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## Research Article

# THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' NEEDS BETWEEN EFFICIENCY AND PROFICIENCY: TOURIST AGENTS AS A CASE STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays, the fact of learning English becomes an urgent linguistic need that all the professionals and mid-professionals in the domain of tourism are striving to accomplish due to the requirements of their jobs in the light of the pace of life that they witnessing and which tends towards promptness and rapidity in everything. The conducted survey that was adopted in this investigation shows to what extent the majority of the informants prefer to learn basic English in a short span of time instead of learning it proficiently in a long period of time, which means that they prefer to sacrifice proficiency for the sake of time. Hence, our query is related to the quality of the learned product and whether it satisfies the learners' needs in terms of acceleration in the absence of any comprehensive model of language learning in a teaching context or not. This new comprehensive model should combine two extremely significant elements, the factor of time and the factor of proficiency in such a way as to take the full advantage of the notion of time in terms of learning and the use of the resources and energy adequately.

## KEYWORDS

Professionals, mid-professionals, proficiency, efficiency, acceleration, linguistic needs, comprehensive model of language learning.

## INTRODUCTION

No one denies the importance of learning a new language, especially if it has to do with the English language. In fact, the needs behind the learning of English differs from one occupation to another within the same domain or field of work. The focus in this article is on the professionals and mid-professionals, or tourist agents, who occupy different jobs in the field of tourism where the use of English is necessary in most of their vigorous activities. According to one of the surveys that we have conducted in such a way as to understand the reason behind the increasing demands of the learning of English, which can be considered as an urgent need, we found that 71% of the informants prefer to take accelerated courses even if they are aware that they are sacrificing language proficiency for the sake of time. It is a paramount issue that is imposed by modern jobs as a new requirement for any professional development. As a matter of fact, the pace of life, as it is stated by Panov (2005) and Snooks (2005), has witnessed important changes and challenges that require certain acceleration in terms of processing in all the domains of life without any exceptions. Hence, the notion of acceleration may lead to undesirable results in the absence of a concrete, reliable, and comprehensive model of language learning that takes into consideration the learners' linguistic needs in terms of urgency and proficiency.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature investigation of the language learning needs among professionals and mid-professionals who work in the field of tourism in different occupations revealed to what extent these people tend towards the learning of languages, especially the English language that represents the master key for any adequate communication in the absence of other national or international tongues.

However, many scholars acknowledged the increasing demands for accelerated learning courses in multiple professional disciplines due to the widespread of the local and global challenges on the social, economic, political, scientific, technological, and communication levels. Hence, the learning of English emerged as one of the apparent tendencies on the linguistic level. Modern jobs need not only life-long learning skills and performances, but regular and continuous professional development as well, which includes some disciplines that should be realized in a short span of time without any serious consideration of the target product in terms of its efficiency and proficiency in the absence of the adoption of any concrete and adequate evaluative criteria.

In some empirical researches conducted by Panov (2005) and Snooks (2005), they found that the pace of life has undergone crucial changes and that acceleration in all domains of life becomes an urgent and required need that should be taken into account. On the other hand, Scholars and linguists such as Scott & Conrad (1992), Lozanov (1978), and Kitaigorodskaya (1995), among others, also emphasized this idea of acceleration in terms of language acquisition and learning through different intensive educational programs, especially on the level of high-demands of languages such as English. According to Serdyukov (2008), the qualified specialists in different degrees and tendencies, which are trained and prepared for different market opportunities in a very short time becomes a requirement and an earnest and persistent need in all societies worldwide. It is a fact that shows clearly to what extent "contemporary jobs necessitate not only continuous, life-long learning, but also concise, on-demand, occasional or regular professional development activities. This includes educational or training activities aimed at upgrading or changing

specialization which should be accomplished in minimal time” (p. 1).

In scrutinizing literature, we found that the notion of acceleration in relation to language learning is dealt with by different scholars from various perspectives. Each learning enterprise deals with it from its own professional point of view, most of which are related to the business benefits and how much they are going to earn from it in a short duration of time. Imel (2002) defined the concept of acceleration in relation to learning as a multidimensional method for learning in a student-centered context. On the other hand, Boyd (2007) stated that the accelerated learning is a learning context in which the learners learn in a shorter span of time with the use of different teaching and learning strategies in comparison to what used to take place in the traditional or common teaching processes.

