety forms such as quizzes, exams, assignments, and projects and can be utilized with the support of internet connection (Bartram in Doğan et al., 2020). Online assessment has grown in popularity in recent years due to the growth of digital technology and the need for distance learning during the COVID-19 epidemic. Some studies have identified that online assessment can be useful and benefit both teachers and students as the features of the online assessment platform provide them the easiness to access and use it in various forms of assessment (Aljohani et al., 2021; Baresh, 2022; Kazemian & Khonamri, 2024; Nurhadianti & Pratolo, 2020; Singh & Gokool, 2018; Zuhriyah & Pratolo, 2020). It does, however, create some obstacles including technological challenges such as internet outages that can develop during the process. Other obstacles may be faced besides technology problems, dishonesty in doing academic assessments, and students may feel lonely and less cooperative during online assessments due to lack of social involvement.

Edulastic

Edulastic is a platform that was founded in 2014 by Aditya Agarkar under the GoGuardian company. Edulastic is a simple-to-use online assessment platform that offers teachers, administrators, and students with real-time data. Unlike most other platforms, Edulastic is intended to function as both an international standard system and an assessment tool for teachers.

Qoura (2021) discovered that Edulastic enables teachers to easily develop standards-aligned exams and receive immediate feedback from students to adapt learning. Edulastic's rigorous standards make it a useful online educational tool for administering tests, assisting students, and monitoring their progress. Free Google Classroom synchronization is offered when used with Edulastic (Ukidve, 2022). Some features that provide activity on this platform are identified. Edulastic offers the resources to support activities and questions in

the following formats: multiple-choice or true-false activity, multi-select or checkbox, fill in the blank, short response, open-ended answers, matching sequencing, and sorting sentences as well as feature multimedia including image-supported, audio clips and video as the source of learning and assessment (Appel, 2021; Cekiç & Bakla, 2021).

Edulastic allows teachers to monitor students' work before, during, and after exams using its real-time data function. They can assess each students' response time and compare it. They can also set time limits for assessment, helping students understand project duration. Teachers can also give students the choice to save their work and leave the evaluation so they can finish it later and use the time that remains. Edulastic also features Kiosk mode app and Safe Exam Browser to ensure students are unable to exit the assessment on their device to look for answers in the browser. The Edulastic feature functions as anti-cheating on students during assessment where the feature works only being able to run one single app on the full screen mode once it is activated.

Edulastic indeed has numerous features to support learning activities in the classroom and aid assessment process. However, Edulastic is one of the assessment platforms that is rarely used in schools. Çekiç and Bakla (2021) assert that the limited number of studies on Edulastics supports this, stating that there is still a dearth of research analyzing and examining the use of Edulastic as a platform for assessment in education.

Methodology

Research Design

With regard to the research questions, this study used a qualitative approach. A case study was employed to help obtain answers to the research questions. According to De Vaus, as cited in Priya (2020), units of analysis in case study research can be an individual, a family, a household, a community, an organization, an event, or even a decision. More specifically, this case study constitutes a descriptive case study (Yin, 2014). It was chosen to provide a detailed description of students' perspectives on the use of the Edulastic platform for school final summative assessment and their experience when it was taking place.

Participants

The study employs purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2015). Six 12th grade students, who were four females and two male students between 17 and 18 years old, experiencing online final summative assessment in a private secondary school in the town of Purwokerto, Indonesia, participated in this study. The students used different devices while taking the online final summative assessment. Three (two females and one male) used laptops, while the others (two females and one male) used android smartphones.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021) was conducted to gather data on students' thought or opinion about and experience of using Edulastic platform as the online school final summative assessment tool. In the middle of 2023, a few weeks after the students under study had joined an online school final summative assessment, we invited them to attend an informal focus group discussion onsite for an interview. The students were informed about the purpose of the study beforehand and provided with written informed consent for participation. The interview lasted approximately an hour and a half and was recorded.

Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis to process the collected data. Transcription was used to transform the audio data into text. It was then reduced into smaller sections by identifying the important information and interesting details related to the topic of the study. Coding was undertaken on each segment to seek patterns in the meaning of the data to arrive at themes.

Results

The results below are students' opinions on Edulastic's use during assessment, including its features, access support, and devices used. The research participants have been codified as FS for female students and MS for male students, with the number of participants listed after the codes, for the sake of anonymity.

Students' Views on Online School Final Summative Assessment via Edulastic

Four of the six participants mentioned Edulastic as a favorable tool for taking online tests because they felt more comfortable with it. They stated that it is easier to answer and adjust questions while working on them via Edulastic.

