FACTORES QUE INCIDEN EN EL APRENDIZAJE DEL IDIOMA INGLÉS EN LA UNIVERSIDAD ESTATAL DEL SUR DE MANABÍ.

FACTORS THAT AFFECT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AT THE ESTATAL DEL SUR DE MANABÍ UNIVERSITY.

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RESUMEN

El aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa en la universidad está influido por un sinfín de factores que pueden favorecer o dificultar el proceso de adquisición. Este estudio investiga los factores clave que afectan al aprendizaje del inglés entre los estudiantes universitarios, centrándose en aspectos académicos, ambientales y personales. La capacidad de comunicarse en inglés es cada vez más esencial para el éxito académico y profesional en un mundo globalizado. Las universidades desempeñan un papel fundamental a la hora de proporcionar a los estudiantes las habilidades necesarias para alcanzar el dominio del inglés. Comprender los factores que afectan al aprendizaje del inglés puede ayudar a educadores y administradores a desarrollar programas y sistemas de apoyo más eficaces. Esta investigación se centra en analizar los factores que influyen en el aprendizaje del inglés a nivel universitario. Se utilizó un enfoque de métodos mixtos, combinando encuestas cuantitativas y entrevistas cualitativas con estudiantes de la Universidad Estatal del Sur de Manabí. La encuesta midió factores como los métodos de enseñanza, la disponibilidad de recursos y las actitudes de los estudiantes, mientras que las entrevistas permitieron conocer en profundidad las experiencias individuales y los desafíos institucionales. Como resultado principal, factores académicos como las metodologías de enseñanza y el diseño curricular son fundamentales, mientras que factores ambientales como la disponibilidad de recursos y el tamaño de las clases crean el contexto en el que se produce el aprendizaje. Los factores personales, como la motivación y la ansiedad, también influyen en los resultados de cada estudiante.

Palabras clave: Académico, capacidad, motivación

ABSTRACT

English language learning at the university level is influenced by a myriad of factors that can either enhance or hinder the acquisition process. This study investigates the key factors affecting English language learning among university students, focusing on academic, environmental, and personal aspects. The ability to communicate in English is increasingly essential for academic and professional success in a globalized world. Universities play a critical role in providing students with the necessary skills to achieve proficiency in English. Understanding the factors that affect English language learning can help educators and administrators develop more effective programs and support systems. This research is focused to analyze factors influencing English language learning at the university level. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with students from Estatal del Sur de Manabi University. The survey measured factors such as teaching methods, resource availability, and student attitudes, while interviews provided in-depth insights into individual experiences and institutional challenges. As a principal result, academic factors such as teaching methodologies and curriculum design are foundational, while environmental factors like resource availability and class size create the context within which learning occurs. Personal factors, including motivation and anxiety, further influence individual student outcomes

Keywords: Academic, ability, motivation

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INTRODUCTION

No matter if it is difficult or easy to master a language, it is a prolonged and consistent period. Acquiring or learning a language requires much time and effort from not only the learners but also the teachers. Nowadays, when English is considered an international language, the activity of teaching and learning English as a foreign or second language is also examined and discussed widely worldwide. Due to the globalized world in which we live, English has become an essential tool for the professional development of students and is the most used language in the world to communicate between nations. To bring language learning closer to students in Latin America, various tactics have been implemented, but there are still students who have not reached the expected level as a result of these tactics. (Hempel et al., 2020)

English was considered an optional subject in some Ecuadorian universities; Therefore, each institution had the option of whether or not to include it in its curriculum. There was the possibility of determining how many hours of classes it would offer within the network. The State has also been interested in higher education. In Ecuador, the approach to teaching English in higher education institutions has traditionally been flexible, with universities having the autonomy to decide whether to include it in their curricula. This flexibility extends to determining the number of hours dedicated to English language instruction, allowing each institution to tailor its offerings according to its specific needs and resources.