Generally speaking, accelerated programs have been growing at an extremely impressive and attractive pace worldwide, which enhances us to question the validity of such programs in terms of their learning quality outcomes that are achieved in such unbalanced circumstances (Serdyukov, 2008). Therefore, in order to satisfy the learners' learning needs in terms of acceleration, proficiency, and time sufficiency, we need to develop and apply a comprehensive model of language learning in a teaching context. This model should be, on one hand, formal in the sense that it should be instructional, quantitative, qualitative, and evaluative by having a learning sequence from input to output (Boughoulid, 2022). On the other hand, it should be substantial, in the sense that it takes into consideration the use of the discursive character of learning and teaching criteria, namely, quantity, quality, manner, and relation (Grice, 1975).

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.2. The background of the informants

The survey was conducted among tourist professionals and mid-professionals working in the field of tourism in the city of Marrakech, Morocco. The number of the informants is 41 who work in different occupations. Their levels of English vary from almost zero level, with no degree, to a higher degree, with a university degree. Most of them started the study of the English language as a second foreign language at public school between the age of fourteen and sixteen. In the Moroccan educational context, students usually start the study of English in grade 9 (K-9) in public schools with an average of two hours per a week. In private schools, they start it at an early age.

#### 3.2. The research design

In the present research, I adopted a mixed method in such a way as to highlight all the survey's outcomes in terms of content and numbers. The emphasis in this study will be focusing on the learners' linguistic needs on the basis of the different criteria surrounding their contributions in the answering of the main questions of the survey, especially the ones related to duration and proficiency.

### 4. Results, analysis, and discussion

The informants who participated in this survey are 41 tourist agents. They include 16 females, who represent 39%, and 25 males, who represent 61% (See figure 1). These tourist agents' levels vary between those whose proficiency in English is close to the zero level with 7,3% and those who have a very high level with 2,4%. The beginners represent the average of 31,7%. The participants with an average level of English represent 41,5%. Other participants of a high level with a baccalaureate degree represent 17,1%. On the basis of the statistics demonstrated in figure 2, we could notice

that there are five different levels. The majority of the participants include two major levels, the beginners, which are represented by 13 tourist agents and the ones that have an average English level with the total number of 17. They both represent the higher number in terms of participation with the total of 30 informants, which represents an average percentage

of 73,2%. All these tourist agents are eager to learn the English language whatsoever their level of English or occupation is, because of the nature of the domain in which they work, which is the one of tourism in which the dominant language in terms of use par excellence is English.

Figure 1: Statistics concerning the informants in terms of gender and percentage.

