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THE MECHANISM OF EFFECTIVE CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING

МЕХАНІЗМ ЕФЕКТИВНОГО ПОСЛІДОВНОГО ПЕРЕКЛАДУ

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Consecutive interpreting is a key element of professional translation, playing an important role in diplomacy, business, law and education. Despite its widespread use, the field suffers from a lack of structured methodologies, standardised training programmes and up-to-date materials. This review examines the theoretical and practical aspects of consecutive interpreting, with a focus on interpreting techniques, cognitive processes, and training approaches.

Two main methods of interpreting are analysed: formal-symbolic, which preserves the syntax of the original, and semantic, which focuses on conveying meaning. The advantages and limitations of each method are compared in different contexts, particularly when working with specialised topics. Special attention is paid to note-taking techniques that facilitate memorisation and recording of key information.

The review emphasises the importance of rhetorical skills and communicative adaptation to ensure the naturalness and persuasiveness of the translation. Particular attention is paid to the role of background knowledge, situational awareness, and the interpreter's ability to work with linguistic and cultural nuances that affect accuracy and effectiveness.

The study justifies the need for structured interpreter training programmes with a focus on practical exercises, cognitive skills development, and real-world application. Effective training should cover not only language skills but also strategic skills for confidently handling complex communication situations. The review calls for further research into the cognitive mechanisms of consecutive interpreting and the development of new teaching methods and resources to improve the quality of professional training for interpreters.

Key words: consecutive interpreting, semantic translation, paragraph-phrase interpreting, translation notation, translation methodology, interpreting challenges.

Послідовний переклад є ключовим елементом професійного перекладу, що відіграє важливу роль у дипломатії, бізнесі, судочинстві та освіті. Попри широке використання, галузь стикається з дефіцитом структурованих методологій, стандартизованих навчальних програм і сучасних матеріалів. У цьому огляді розглядаються теоретичні та практичні аспекти послідовного перекладу з акцентом на перекладацькі техніки, когнітивні процеси та навчальні підходи.

Аналізуються два основні методи усного перекладу: формально-символічний, що зберігає синтаксис оригіналу, та семантичний, орієнтований на передавання змісту. Порівнюються переваги та обмеження кожного методу у різних контекстах, зокрема під час роботи зі спеціалізованою тематикою. Окрема увага приділяється технікам нотування, які сприяють запам'ятовуванню та фіксації ключової інформації.

Огляд підкреслює важливість риторичних навичок і комунікативної адаптації для забезпечення природності та переконливості перекладу. Особлива увага приділяється ролі фонових знань, ситуативної обізнаності, а також здатності перекладача працювати з мовними та культурними нюансами, що впливають на точність і ефективність.

Дослідження обґрунтовує необхідність структурованих програм підготовки перекладачів із фокусом на практичних вправах, розвитку когнітивних навичок та застосуванні у реальних умовах. Ефективне навчання повинно охоплювати не лише мовні, а й стратегічні навички для впевненого вирішення складних комунікативних ситуацій. Огляд закликає до подальших досліджень когнітивних механізмів послідовного перекладу та розробки новітніх методик навчання й ресурсів для підвищення якості професійної підготовки перекладачів.

Ключові слова: усний послідовний переклад, смисловий переклад, абзацно-фразовий переклад, перекладацька нотація, методологія перекладу, перекладацькі труднощі.

Statement of the Problem. Despite the growing popularity of simultaneous interpreting, consecutive interpreting (including off-the-page interpreting) is still the most common type of professional translation activity, and the most popular type of translation used in foreign language teaching and translation.

Consecutive interpreting serves negotiations of various levels and ranks, ranging from discussing the situation with a small company's business associate to diplomatic negotiations and negotiations between heads of state.

Nevertheless, there is currently a shortage of textbooks and even training manuals on consecutive interpreting. Some of the existing ones either incorporate consecutive interpreting as a non-independent discipline in the interpreting course, or are purely theoretical and of little practical value, or are simply collections of texts for translation with the recommended expressions attached.

This very situation needs to be improved as we believe that consecutive interpreting constitutes a separate and rather independent discipline with its own subject, methods and practical techniques which fully justify the separability of consecutive interpreting as an independent training course.