"Typing answers using a cell phone can be faster than handwriting and it can save time working on all questions." (FS 3)

"Exams with Edulastic are different from doing paper-based exams. With paper-based exams, when I want to change my answers, I have to erase the writing with type-x and have to wait till it dries, whereas with Edulastic I just write down the answers immediately after deleting an incorrect answer." (FS 2)

The students suggested that the implementation of Edulastic in learning evaluation be continued. As the students explained, Edulastic is an engaging yet convenient tool for evaluating their learning process.

Students' Views on Edulastic Features as Assessment Instrument

Time set feature

Edulastic allows teachers to set time limits for students to complete assessments, helping them understand project durations. Students can save their work and leave evaluations for later completion and, therefore, maximize the remaining time.

"During the exam, the time is displayed on the screen in the form of counting down the time remaining to complete and finish our exam, and I think it's very useful to keep us aware of how much time we have" (MS 1)

"As I recall, if the time limit is up, we will be logged out of the system, even if we haven't finished working on it." (MS 2)

"Actually, in my opinion, with the countdown time displayed on the screen, sometimes it makes me anxious thinking about how much time left to complete my exam." (FS 3)

Some of the participants believed that the countdown time display is useful. The others, however, thought that it brings about anxiety.

Features in reading section

In most English exams in Indonesia, the reading section is a dominant part. In a paper-based test, the display of the reading passages and the questions that follow may take several sheets of paper. It gets students to flip through the question sheets. This does not happen within the Edulastic application.

"Doing English reading questions using Edulastic is very simple…. The reading text and questions are on one page, so I only need to scroll up and down the same page." (MS 2)

"In my opinion, with reading text and questions on the same page, it allows us to do the reading test more conveniently." (FS 1)

"..., it includes color pictures supportive and related to the text, so we can comprehend the text more easily." (FS 2)

All the participants agreed that Edulastic is helpful with respect to the reading test. It helps prevent them from distraction and confusion. In addition, with color pictures in Edulastic English reading passages, their reading comprehension is facilitated.

Features in listening section

In traditional exams, when working on a listening test, students need to concentrate on the recording played from the front side of the exam room. Sound and noise may distract concentration. Edulastic, however, allows students to have listening sessions free from such distraction and repeat listening to recordings at their own pace.

"I prefer to work on listening questions if listening can be repeated. Whereas with a paper-based test, I can't do that because the listening section is heard only once." (MS 1)

"With Edulastic I don't have trouble understanding listening recordings, listening tests are easier and recordings are clearer because I can do it through earphones." (FS 4)

All the participants acknowledged that the Edulastic listening session made the listening assessment easy to work on, as the tool provides audio clips right on the assessment page. Therefore, they can access them instantly.

Students' Views on Edulastic Accessibility Performances

Supporting device

In order to administer online assessments, it is necessary to have a device in support of the need for access to the platforms or applications utilized. The participants expressed their opinions about the devices they used during the assessment. They used different devices. While two female and one male participant used smartphones, the other three used laptops when working on the online school final summative assessment.

"The smartphone device that I have is of an older version of the ios-based operating system, with less optimal battery health…. So, I switched to a laptop because I am worried that if I use a cell phone, it will run out of power in the middle of tests." (MS 1).

"I was using an android smartphone to do the online assessment. However, my phone system is running out of storage memory. Meanwhile, if I take the online exam using a cellphone, I have to install the Rdev Exambrowser pro application onto my device in order to support the Edulastic platform." (FS 4).

"We need extra storage memory in our phone to install the exam browser. This application is needed by us to scan the barcode from the teacher to access the test questions on Edulastic. We also need this application so that we don't leave the educational system easily. But if we are knocked out of the Edulastic system while taking the exam, the response we have submitted will be stored in the system, and we are permitted to return to Edulastic at will." (MS 2).

The participants elaborated the crucial function of the device needed to do the online summative assessment on Edulastic. They shared their experiences using devices for online exams with Edulastic. It becomes apparent that they must consider the right device concerning memory capacity, battery life, etc. before joining the assessment to foresee problems when completing assessment on Edulastic.

Internet connection

Taking online examinations with Edulastic needs more than just a device. Internet connection is required to support online evaluation. In the implementation of final summative assessment in the school under research, access to the Edulastic platform is made possible with the school Wi-Fi; nevertheless, unstable internet during peak Wi-Fi traffic hours posed challenges for test takers.

"I think internet connection is crucial while taking online exams. If the internet connection is bad, we are unable to move to the next page. Also, when the internet access is lost, I'm often kicked out of the platform while still working on the exam. This situation can be frustrating and even annoying." (FS 1).