Historically, this option meant that the emphasis on English varied significantly from one university to another. Some institutions might have prioritized English language education, offering extensive courses and advanced training, while others might have chosen to focus more on other subjects or skill areas, resulting in less emphasis on English.

However, the Ecuadorian government has recognized the growing importance of English proficiency in the globalized world and its impact on higher education and employability. As a result, there has been increasing interest from the State in standardizing and enhancing English language education across universities. This interest is part of a broader initiative to improve the quality of higher education and better prepare graduates for the international job market. Research, academic-professional training and connection with the community must be the objectives of academic-training management, according to article 3 literal b of the Codified Regulations. It also includes categorical statutes that require university students to achieve an upper-intermediate level (B2) in the study of English in order to graduate. This implies a modification in the technique of teaching the proficiency of the foreign language.

The objective of this research is to establish the relationship between the importance of teaching English as a foreign language in universities and its impact on the development of linguistic skills for professional training. For which information regarding the teaching of English has been collected, analyzed and systematized.

Language Teaching and Learning

Highlights the interconnected and subordinate connection between teaching and learning in conversations about language education (Brown & Brown, 2011). The role of teaching involves

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guiding, facilitating learning, encouraging learners, and creating the conditions for learning. Understanding how students learn is essential for educators to determine their educational philosophy, teaching style, approach, methods, and classroom techniques. Cook (2021) stated that the effectiveness of teaching is demonstrated through the ability of students to learn, emphasizing that successful teaching is reliant on learning.

Goal of Language Teaching and Learning

It is important for teachers and learners to understand the goal of language teaching and learning, as well as how to achieve it. It is pointed out that the goal of language teaching is to develop learners' communicative competence. (Ho, 2020). As advised in (Byram, 2020), When choosing educational tasks, it is important to keep in mind that our aim is for students to communicate easily with others: to comprehend others' messages broadly and express their own thoughts effectively (p. 47). Following this point, (Liu et al., 2021) believes that the ultimate goal of language instruction is to equip learners with the ability to use the language for their communication. This reasonably explains why the four macro language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) fall into the two categories: vocal and written communication. Listening and speaking are the most important forms.

Major Methods in Language Teaching

To understand the current methods for English language teaching, the reasons for the dominance of several teaching methods in language classrooms, as well as the challenges that teachers and learners encounter, it is necessary to understand the major methods for language teaching. These methods are summarized below.

The grammar-translation method is "a way of studying a language that approaches the language first through detailed analysis of its grammar rules, followed by application of this knowledge to the task of translating sentences and texts into and out of the target language" (Menezes, 2021, p. 52). According to the grammar-translation method, reading and writing are the main focus, while listening and speaking are not emphasized. Vocabulary is taught using bilingual word lists, grammar is taught deductively, and the student's native language is the medium for instruction (Ruman, 2022).

The direct method proposes that a foreign language should be learned the way children learn their first language, or the way children being transferred to another country acquire a second language naturally and without great difficulty (Menezes, 2021). Foreign language learning, therefore, must be natural, and language should be taught without translation and without the use of the learner's native language. Instead, it should be taught through demonstration and action. Grammar should be taught inductively, and speaking and listening should be developed in small and intensive classes (Saengkaew, 2022).

The audio-lingual method is a language teaching method that originated from the intensive language training courses of the US military and focuses on aural and oral skills. These courses were also known as the army method. Later, in its variations and adaptations, this method was renamed the audio-lingual method in the 1950s (Brown & Brown, 2011). The audio-lingual method is described by (Saengkaew, 2022) as follows:

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New material is presented in dialogue form, little or no grammatical explanation is used, grammar is taught inductively, structural patterns are taught using repetitive skills, vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context, there is much use of tapes, language labs and visual aids, very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted (p. 16).

The goal of communicative language teaching is to enhance the learner's ability to communicate effectively. Tasks and activities in communicative language teaching aim to help learners achieve communicative goals by engaging in processes like exchanging information, negotiating meaning, and interacting, as highlighted by (Liu et al., 2021). Learner-focused education is prioritized in communicative language teaching. (Brown & Brown, 2011) outlines the main features of communicative language teaching, and explain that:

Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence, language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, functional use of language for meaningful purposes, fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques, students ultimately have to use the language, productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts (p. 241).

