

The Role of Social Media in Teaching English

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Abstract

With changes in various domains of life, each era has its impact on various age groups. It seems that this generation has been the most affected by technological trends and advancements. It is apparent nowadays that young learners, especially those studying at a tertiary level, are very much hooked on social media: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Blogs, and more. This technology has affected students' performance at the higher education institutions which has made parents and teachers alike fear that this technology may distract students' attention. However, there is an opposing point of view arguing that technology could be used in the proper way so as to increase students' achievement by utilizing it in teaching. To tackle this issue, the researchers have distributed a questionnaire among (22) Business majors at Ibri College-the Sultanate of Oman (IBRI CAS). The results were promising: though some students admitted that Social Media takes much of their time on personal and trivial things, still many seem to significantly benefit from it by using it in supporting their studies. Recommendations, discussion, and explanations will be highlighted in detail throughout this article.

Keywords: achievements, distracting, Facebook, Snapchat, Social Media, teaching, Twitter

Introduction

Social Media has become a powerful educational tool in the field of teaching, allowing students better chances to become more interactive, better engaged and vigorously dynamic in the

classroom when learning English. Moreover, Social Media is seen as a vital and essential requirement in the teaching-learning process: enabling uploading reports, term papers and book reviews, facilitating teachers-students' and peer communication, especially recorded lessons and live video conferences via Skype, MS Teams, and other online applications, allowing for the exchange of ideas and enhancing networking and research skills, which proved to be vital during crisis times; COVID 19, for instance. All of this has paved the way for teachers to utilize technology in teaching, particularly Social Media, as a support for their courses. Furthermore, Social Media has the potential to play a major role in helping shy students who feel intimidated to speak in class on one hand, and encourage students to excel in writing, when it comes to writing skills, on the other hand. This paper highlights the use of Social Media in the teaching process, while taking a balanced approach in revealing both its advantages and disadvantages. Nevertheless, what is evident is that the negative perception that some educators might have towards the possible impact of Social Media on students' learning might be impeding taking full advantage of its benefits.

Research question

How can Social Media be utilized for enhancing the teaching and learning of English?

Literature Review

While Social Media might be clearly linked to online websites and applications, it is basically clustered around sharing-related patterns that include communication, interactions, collaboration and exchanging ideas and information in virtual groups and networks.

Social Media refers to the social software in the form of websites and other online groups such as social networking and micro blogging which are created by a sizable group of folks (known as users) to share conversations, personal messages, ideas, information or to grow social and professional contacts (Mukhtar, (n.d), Para.15)

Media has become an essential part of our lives. It surrounds us and is used in almost every aspect of life. With the advancements in technology, media can be used for teaching and learning purposes more than ever before. Media aids teachers in presenting information to students by engaging them more effectively than traditional

methods while also providing many benefits to both students and teachers. (Shoutoutuk, 2021, Para. 1).

In this sense, utilizing Social Media in education is seen as a source of collective learning method which fits teaching big groups or small number of individuals at the same time. In fact, group learning can take various and diverse kinds in Social Media. It could be in the form of online teams, triggering a mutual cooperation and exchanging of ideas. This type of online team does not usually require the presence of a teacher, although it would be more beneficial and rewarding if a teacher volunteers or creates the group for his/her own students. An example of such an online interactive site is where students learn from one another in the form of ‘**Blogs**’. “Additionally, online tools like Wikis or blogs can create collaborative learning environments in which students are actively engaged in the learning process”. (Shoutoutuk, 2021, Para. 3). “Blogging is a very popular medium through which individuals share their thoughts and opinions. It is also a great way to educate people on certain topics. Hence, a perfect social media practice for education of your students.” (Moran, (n.d), Para. 7).

Nonetheless, while the traditional way of teaching causes boredom to students, to some extent, using technology in teaching makes students pay more attention with much fun. When used in the proper way, technology helps a lot in teaching—more interesting.