The above explains our attempt to at least partially fill the existing gaps in the teaching of consecutive interpreting and offer an article on this discipline, which should be mastered by students at language universities and faculties.

Analysis of Recent Studies and Publications. The authors reference a range of contemporary works on translation and interpreting, including theoretical and practical manuals (e.g., Newmark P. [1], [2], Venuti L. [3], [4], Kornakov P. [5], Miram G. [6], [7], [8], [9]), and point out that many scholars acknowledge the lack of clear methodology for interpreter training. Criticism of current teaching approaches is widespread – such as the mistaken conflation of translation with foreign language teaching, over-reliance on vocabulary memorisation, and using written translations as models for interpreting exercises. Constructive alternatives, however, are rarely proposed. The article refers to Kornakov's recommendations for practical, professionally relevant exercises and emphasizes the importance of learning in non-ideal, realistic settings. Overall, while recent studies raise valid critiques, the field is still in search of systematic, practical methodologies for training interpreters.

Purpose of the Study. The main purpose of the study is to partially fill the existing gaps in the teaching of consecutive interpreting and to provide an article that focuses on practical, applicable aspects of the discipline. The authors aim to outline the theoretical foundations, main interpreting techniques (formal-symbolic and semantic methods), cognitive mechanisms, and note-taking strategies required for effective consecutive interpreting. The article is intended as a useful supplement for standard university courses in translation and interpreting, targeting both students and practitioners. Ultimately, the study seeks to justify the need for structured, practice-oriented training programmes that address real-world conditions and develop both linguistic and strategic skills for interpreters, thereby elevating the quality of interpreter training and professional development.

Presentation of the Main Material.

Consecutive interpreting tools

Let us consider the conditions for performing consecutive interpreting which is the interpretation of a text after listening to it, regardless of its length.

Given a certain peculiarity of the approach, a separate type of consecutive interpreting is considered to be paragraph-phrase interpreting. In bilateral consecutive interpreting, the paragraph-phrase form is quite common.

In general, consecutive interpreting implies that, one party to a communication C1 sends a message in a certain language L1 to a translator T, who converts this message into a semantically equivalent message in another language L2 and sends it to the other party to the communication C2.

In bilateral consecutive interpreting, the direction of sending a message is reversed at regular intervals – from C2 to C1 – and, accordingly, the languages of translation are changed too.

The length of the message sent can vary widely: from a single sentence, paragraph or phrase (paragraph-phrase form) to a whole text consisting of several (sometimes several dozen) phrases.

Bilateral consecutive interpreting can be represented as follows:

$$C1, L1 \leftrightarrow T \leftrightarrow C2\ L2$$

Among the most common definitions of translation, we can distinguish two that, in our opinion, best reflect the essence of this process, to wit:

The process of interlingual conversion or transformation of an oral or written text presented in one language into a text (oral or written) in another language.

The transmission of thoughts (feelings, emotions) expressed in one language by means of another [10].

In fact, there are two possible ways of translation, which some authors consider to be the only possible ones. Different translation scholars call the first way of translation symbolic, formal-linguistic, transformational or translation itself, and the second way represents – semantic translation, denotative translation or interpreting.

The question may arise which of the above two methods is used in consecutive interpreting:

in its classical form (unidirectional translation of an entire large text);

in paragraph-phrase translation.

The paragraph-phrase approach is essentially a word-for-word translation, which can be described as follows:

$$T1 \rightarrow Tr \rightarrow T2,$$

Where T1 and T2 are the source and target texts, and Tr is a regular transformation.

Unlike paragraph-phrase translation, the semantic translation of a whole text is performed as follows:

the translator listens to the text in language 1 (T1) and perceives its content (C1);

converts the semantic content of the text in T1 into the content for the target language (C2);

transmits the new semantic content (C2) into language 2, i.e. generates the translation text (T2) according to the following scheme:

$$T1 \rightarrow C1 \rightarrow C2 \rightarrow T2$$

At the same time, there are inevitable differences between the meanings C1 and C2, as well as between their linguistic embodiments T1 and T2, due to semantic losses in translation; objective differences between the source and target languages in grammar, stylistics, rhetoric and lexical-semantic compatibility [6].