The ability to communicate in English is increasingly essential for academic and professional success in a globalized world. Universities play a critical role in providing students with the necessary skills to achieve proficiency in English. Understanding the factors that affect English language learning can help educators and administrators develop more effective programs and support systems. This article reviews the primary factors influencing English language learning at the university level.

Issues Relating to the Activity of English Teaching and Learning

The Roles of Teachers and Learners

According to Lochana and Deb (Saprudin et al., 2022), teachers have recently realized the importance of using a student-centered approach to teaching where teachers can help students to learn the target language in context and to use it in real situations both inside and outside the language classroom. Collaborative or cooperative learning is described by Liu et al (2021) as a student-centered approach in which learners use cooperative activities, such as pair work or group work, to: express their viewpoints and opinions; share their ideas, information and experience; and discuss and debate with each other. Avellaneda (Avellaneda, 2024) point out that, when using cooperative learning activities in language classrooms, teacher talk should be reduced and students' talk should be increased, with a focus on negotiation of meaning and a greater amount of comprehensible input. In addition, a relaxed classroom atmosphere and motivation for learning should be emphasized. Collaborative learning aims to provide learners with interactive tasks that can help them develop communicative competence (Liu et al., 2021)

Student-centred collaborative approaches require teachers and learners to play roles that are different from the traditional approaches. According to (Brown A. , 2020), teachers play five main roles when using collaborative activities involving pair work and group work for students in language classrooms. Teachers should help students build up enough classroom language so that they can

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understand the teachers' instructions, choose group techniques appropriate for students, plan group work, monitor tasks, and help debrief students to start the activity.

Methodology

The present research corresponds to a qualitative approach, to obtain information through resources such as interviews, surveys and observation of processes that support the strengths or deficiencies in the teaching-learning process in high school students in order to have a holistic vision. of the problem to be investigated.

It is basic research, obtaining documentary and bibliographic information from research carried out with a similar approach in terms of seeking to satisfy cognitive and procedural needs that optimize the acquisition of new knowledge. A descriptive type of work is carried out, taking into consideration both internal and external characteristics and factors that allow the understanding of the processes and strategies applied before and during the case study inquiry process.
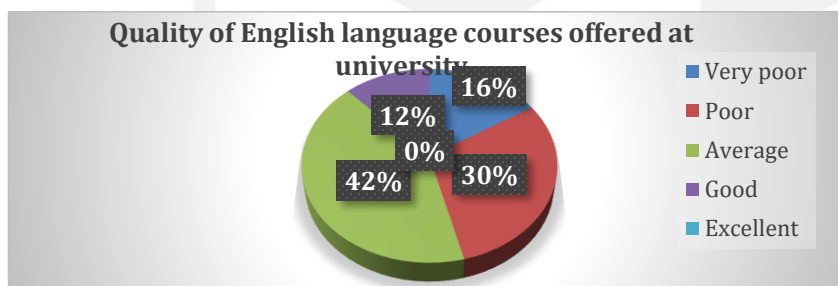
A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews with students from UNESUM. The survey measured factors such as teaching methods, resource availability, and student attitudes, while interviews provided in-depth insights into individual experiences and institutional challenges.
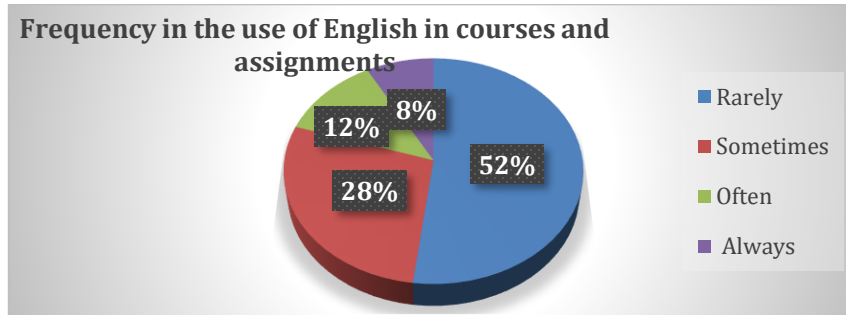
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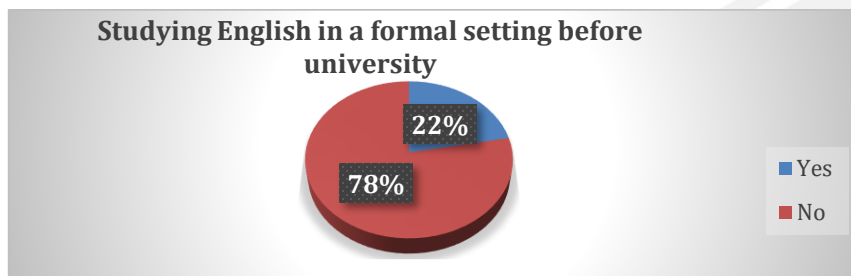
Graphic # 1