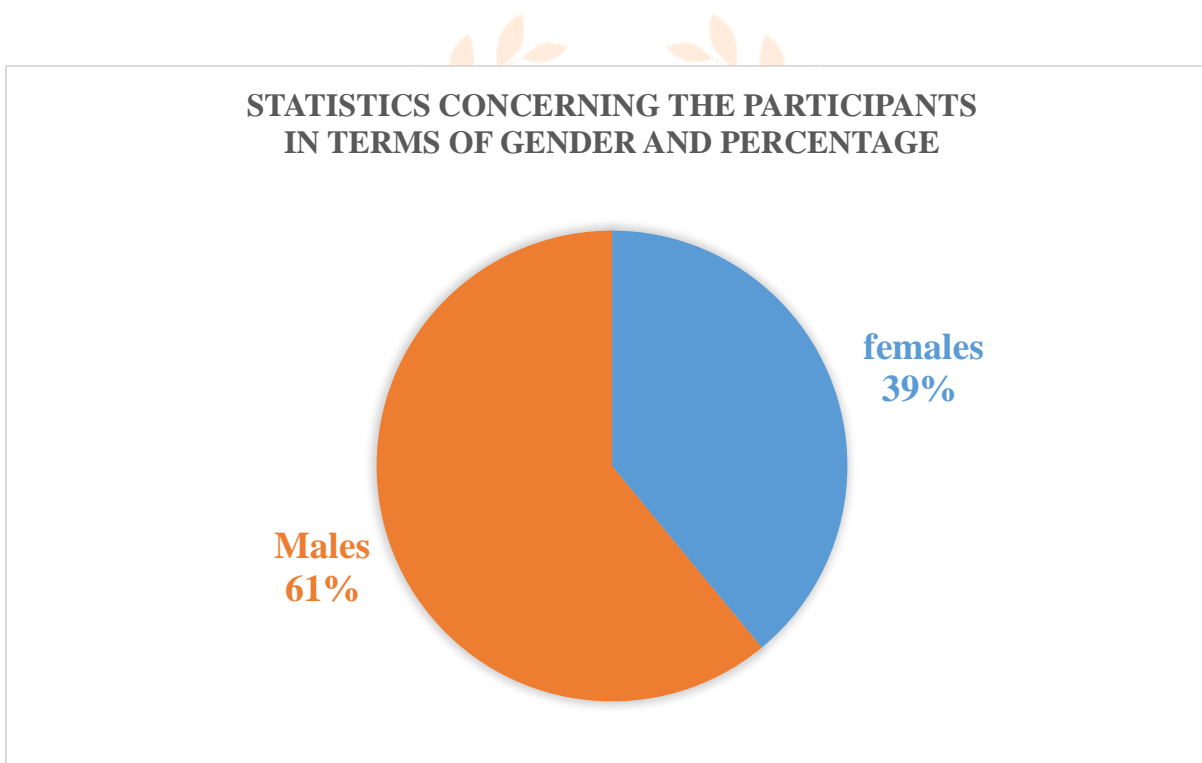
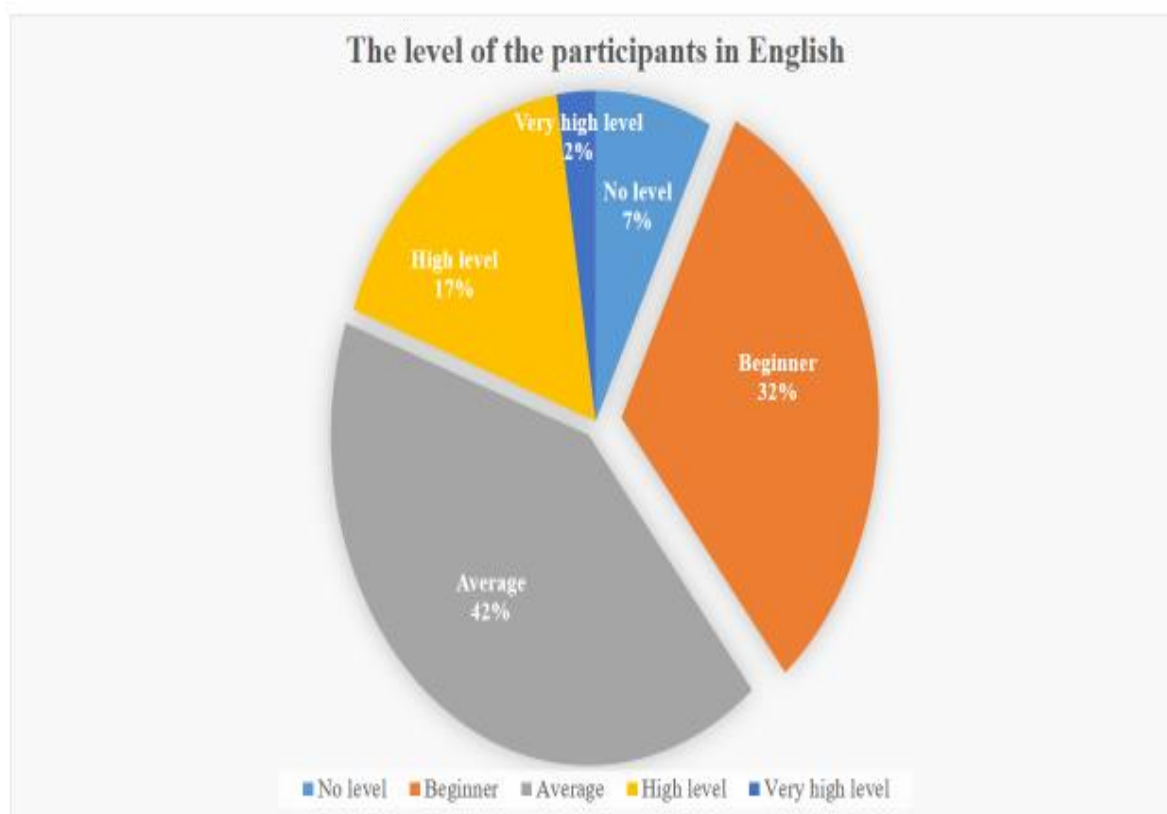