It is very important to understand that while attempts are made to preserve the form of the original in written translation, such an approach is inaccurate for oral translation for two reasons:

firstly, because the language form (rhetoric, stylistics, grammar) of the translation must differ from that of the original,

secondly, because the rhetoric of written speech differs from the rhetoric of oral speech in the target language.

Therefore, from the two translation schemes:

1.

T1 → UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT AND FORM OF THE ORIGINAL → SELECTION OF MEANS OF CONVEYING THE CONTENT AND FORM OF THE ORIGINAL → T2

2.

T1 → UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONTENT OF THE ORIGINAL → CHOICE OF MEANS OF CONVEYING THE CONTENT → T2

in oral translation the second scheme should be chosen, to avoid preserving the form of the original.

In interpreting, one should use the form of oral communication (rhetoric) of the target language.

The rhetoric

Rhetoric includes an adequate style (as a certain set of lexical and syntactic means) and the most used communication forms.

The first theorists and practitioners of rhetoric, Aristotle and Cicero, put forward the idea that the main goal of the speaker is not to reveal the truth, but to persuade through the probable. An interpreter should take the second part of this thesis into account and speak convincingly using the most probable (i.e., the most used) expressions [1].

It should be noted that in consecutive interpreting, for example, dialogues should not be translated literally and in detail, because the style should be more conversational, and this implies a different rhetoric (as a set of expressions to convey this content). The rhetoric for conveying this content is different in English and Ukrainian.

When translating in writing, the translator strives to preserve the form of the original, which should never be done in interpreting.

Oral interpreting is much shorter and contains many more omissions and discrepancies with the original, both in content and, especially, in form.

Nevertheless, the main semantic and – more importantly in the case of interpreting – pragmatic content of the original is conveyed in the interpreting through the use of linguistic expressions adequate to the colloquial style of the Ukrainian language, understandable to the addressee due to their common usage.

Consecutive interpreting is much more influenced by the translation situation and background information [3].

Interpreting of the source text

As already noted, consecutive interpreting can be performed in two ways – formal-symbolic and semantic.

With the formal-symbolic method of translation, the syntactic (and, partially, lexical and semantic) structure of the original is reflected in the interpreter's memory and preserved in the translation, with only minimal transformations being made, determined by the differences in the grammatical and lexical systems of the languages involved in the translation [6].

At the same time, in consecutive interpreting using the semantic method, the syntax of the source text is almost completely lost, and the translation is based on the content structure of the predominantly syntactic type, which is reflected in the translator's memory after listening to the source text.

To derive such a content structure from the syntactic structure of the source text, the interpreter must first perform semantic fragmentation of the source text and then translate the resulting text fragments into a conventionally asyntactic form. In other words, during consecutive interpreting, the source text is initially stored in the translator's memory as separate semantic segments [11].

Typically, semantic segments are stored in the translator's memory or in the translator's shorthand either in the form of conditional «theme-rheme» structures or in the form of unrelated prepositional and prepositionless noun or verb constructions.

Thus, during consecutive interpreting using the semantic method, the source text is stored in memory in a predominantly asyntactic form. When generating a translation text, the translator connects conditional structures in compliance with the syntax rules of the target language. At the same time, it can be argued that with the formal-symbolic method, the source text is most often stored in memory in the source language.

In addition, it can be argued that in the process of understanding modern English (and subsequent translation), the emphasis is increasingly shifting from perceiving a statement based on the content of its components (individual words) to reconstructing the content of the whole statement based on keywords, situation and background knowledge. In other words, both understanding and translation are based on a reduced, mostly asyntactic representation [7].

Notation

Consecutive interpreting of a long speech can only be performed if the interpreter has notes allowing him or her to recall the semantic and (preferably) pragmatic content of the translation text. Such notes are referred to as translation notation and must be made in compliance with certain rules, which are given below.

Rule one. Selection of information for the translation text construction.

Information from the listened-to text should be recorded within semantic segments, either by key (most significant) or by salient words. By ‘salient words’ we mean words that stand out because of their extraordinary nature and are closely associated with the content of the original.

During notation, the necessary minimal transformations and generalisations are carried out. When translating, the text of the recording is expanded semantically.

Rule two. Abridged recording.