According to graph 1, from 50 students surveyed, 78% indicate that they have not previously studied English in a formal setting before university; while 22% mention that they have previously studied English in a formal setting before university.

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Graphic # 2.

According to graph 2, from 50 students surveyed, 16% rate the quality of English language courses offered at university as very poor, 30% rate the quality of English language courses offered at university as poor, 42% rate the quality of English language courses offered at university as average; while 12% rate the quality of English language courses offered at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University as good.

Frequency in the use of English in courses and assignments

- Rarely: 52%
- Sometimes: 28%
- Often: 12%
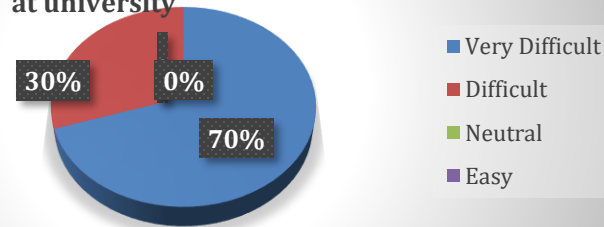- Always: 8%

Graphic # 3

According to graph 3, from 50 students surveyed, 8% mention they always use English in courses and assignments, 12% alludes they often use English in courses and assignments, 28% refers sometimes they use English in courses and assignments; while 52% indicates the rarely use English in courses and assignments at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.

English language instruction adequately integrated into field of study

- Yes: 20%
- No: 80%
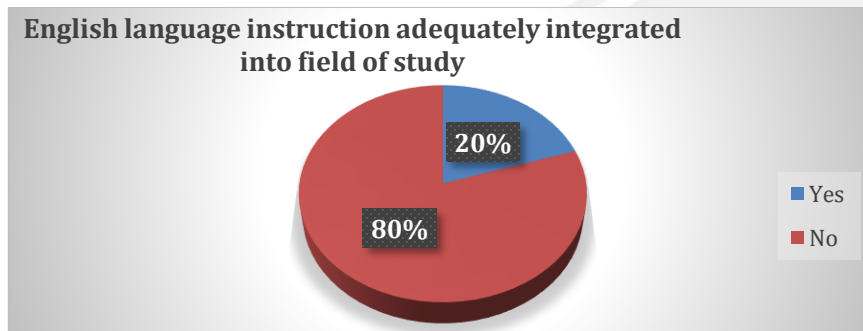
Graphic # 4

According to graph 4, from 50 students surveyed, 80% indicates the English language instruction is not adequately integrated into field of study; while 20% expresses the English language instruction is adequately integrated into field of study.