Figure 2: The level of the informants in English





On the basis of the conducted survey, all the 41 informants confirmed that the learning of the English language represents an important advantage for them because it is considered as an urgent need in the domain in which they work, which is that of tourism. It is also an opportunity that puts them into a favourable position in comparison to their colleagues in the same domain and in the same position. If we check the statistics stated in figure 3, we can notice that there are more than 16 different occupations in the field of tourism in which all these participants are looking forward to learning English in either ways, in a long or short span of time.

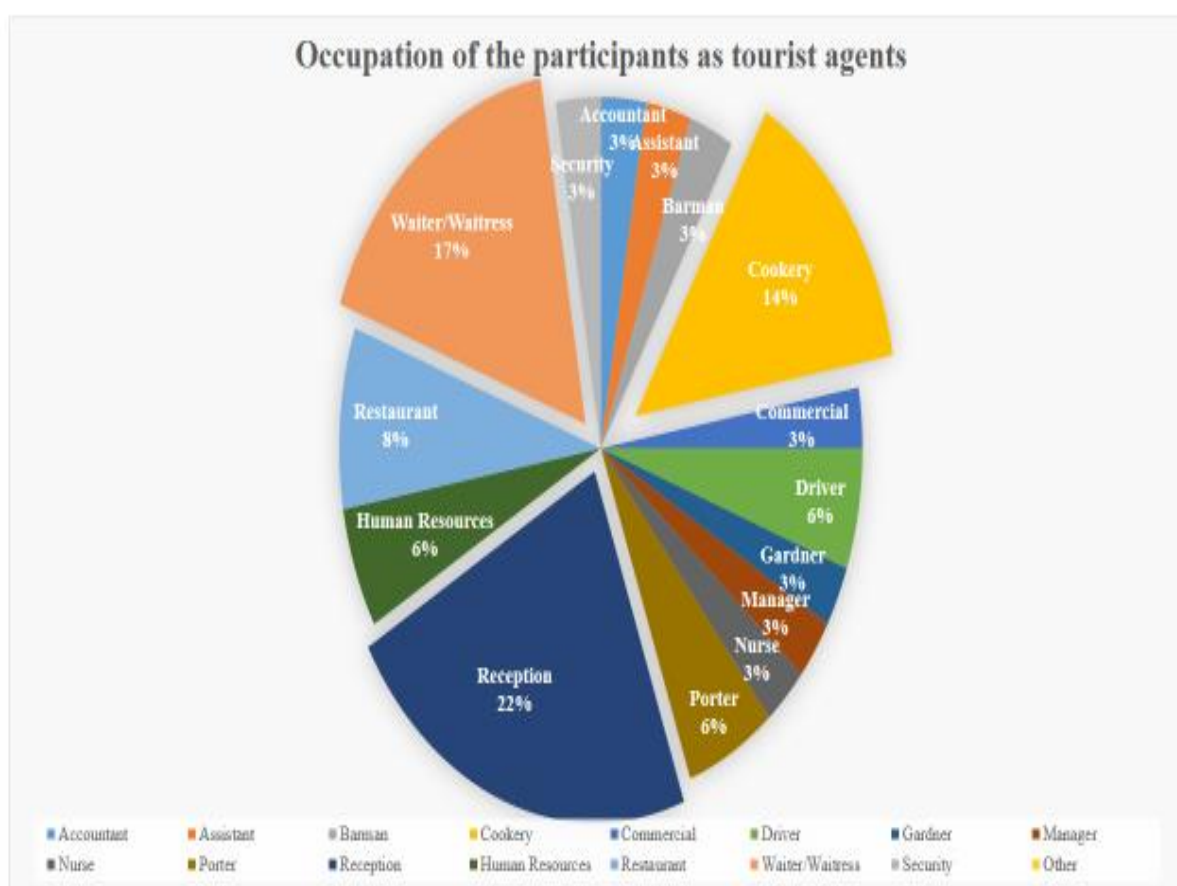
In fact, in the domain of tourism, the need for the use of English may vary from one occupation to another in terms of its importance and use. For instance, the