The emerging role of social media in teaching-learning process cannot be ignored. It not only provides students access to useful information but also connects them with learning groups and other educational systems that make their overall learning process more interesting and engaging. (Jain,2019, Para. 2).

This era witnesses and boasts the powerful utilization of technology in the educational process; many academic institutions have started using tablets and computers in conducting lessons, provided that quality has the priority over quantity. This way of teaching has spread all over the world, especially during COVID-19 pandemic. For learners, technology has had a significant impact on the current generation of learners, also known as the "Digital Generation" or "Gen Z.", leading to what has become to be known as ‘Digital Literacy’; the ability to navigate and use

technology effectively, and 'Remote Learning', as a new mode of learning that proved to be useful during unpredictable crises.

As long as the platform is used to aid teaching and learning, it can be considered a social media tool for education. Social media tools have definitely become an integral part of teaching. Technology plays such an important role that some schools now prefer to use tablets instead of textbooks or computers over blackboards, just because they want better ways to educate their students using these new advancements without sacrificing any effectiveness or quality. (Shoutoutuk, 2021, Para. 9).

Almost all online methods of teaching are useful, more flexible, and time saving. Different teachers utilize diverse tools in teaching. Every tool has its advantages and merits. Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp are all popular Social Media platforms that can be used by teachers to enhance their teaching and connect with students. Some of the ways in which teachers can use these platforms in education include:

Skype: a popular video conferencing and instant messaging platform that can be used for online learning, plays a very important role in a one-on-one teaching or conversation without being together in one physical place. Students or participants from all parts of the world can join classes conducted via Skype, provided that they have accounts. The teacher does not have to worry about the place to be in- he/she might give their lessons from anywhere: kitchen, on the roof, on a farm, etc.

What better way to connect with educators on a global level than Skype? It is a great social media tool for education because it allows students and teachers to have a one-on-one conversation without being physically present in a classroom. Teachers can give students a virtual tour of lessons without coming together in a physical space. This is a great way to connect people internationally. (Moran, (n.d), Para. 12).

Through **Skype**, virtual classrooms can be used to conduct remote-live lectures, discussions, and other collaborative activities with students, allowing for real-time interaction and engagement, similar to a traditional classroom setting. For English learners, Skype can provide opportunities to interact with native speakers to improve speaking skills.

WhatsApp: Teachers can use WhatsApp to communicate with students individually or in groups. They can use the platform to share resources, updates, and announcements, as well as

provide individualized support and feedback. WhatsApp could be used in conducting live meetings, giving lessons, and opening platforms for discussions. WhatsApp can also be used to create virtual study groups and collaborate on projects.

Twitter: Teachers can use Twitter to share resources, updates and announcements with their students, as well as connect with other educators and experts in their field. Twitter can also be used for creating learning communities, where students and teachers can share ideas, collaborate and participate in discussions.

Facebook: It plays an important role in teaching. The teacher can create a page, open accounts for his students, and asks them to upload homework, reports, assignment, etc. Via Facebook, the teacher and his students can hold video conferences, exchange messages, and might invite parents to share some chats and ask about the level of their sons and daughters. “School, college and university staff should be encouraged to make use of technology for student and parent communication. The benefits are obvious; starting with healthier parent-teacher relationships and all the way to permanently changing the way our children will learn” (Nasta, 2019, Para. 16).

A great use of Facebook in education is to make a page dedicated specially for the students belonging to a classroom. Instead of putting the teachers and students through the trouble of dealing with the traditional online classrooms, you can arrange something that everyone is familiar with. You can create a Facebook page for a batch and ask all the students to follow it. All the updates, assignments, homework or discussions can be put up on the page. (Moran, (n.d), Para. 6).

Teachers can use Facebook to create a class page or group, where they can share assignments, updates, and other important information with their students. Facebook can also be used for student-teacher communication, allowing teachers to respond to students’ questions and provide feedback.