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Graphic #5

According to graph 5, from 50 students surveyed, 30% mentions that the accessibility additional English language resources are difficult, while 70% indicates that the accessibility additional English language resources are very difficult at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.
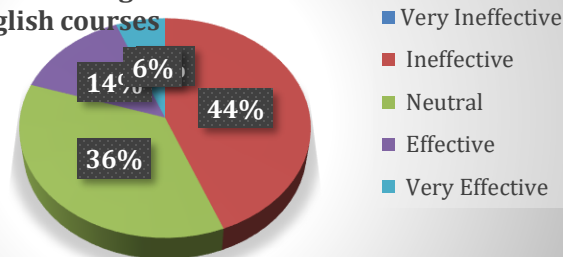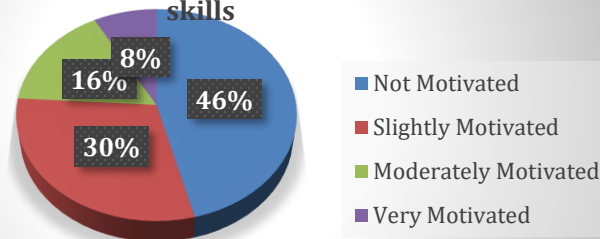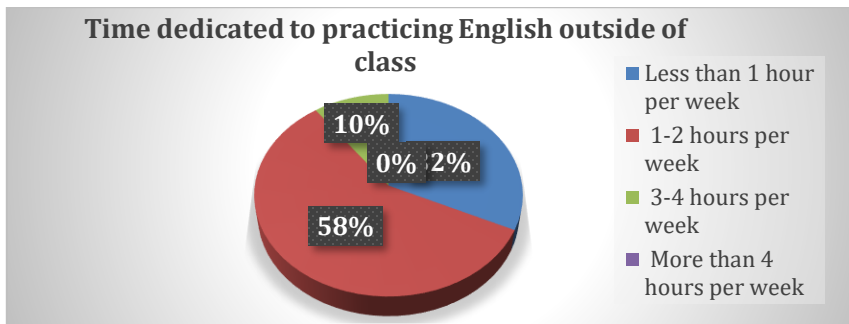

Graphic # 6

According to graph 6, from 50 students surveyed, 14% mentions the teaching methods used in English language courses are effective, 6% refers the teaching methods used in English language courses are very effective, 36% alludes the teaching methods used in English language courses are neutral, while 44% indicates the teaching methods used in English language courses are ineffective at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.

Graphic # 7

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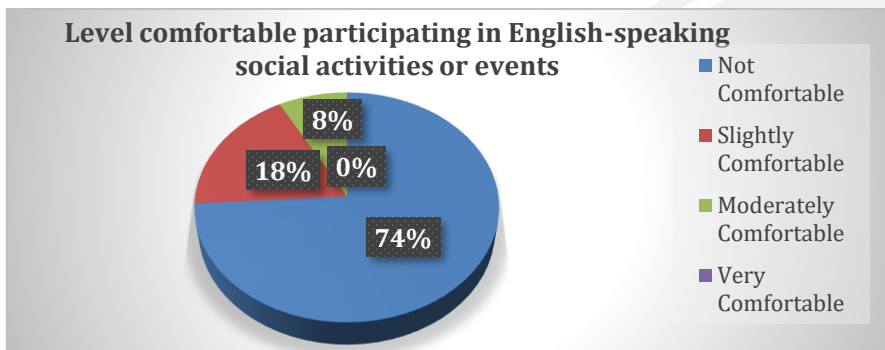
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According to graph 7, from 50 students surveyed, 8% mentions that they are very motivated to improve English language skills, 16% refers that they are moderately motivated to improve English language skills, 30% denotes that they are slightly motivated to improve English language skills, while 46% inidcates that they are not motivated to improve English language skills at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.

Time dedicated to practicing English outside of class

- Less than 1 hour per week
- 1-2 hours per week
- 3-4 hours per week
- More than 4 hours per week

10% 0% 2% 58%

Graphic # 8.

According to graph 8, from 50 students surveyed, 10% mentions that they dedicate 3-4 hours per week to practicing English outside of class, 58% alludes that they dedicate 1-2 hours per week to practicing English outside of class, while 32% refers that they dedicate less than 1 hour per week to practicing English outside of class at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.