Abbreviations are made either by dropping the endings of words to a meaningful base, or by using alphabetic and/or alphanumeric abbreviations or omitting vowels in words. It should be noted that the semantic redundancy of vowels in some languages (Arabic, Hebrew) allows them to be omitted even in printed texts in these languages.

Rule three. Layout of information.

Information from the source text should be arranged by semantic segments, vertically, one segment under the other, in a ‘column’.

Some translation works recommend the use of a particular italics or symbolic notation in translation notes. Let us share our ideas on this matter.

A special symbolic notation is, in fact, another language (code) that will complicate the already difficult work of an interpreter. An insufficiently mastered symbolic notation can be a source of errors. The optimal, centuries-tested symbolic notation of a language is stenography. Is it worth using imperfect and incomplete translation notation systems? [12]

Based on the above considerations, we believe that an interpreter should either use stenography, having previously mastered it thoroughly (in fact, this means learning another language), or develop his or her own system of notation. Over the years with the experience gained in interpreting, this system will become familiar and easy to use.

Nevertheless, when developing an individual system, it is advisable to consider some recommendations. It does not really matter which language you record in (source or target) – some ‘venerable’ translators use a meta-language for writing – a combination of both languages, numbers, Greek letters, etc.

There is no point in writing down obvious things that the background information or the translation situation will tell you anyway, for example, if you are translating an English speaker and he is talking about the country's GDP, it is irrational to write ‘eng. GDP’ [8].

Translation notes should differ from shorthand or lecture notes primarily in that not everything should be written down and, more importantly, you should write down not words, but generalised ideas expressed by the speaker, relying on your memory when developing the notes.

Separate semantic groups («subject-predicate-adjective» groups, "theme-rheme" structures) should be written down in the order of their development during translation, one group under the other in a ‘column’ in the middle of the notebook. Modalities (modifiers) can be written in the margins to the left and right of the group [2].

You should not start taking notes immediately at the beginning of the speaker's speech – you should briefly express the completed thought.

Communicative aspect

The communicative theory of translation treats translation as a special communicative act, the participants in which are the ‘message sender’, the ‘intermediary’ and the ‘message receiver’. The message is a text sent in one language and received in another, while the function of the intermediary (i.e. the translator) is to interlingually transform the message.

The specificity of translation as a communicative act is that for the ‘message sender’ and the ‘message receiver’ it is a monolingual communicative act (everyone speaks one language), while for the ‘intermediary’ it is communication in two languages [10].

Of particular importance for translation as a communicative act is the completeness and compatibility of the subject matter and language skills of the participants. In this case, it is customary to talk of the completeness and compatibility of the communicators' thesauri.

For example, the incorrect use of the tense form of a verb by one of the communicators (translator) leads to a distortion of the message sent to the recipient, and the omission of an unfamiliar term leads to unsuccessful communication (miscommunication).

Depending on the type of translation (written, simultaneous, consecutive), communication theory acquires some specifics, for example, for written translation, the breadth and uncertainty of the target audience of a written text are of particular importance, which puts forward special requirements for communication [8].

For the success of consecutive interpreting as a communicative act with a specific audience, both the characteristics of the user of the translation – the ‘message recipient’ – and the specific features of the ‘message sender’, for whom the translator is the audience, are particularly important. Moreover, both the completeness and specificity of their linguistic and subject thesaurus, as well as their psychological and phonetic specificity, are vital [3].

First, it should be noted that, despite the presence of an ‘intermediary translator’, psychologically, most speakers address their speech towards the audience for whom their language is native and who has the same background information as they do.

Even though speakers are aware of the presence (and sometimes the complexity of the task) of the interpreter, their true target audience is ‘their own’ (compatriots, colleagues) and therefore (mostly subconsciously) they speak ‘for their own’.

This is most clearly expressed in the following features of the communicative act of translation.

Excessively fast speech, highly reduced pronunciation of sounds.

Hidden quotations and allusions to events, personalities, cultural realities of one's own country, language, and environment.

Such communicative inadequacy of the message for the translator (even if he or she is a complete bilingual) is almost always observed in one form or another, even in speeches by well-known political actors who seem to be speaking ‘for translation’.

Consecutive interpreting should also consider the communicative and linguistic specifics of the reports, messages, and dialogues being translated. The translation task is to select adequate translation equivalents for the inventory of linguistic means typical for texts of different genres and styles [13].