Professors can use their Twitter or Facebook handles or even messaging services such as WhatsApp to hold live sessions, offer extended support to students thereby enhancing the scope of learning beyond classroom. They can organize discussions related to their subjects or class assignments on Social Media platforms. Social Media, therefore, helps both teachers and students

to remain connected off campus. (Jain,2019, Para. 9). “Twitter lends itself to communicative forms and learning activities focused on discussing and debating. Instructors may use the platform to foster interaction in either synchronous or asynchronous discussion” (Su, 2022, Para. 5).

Nevertheless, it's important to note that while these platforms can be useful tools for education, they also come with some risks and challenges, such as the need to maintain student privacy and security, and to set appropriate boundaries for communication. Teachers should also ensure that they are using these platforms in a way that aligns with their school's policies and guidelines.

Yet, in some circumstance teachers might find themselves forced to use online teaching. For instance, while attending conferences and seminars abroad, teachers might find it useful to conduct lessons online, or use the YouTube technology to record their lectures in advance, so that students can cope with the material required.

Professors may like to continue engagement with their students even when they are travelling and not taking sessions. They can even stream lectures to avoid any cancellation of classes while travelling. If the professor is unavailable during the actual class time, he can use YouTube to record a lecture beforehand. (Jain,2019, Para. 30).

Moreover, teachers can use YouTube for uploading and sharing informative videos on different lessons, or students can use this platform for presenting a video or presentation in the classroom. The videos can be accessed by anyone around the world and thus it provides a platform to share your opinions in the form of videos with the world. (Rashid, (n.d.), Para. 17).

Teachers are different in the way they deliver classes; some still follow the traditional way, others use technology in almost all sections of the course. As there is no best way of teaching that suits all students in the world, some teachers adopt the “Blended” method—mixing ways of teaching; following the traditional way and the modern, as well.

A good teacher is somebody who can oscillate between the past and the present to give the students a bright future. A modern-day teacher must be aware of the roots of learning yet should be able to integrate modern ways of learning in imparting education. (Rashid, (n.d.), Para. 2).

“A lot of contemporary teachers have witnessed the advantages of integrating Social Media channels as modes of learning in their classrooms”. (Rashid, (n.d.), Para. 4). This is true, as technology is spreading in all fields of life- teaching and studying, in particular. Following the proverb, “Adapt yourself, or die”, teachers should improve and promote their technological skills in classrooms.

Because of the widespread of technology in all parts of the world, almost all people can use it and get benefit from its content: teachers, parents, students and any other interested people. All people have the right to join groups and other academic institutions that offer knowledge. “The use of social media in education helps students, teachers and parents to get more useful information, to connect with learning groups and other educational systems that make education convenient” (Nasta, 2019, Para. 2). Using videos is also a very important and essential way of teaching.

Using videos as teaching tools, whether in class or out, plays a very vital role. It inspires students and broadens their horizons to comprehend the material at hand. “A video is a prominent tool in social media trends that is effective and you can use it to share useful videos that inspire students and help them in their course subjects”. (Nasta, 2019, Para. 8). The question now is: do teachers –personally- get benefit of the technology of Social Media?

Teachers are not perfect, and always seek knowledge for themselves and / or their students. They utilize Social Media in supporting their lessons by referring to new, prestigious, and up-to date sources, activities to apply while teaching, in addition to connecting and following up events that take place in the whole world.

Teachers also use social media as a medium to get new resources to support their lessons, activities to teach particular concepts, bulletin board ideas, information on new apps to do a follow up of certain topics as well as to network and know what is happening in schools all over the world (Nasta, 2019, Para. 15).

Generally, students always need assistance, whether from their teachers or colleagues. If one or more get stuck, the Social Media helps, regardless of time or place. “If a student is stuck with their homework, they can always communicate with their friends or tutors. They don’t need to wait and

meet the teacher physically” (Willbold, 2019, Para5). That is why many people strongly believe in classrooms with no physical boundaries. “I believe in a classroom without walls. That is the power of digital tools and social media, to break down the systems and the physical barriers that separate and limit learning” (Zhang, 2022, Para. 6).