Level comfortable participating in English-speaking social activities or events

- Not Comfortable
- Slightly Comfortable
- Moderately Comfortable
- Very Comfortable

8% 18% 0% 74%

Graphic # 9

According to graph 9, from 50 students surveyed, 8% mentions that they feel moderately comfortable participating in English-speaking social activities or events, 18% indicates that they feel slightly comfortable participating in English-speaking social activities, while 74% expresses that they do not feel comfortable participating in English-speaking social activities at Estatal del Sur de Manabí University.

Discussion

The study highlights the interplay of various factors affecting English language learning at the university level. Academic factors such as teaching methodologies and curriculum design are

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foundational, while environmental factors like resource availability and class size create the context within which learning occurs. Personal factors, including motivation and anxiety, further influence individual student outcomes.

Academic Factors that affect English learning could be Teaching Methodologies that play a crucial role in language acquisition (Mundelsee & Jurkowski, 2021). Communicative approaches, interactive activities, and project-based learning have been found to be particularly effective. The Curriculum Design well-structured that integrates practical language use, cultural context, and incremental skill-building can significantly enhance learning outcomes. In addition, assessment methods or forms of assessment, including formative and summative assessments, help track progress and identify areas needing improvement.

In other hand, environmental factors like resource availability or access to learning materials such as textbooks, language labs, online resources, and multimedia aids is essential. Universities with better resources tend to have higher levels of student proficiency. Other problem that teacher and students find in universities are class size, specifically, teachers consider that smaller class sizes allow for more personalized attention and increased student participation, which positively affects language learning.

Pedagogy is recognized as a factor that influences English learning. The findings of this study showed a positive relationship between teaching and learning tools and techniques used in English classes and students' English understanding and output. This might suggest that successful learning depends on strong teaching methods like lesson preparation, classroom activities, and creating a comfortable environment, as well as engaging teaching materials like inspiring textbooks, multimedia resources, and technology. Discovering that effective teaching skills and techniques rely on clear and comprehensible content delivery methods is intriguing (Bizami et al., 2023). Moreover, Chen's study also backed the notion that EFL teaching methods focused on lesson presentation, teaching language, classroom activity arrangement, and creating a conducive classroom environment. Additionally, (Hempel et al., 2020) found that offering EFL students' resources like English newspapers, magazines, videos, radios, books, and dictionaries could aid in their advancement in English proficiency as these resources are crucial in language acquisition.

Personal factors like motivation are consider as significantly impact language learning. Students who see the value of English for their personal and professional goals are more likely to engage deeply with the language. Furthermore, high levels of language anxiety can impede learning. Creating a low-stress, encouraging environment helps reduce anxiety and fosters better language acquisition.

Additionally, the factors influencing learners' understanding and proficiency in English in this research are not limited to motivation and attitude towards the language. Teachers' qualifications, general characteristics, teaching materials, and methods also play a significant role in English classes. The findings also indicate that students' success in English is linked to teachers' credentials and overall attributes like being visually appealing, using accurate pronunciation, and providing clear explanations (Bizami et al., 2023). Additionally, educational resources like engaging textbooks, online tools, and computer aids, along with teaching methods like lesson preparation, classroom

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activities, and behavior management, have been found to boost students' understanding and expression of English.

Finally, recognizing and accommodating different learning styles and preferences can enhance individual student success. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners benefit from tailored instructional strategies.

CONCLUSION

Effective English language learning at the university level requires a holistic approach that considers academic, environmental, and personal factors. Universities should aim to adopt diverse teaching methodologies, ensure adequate resources, create supportive learning environments, and address the individual needs and motivations of students. There are numerous factors that can influence both understanding and speaking in the English language, and it is important for foreign language learners and teachers to recognize them. Particularly important for EFL learners' success is students' attitudes and motivation, teachers' characteristics, and pedagogy.

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