"Once I experienced internet trouble while doing a test via Edulastic. I was using the Wi-Fi provided by the school then, but since many people were using the same Wi-Fi, the connection was unstable…. As a result, I was kicked out of the platform just when I was about to change from Wi-Fi to my internet quota." (FS 4).

This situation requires great attention on the part of students. With all their efforts, they must anticipate technical problems that may appear by selecting the best connection beforehand, in order to stay focused on the assessment.

Students' Views on Cheating Risk

Using Edulastic to do the school final assessment does not automatically make it easy for students to cheat. Edulastic cooperates with an exam browser application to prevent cheating among students. Edulastic also has their own settings to prevent this.

"Using Edulastic as a test tool is a great decision. The system on Edulastic prevents students from copying each other's works or looking for answers on the Internet." (FS 2).

"I think it will be a big mistake if we exit the Edulastic system. Student answers are safely stored in the system, but if during the exam we accidentally exit the Edulastic page, the platform will make a loud sound as a warning. It could be embarrassing when it does. This is the good thing to prevent cheating, accordingly." (MS 2).

"It's also impossible to copy friends' answers. The font for Edulastic is too small for students to be able to glance at others' responses." (FS 3).

The exam browser app prevents students from searching for answers on the internet or translating difficult English words with google translator or other dictionary apps. Instant penalty (embarrassment) will be imposed by the system on those test takers trying to cheat. Even classic cheating practice (glancing at the answers of friends sitting nearby) becomes impossible to do.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore students' opinions about and experience with online assessments, particularly Edulastic platform. This section offers discussion dealing with the aforementioned findings. Through its elaboration, regarding the purpose of the study, the discussion is organized under two topics as follows: (1) the students' views on Edulastic as the school final summative e-assessment tool and (2) the students' challenges in taking online school final summative assessment via Edulastic.

Students' Views on Edulastic as the School Final E-Assessment Tool

The results of this study, as presented earlier, show that all the participants generally had a favorable opinion on the use of Edulastic as a tool for carrying out online school final summative assessments. In the result, four out of six students agreed that taking online assessment was more convenient if compared with traditional paper-based systems, due to its system's flexibility and practicality. This corroborates Baresh (2022)'s and Singh and Gokool (2018)'s reports. The students stated that doing an assessment with Edulastic was also easier for them compared with the traditional one. They believed that typing answers using the device was faster than writing them on paper. In general, online assessment indeed should have various features in the format that would make it a valuable platform. In compliance with this, Zuhriyah and Pratolo (2020) state that students perceive online assessment platforms as useful tools because they have some features including a variety of formats, such as multiple-choice or true/false. In the context of the present study findings, Cekiç and Bakla (2021) mention that Edulastic provides some features to support activities and questions in the format of multiple-choice, fill in the blank and open-ended answer. This statement is in line with the response given by the students in the interviews, where they agreed that the features helped them more easily select and type answers, or change and retype answers when they realized giving incorrect responses.

Edulastic is also able to support students in taking English assessments. Despite similar features available in the tool mentioned by Zuhriyah and Pratolo (2020), Edulastic offers picture and audio resources for students to enhance comprehension in English reading and listening sessions, allowing them to work comfortably and effectively. The students expressed their convenience with Edulastic as the tool for conducting online English summative assessment. Results of the interviews revealed that all six participants more conveniently did English listening sessions online via Edulastic as they found it easier to work on with the efficient and effective audio clips provided. In addition to easy access to the listening session, students also stated that working on the reading comprehension questions via Edulastic was easier in comparison to that in traditional assessment. Students mentioned that they experienced distraction and confusion when reading material, and the questions were not on the same page as found in traditional paper-based exams.

Edulastic also provides teachers to activate time set limits for students to complete their assessment. Most participants admitted that the time set feature helps remind them of the remaining time to anticipate being locked out of their system if the examination time was over. Those features that are available on Edulastic allow the students to conduct the e-assessment easier. It is compatible with a study by Aljohani et al. (2021) asserting that the accessibility and availability of online examinations are what satisfy students with e-assessment.

Cheating during examinations has become a primary issue either using paper-based tests or using online assessment. In fact, conducting online assessment increases the possibility of cheating because it is easier to find the answer through the internet (Alharbi et al., 2021; Baresh, 2022; Mellar et al., 2018). In contrast, Edulastic provides a feature that prevents students from cheating when doing school final summative exams. It is supported with a system that makes switching to another platform on their device or changing the Edulastic platform to another platform or application impossible. Edulastic collaborates with Kiosk mode and safe exam browser to activate only a single app with full screen to be opened and operated during summative assessment. Regarding this matter, the research participants admitted that conducting online summative assessment with the Edulastic platform prevented them from cheating. They reported that only the Edulastic platform is allowed to be opened during examination. They agreed that Edulastic features for anti-cheating are good features particularly for school final examinations. The platform encourages them to properly complete the assessment, and not to waste time seeking answers on the internet.