It should also be borne in mind that in consecutive interpreting an interpreter always deals with oral speech, albeit often prepared in advance, which is characterised by syntactic parallels and repetitions, direct address and emphatic constructions, in which colloquial ellipses are frequent and inconsistency between sentence members is observed.

When translating appeal-oriented texts, it is especially important to consider whether the interpreter has managed to convey the same emotional impact on the audience as the original author intended [14].

Factors for effective consecutive interpreting

Consecutive interpreting is considered a slightly easier type of interpreting than simultaneous one. A consecutive interpreter has more time to think over the translation option and has the opportunity to have direct contact with the participants in the communication, but nevertheless, the interpreter performs a very difficult task.

The conditions under which a consecutive interpreter must work depend on several related factors: the type of consecutive interpreting – one-way or two-way; the form – paragraph-phrase or full text translation; and the method – formal-symbolic or semantic [9].

In the case of a semantic one-way interpretation of a whole text, the optimal time for perceiving the text for translation is one to two minutes. Of course, only an experienced interpreter can memorise and reproduce such a volume of verbal information without significant semantic loss, so it is recommended to record it using a proven and convenient (preferably self-developed) system.

The ability to memorise and reproduce information of this volume is acquired as a result of persistent training using special techniques and the accumulation of translation experience.

Bilateral consecutive interpreting is usually performed using the paragraph-phrase mechanism, with the text size to be memorized being small. The translation mechanism and the amount of memorisation are determined by the standard conditions of such translation – bilateral or multilateral dialogue at negotiations, during a discussion, or a press conference, for instance [11].

In addition, in the close and often tense atmosphere of a negotiation or discussion, there is often no time or opportunity to think about the version even more, to write it down, so a significant part of paragraph-phrase bilateral interpreting is done ‘on a roll’ in a formal-symbolic way [15].

Interrupting the person, you are interpreting and asking something is undesirable for ethical reasons, although a lot depends on the specific conditions.

One of the most common questions in this regard is what to do if you do not know or understand a word or expression. Firstly, practice and experience make such a situation less likely, and secondly, the redundancy of a natural language and the repetition and paraphrasing inherent in speech will allow you to understand what is being said and avoid an unfamiliar word.

A professional translator has to translate in various fields (military, aviation, chemistry, agriculture, medicine, veterinary medicine, communications, copyright, economics, etc.). Obviously, a true professional must have encyclopedic knowledge, but they cannot know everything [16].

However, a good translator can easily translate texts on unfamiliar subjects without a dictionary, although (within their limited thematic thesaurus) they perceive only the superficial meaning, while a specialist, listening to the translation, will perceive the special content (based on their full thesaurus).

The interpreter's general erudition and intuition play a significant role in translating a text on an unfamiliar subject [4].

Some translation researchers rightly point out the lack of a clear methodological basis for teaching translation. Often, translation teachers teach students a foreign language, mistakenly believing that translation is just a part of this discipline.

In particular, according to many translation researchers, the following approaches to teaching translation are clearly erroneous:

memorising new vocabulary;

written translations recommended as models for interpreting [17].

In the process of teaching translation, students should not be encouraged to learn new words.

Acquiring new vocabulary, especially word-for-word correspondences between the source and target languages, is the domain of foreign language teaching. Translation should be taught to people who already have a good command of a foreign language.

Ready-made written translations should not be used as models for teaching interpreting [18].

The translations given as models are written texts that have the style and rhetoric of the written language; interpreting should be taught with texts of different style and rhetoric.

Unfortunately, the criticism of existing approaches to teaching translation is rarely constructive – criticising existing methods, the authors do not propose other ones. Nevertheless, it makes sense to consider some methodological approaches and techniques that, in our opinion, deserve the attention of translation teachers.

Thus, written hereunder are some elements of the approach of P. Kornakov, one of the contemporary authors of interpreting teaching methods, whose methodological approach contains a few interesting recommendations, in particular:

Before starting a new exercise, explain to students its purpose and the possibility of practical application in their professional activities.

Sometimes it is advisable to substitute the vague concept of the benefits of an exercise with interest (for example, texts of exercises with interesting content).

Interpreters rarely work in ideal conditions, so it is useful to do exercises with distractions (noise, light, etc.).