tourist agents who work in positions that have an immediate connection with tourists such as those who work as receptionists in hotels or other touristic zones represent 22%. The ones who work in occupations related to cooking and restaurants represent 22% as well. For those who work as servers either in clubs, restaurants, or other related vocations, the percentage represents 17%. Hence, the total average of the last three occupations represents the percentage of 61% of the whole occupations stated so far because they are most of the time in the front lines, which, most of the time, pushes them to communicate with people from different countries. Even the ones who have no or little contact with tourists such as the accountants who represent 3%, the agents taking charge of the human resources with a percentage of 6%, or the ones who work as gardeners with a representation of 3% as well,

are willing to learn the English language in the same way as their colleagues prefer to do due to its importance as an international and universal tool of communication in the absence of other alternative

tongues. The last three different occupations represent the percentage of 12%, which should not be taken for granted or left unnoticed due to its importance.

Figure 3: The occupations of the participants as tourist agents



The survey is based on two main objectives, which are stated in the form of two interesting questions addressed to different tourist agents with different occupations. In the first question, we asked them if they prefer to learn English proficiently, but in a long span of time. In the second question, we asked them if they prefer to learn basic English in a short span of time. Our objective is to satisfy the tourist agents'

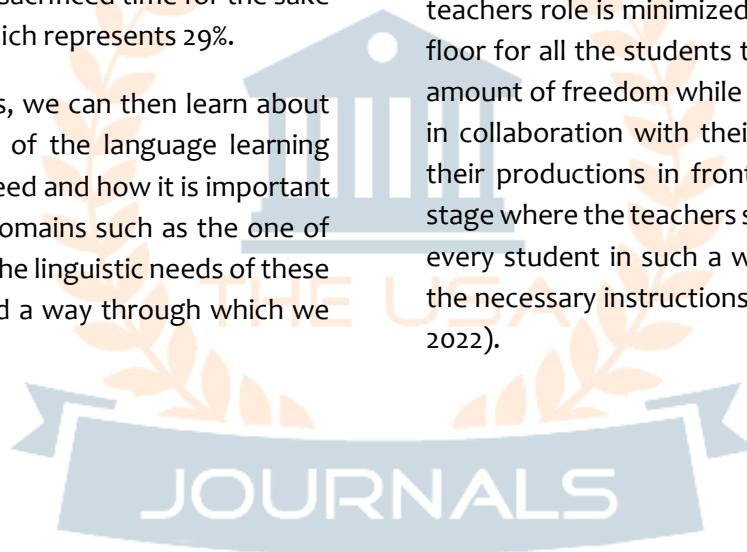
needs and find out which one is important, the time factor or their proficiency of the English language. On the basis of the statistics we were able to collect from the conducted survey and the discussion of the issue of time efficiency and the concept of acceleration in terms of learning among the tourist agents, we found that most of the informants stated that they prefer to learn basic English in a short span of time, which

introduces the acceleration factor as an apparent need that should be taken into consideration in the process of learning. The last question in the survey was a general one. It was about the importance and utility of English for the participants as tourist agents who revealed their great need of the language.