The current study outlined the advantages of Edulastic as an e-assessment tool in the eyes of school final English assessment takers. Such available features as time set feature, where they can control the final assessment time limit, audio feature for the listening test session, and anti-cheating feature are of great value for them while the assessment was ongoing. This finding gives a different nuance in comparison to much recent research, e.g., the ones by Nurhadianti and Pratolo (2020); Zuhriyah and Pratolo (2020), which focus on the use of 'Kahoot!' and 'Quizizz' tools in e-assessment and its impact on student learning motivation, interest, and English skills (especially reading comprehension). In other words, many studies on e-assessment platforms or tools have been highly quantitative. The current study, on the other hand, gives a heavy emphasis on qualitative inquiry on students' views on the use of Edulastic in online school final summative assessment.

Students' Challenges in Using Edulastic Platform as the School Final E-Assessment Tool

The result of the research found that students also experience challenges in using Edulastic. In using Edulastic, students need to be supported by an adequate device and a good internet connection; otherwise, they will be thrown out of the Edulastic system while the exam is in progress. It is explained by Chiang (2020); Fageeh (2015) that the major obstacle for students completing online tests is a lack of an internet connection. The students completely understand the significance of having a stable connection to the internet in order to access online assessment tools. They have carefully chosen beforehand what they believe is the best internet connectivity to access Edulastic between using Wi-Fi provided by the school or using their own internet quota. However, they continue to encounter the issue of inconsistent internet connectivity, which can lead them to be thrown out of the Edulastic system. The unpleasant situation with internet connectivity during exams added to the students' frustration as they mentioned in the interview. It hindered them from continuing the exam, and they were unable to move to the next questions on other pages. Added to that, the worst situation possibly encountered by students is that they will be kicked out of the Edulastic system. Those conditions will cause delays in the examination process and the possibility of repeating the exam considering the Edulastic time set feature. Some studies strengthened the statements that the major obstacles the students faced during the online assessment were the lack of internet connectivity or internet bad connection, which results in a suspension of the delivery of the assessments, to restart the test being carried out (Alharbi et al., 2021; Amalia, 2018; Chiang, 2020; Mahbub, 2020; Sari et al., 2020). Such indicates that internet connectivity problems do not simply disrupt exam time but also prevent students from maximizing their chances to work on exams.

Edulastic has a feature to prevent students from cheating during examinations. It also requires students to have more storage memory in their smartphone and other devices for installing a safe exam browser. Otherwise, the anti-cheating feature on Edulastic is not activated. Therefore, device accessibility is one of the challenges the students encountered while conducting e-assessment. Baresh (2022) reports that one of the problems some students faced was a lack of the proper devices. Whereas, devices including smartphones, tablets, or laptops are the most crucial tools to access both the internet and e-assessment. Students are unable to access electronic assessments without utilizing a device. As stated by students in the result, the used device needs good battery life and also needs to support its storage memory in order to access the platform particularly if the device has a mobile version in the form of an application. Despite the fact that students can use them, laptops and computers require more space and take longer to turn on and connect to the internet connectivity (Çekiç & Bakla, 2021). Some students commented on the interview that they decided to use a laptop rather than their smartphone as they were worried their smartphone would not be adequate to conduct online assessment. As happened to other students who decided to use their smartphone to access online assessment, they needed to free up storage space for installing a safe exam browser app on their phone. This implies that the students need to carefully consider the right device to support the online assessment in order to avoid unwanted problems while completing the assessment using the Edulastic platform.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To sum up, in the eyes of the students under study, Edulastic is seen as a valuable tool for online evaluations. It at least offers flexibility, practicality, rich activity, trustworthiness (anti-cheating system). Nevertheless, Edulastic is not problem free for them. Inadequate device accessibility and internet connectivity are main issues. With regard to the conclusions, we recommend that Edulastic be used for online assessments when educational institutions and teachers can address device, internet, and other technology infrastructure support constraints. Since only students attending school final summative assessment via Edulastic tool participated in this study, it is warranted that future research will involve teacher participants as well to provide a diverse perspective. Furthermore, the current research is qualitative in nature. In order to ensure more comprehensive research data, a marriage of qualitative and quantitative approaches would be compelling.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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