It is important to define exactly what skills and abilities the student should acquire [5].

Conclusions. The article briefly discusses the peculiarities of teaching consecutive interpreting as an oral translation of a text of any length after listening to it, considering paragraph-phrase translation as its separate type.

There are two possible methods of translation. The formal-symbolic method is the process of interlingual transformation or transformation of an oral or written text in one language into a text (oral or written) in another language. With the formal-symbolic method of translation, the syntactic (and partially lexical-semantic) structure of the original is reflected in the interpreter's memory and is mostly preserved in the translation. On the other hand, the semantic method is the transmission of thoughts (feelings, emotions) expressed in one language by means of another.

The best way to translate large speech fragments (more than a paragraph) consecutively is through semantic translation. In this case, there are certain lexical elements that are translated at the formal-symbolic level within the general framework of the semantic method of consecutive interpreting.

It is worth noting that in paragraph-phrase translation, interpreters tend to use the formal-symbolic method in the case of short and structurally simple texts of colloquial style and non-specialist subjects, and, conversely, they often resort to the semantic method when translating longer and structurally complex specialist texts.

In a consecutive interpreting using the semantic method, the syntax of the source text is almost completely lost. Using the semantic method, the source text is first stored in the interpreter's memory in the form of separate semantic segments. Semantic interpretation is performed based on the content structure, mainly of the syntactic type, which is stored in the interpreter's memory after preliminary listening to the source text.

If the source text for consecutive interpreting is a text in the native language, the conditional asyntactic structure is stored in the memory in the source language. The representation of the source text in the mother tongue is more detailed and contains more elements of formal-symbolic translation.

The translation should consider rhetoric as the optimal linguistic form of communication, which includes an adequate set of lexical and syntactic means and the most commonly used communicative forms. When interpreting, it is recommended to use the rhetoric of the target language. However, the linguistic form of the translation should differ from that of the original, and the rhetoric of written speech differs from the rhetoric of oral speech.

An interpreter should speak convincingly using the most common expressions of the target language, making the most of the translation situation and background information.

Consecutive interpreting of a lengthy speech can only be performed if the interpreter has translation notations allowing them to recall the semantic and pragmatic content of the original. The information from the listened-to text should be recorded within semantic segments, either by keywords or by salient words. During notating, the necessary minimal transformations and generalisations are carried out. Interpreting involves the semantic unfolding of the text.

Translation notations differ from stenographic or lecture notes primarily in that they should not be written down in words, but rather generalised ideas expressed by the speaker and rely on memory.

Particular attention is paid to the completeness and compatibility of the participants' subject and language thesauri and their psychological and linguistic specificity, which is of particular importance for translation as a communicative act with a specific audience. Despite the presence of an 'intermediary interpreter', psychologically, most speakers address their speech towards an audience for whom their language is their native one and who has the same background information.

For the interpreter, the communicative inadequacy of the message is expressed in the following features of the communicative act: the speaker's speech is too fast; pronunciation of sounds is greatly reduced; hidden quotations and allusions to events, personalities, cultural realities of one's country, language and environment; as well as unusual and rarely used metaphors; jargon, professional slang and abbreviations.

Under such conditions, the interpreter's task is to select adequate equivalents for the inventory of linguistic means characteristic of texts of a certain genre and style, which are manifested against the background of the main vocabulary of the language.

Another difficulty of interpreting is evident in the objectively difficult conditions of its performance: the interpreter is in a tight time frame, has no access to external sources of information, nor can they consult or revise the translation. In the case of semantic one-way translation of an entire text, the optimal time for perceiving the text is one to two minutes.

Two-way consecutive interpreting is usually performed using the paragraph-phrase mechanism, and the size of the text to be memorised is small. The interpreting mechanism and the amount of memorisation are determined by the standard conditions of such interpreting – bilateral or multilateral dialogue at negotiations, during a discussion, or a press conference.

The interpreter's general erudition and intuition play a significant role in translating a text on unfamiliar topics. An experienced translator can easily translate unfamiliar texts without a dictionary, although (within their limited thematic thesaurus) they perceive only their superficial content, while a specialist listening to the text will perceive its special content too (based on their full thesaurus).

The remainder of the issues in question is beyond the scope of this article.

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