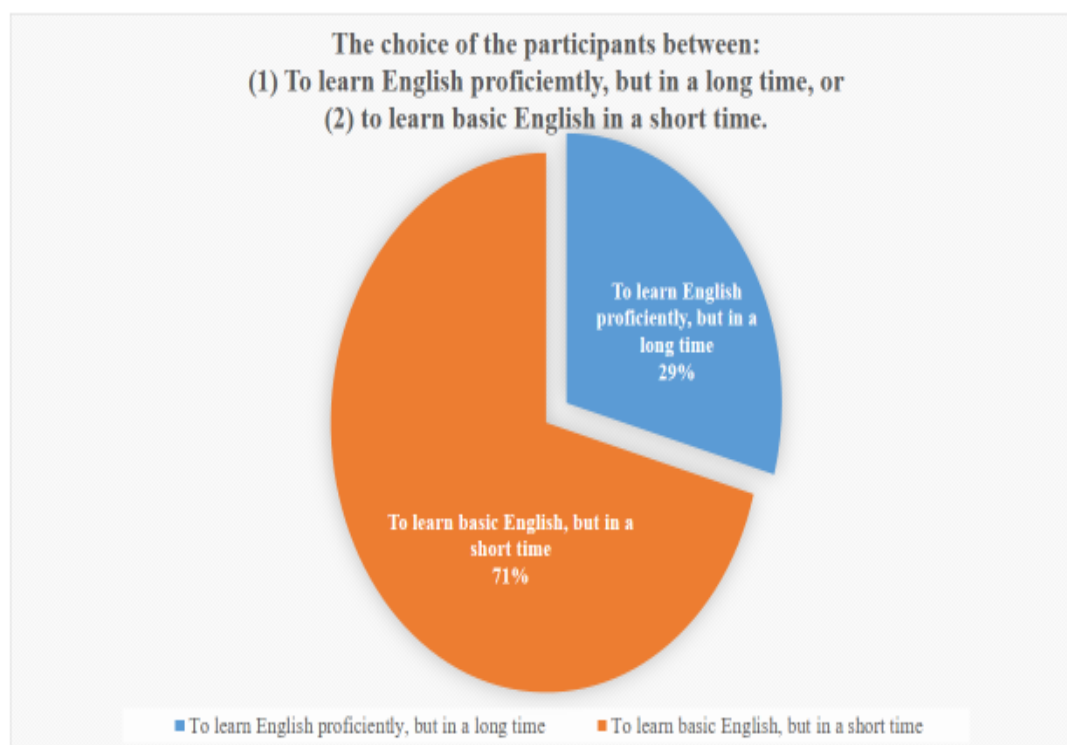
However, the informants' choices between learning English proficiently in a long span of time and learning basic English in a short span of time, as it is represented in figure 4, shows to what extent 29 of them opted for the second choice in which they sacrificed the quality of English for the sake of time, which represents the percentage of 71%, and only 12 of them opted for the first question in which they sacrificed time for the sake of the quality of English, which represents 29%.

On the basis of this analysis, we can then learn about the relevance of the issue of the language learning acceleration as an urgent need and how it is important for some people in some domains such as the one of tourism. In order to satisfy the linguistic needs of these informants, we need to find a way through which we

can combine the time factor and language proficiency through the adoption of a new comprehensive model of language learning in a teaching context. A new model of learning that should be comprehensive in the sense that it should include all the aspects of learning as one package from the very beginning to the end without missing any one of them. This learning process starts by exposing the students to an input, which should be good enough in terms of richness and variety. Then comes the stage where the teacher helps them build their competencies in such a way as to construct the grammar of the target language. By the end, he or she involves them into meaningful and comprehensive communicative acts where the teachers role is minimized in such a way as to give the floor for all the students to feel at ease with a certain amount of freedom while expressing their ideas either in collaboration with their classmates or in exposing their productions in front of the whole class. It is a stage where the teachers step back and keep an eye on every student in such a way as to provide them with the necessary instructions when need be (Boughoulid, 2022).



**Figure 4: The choice of the participants between learning English proficiently in a long time or learning basic English in a short time.**



## CONCLUSION

The different results obtained through the analysis of the conducted survey revealed to what extent the tourist agents are in need of learning the English language effectively and efficiently in such a way as to use it proficiently with an advanced degree of competence as it is required in the domain of tourism in every single related occupation. Hence, by “effectively”, we mean in terms of adequate learning that these agents are supposed to learn in an effective way, which reflects the reality of the learning outcomes. By “efficiently”, we mean in the sense of optimizing the time devoted to learning, the resources that are used and that help in the facilitation of the learning process from its beginning to the end, and the energy that is spent without having to resort to any extra efforts or unnecessary expenses.

## Conflict of Interest Statement:

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author:

Mustapha Boughoulid is an EFL/ESL teacher and a researcher in the field of Linguistics and English Language Teaching Theory (ELTT). He taught English as a foreign language for more than twenty-four years. He is the co-author of the book “How was Moroccan Darija one century ago?” Vol.I, and the author of many articles in the field of teaching and learning.

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