It is true that some students spend much time using Social Media technology looking for trivial things, or listening to music, watching videos, or entertainment, still a considerable number use it to search for useful items that support their educational trend. “What’s even more extraordinary is that, even though some of the students use the social networks for entertaining and other purposes, there are a lot of them that actually use it to promote a lot of positive and useful activities” (Wade, (n.d.), Para. 2). Social Media can be used in communication, as well. People from different classes can chat and communicate by sending messages, chatting or conducting live conversation. It is really worth it. “Just like in every other field, communication is vital and if it can be done easily with the help of social media, why not go for it?” (Wade, (n.d.), Para. 10).

It is worth saying that referring to and using Social Media in many fields of our life, especially in teaching, makes users get advanced in technology in general. Nowadays, little kids are excellent in using this technology. “It’s important to understand the impact of Social Media in education before using it, but we’re of the firm belief that it will help advance students in technology” (West, 2021, Para. 7)

When the whole society uses Social Media in almost all aspects of life, that enhances interactions among them. Teachers are exerting efforts to teach people and pave the way for them to become one family, so that communication takes place between students, teachers and parents, which is reflected on their belonging to educational domains. “...through social media, teachers can enhance interactions between students, between students and teachers, and with people and resources outside the classroom. All are important for a student’s sense of belonging in an educational community” (Ward, 2020, Para. 4).

On the other hand, it is so important to be aware that excessive screen time or lack of balance in technology usage can have negative effects on the physical and mental well-being of the

students. Therefore, educators should also focus on educating students on responsible and balanced technology usage.

Social Media can be used in education in a variety of ways, such as sharing educational content, resources and information, creating online discussion forums, connecting with peers and experts, facilitating communication and collaboration among students and teachers. However, it is important to consider the potential drawbacks, such as distraction and misleading information, which necessitates establishing clear guidance and setting appropriate-use boundaries that regulate the use of Social Media in education. Such guidelines will enable gaining the positive impact of using Social Media for educational purposes which can be categorized under four rationalizations:

- A. Increased access to educational resources: Social Media can provide students with access to a wide range of educational resources, such as videos, articles, and interactive activities, that can supplement and enhance their learning experiences. Social Media platforms like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram provide a wide range of educational content, from lectures and tutorials to study guides and interactive resources.
- B. Connecting with peers and experts: Social Media can be used to connect students with their peers and subject matter experts, allowing them to collaborate and share knowledge. This can be done through what is called 'Virtual Learning' where Social Media can be used to create online classes, interactive learning experiences and remote learning, especially during pandemics and other crises. In addition, using Social Media in such ways is very helpful in breaking isolation for students in remote or rural areas, while providing them with access to enrich their learning and interact with peers in more urban areas.
- C. Enhanced communication and collaboration: Social Media can facilitate communication between students, teachers, and parents, allowing for more efficient and effective communication about assignments, progress, and other important information. Platforms like Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Canvas allow teachers to communicate with students and provide feedback, and facilitate collaboration between students, allowing them to work together on projects, assignments, and other activities. This would result into greater students' engagement and motivation by providing interactive and personalized learning

experiences by encouraging them to share their thoughts and ideas, ask questions, and participate in online discussions.

- D. Personalized learning: Social Media can be used to provide and support personalized learning experiences for students, by providing students with access to a wide range of adaptive learning resources and tools that can be customized to their individual needs and interests. For instance, personalized learning materials, such as interactive activities can be tailored to the specific needs and interests of individual students. Those students can progress at their own pace and on their own schedule which would reinforce their personal improvement and motivation to learning. Furthermore, they would benefit from individualized feedback and additional support they receive from their teachers, allowing them to identify and overcome their own mistakes and pitfalls. At the same time, this would provide teachers with a better detailed picture of the strengths and weaknesses of their students' and their individual progress.

Nevertheless, while there is almost consensus that Social Media can have a positive impact on education by providing new opportunities for communication, collaboration, and access to information and resources, it's important to note that usage of Social Media should be guided and monitored by educators to ensure that these benefits are realized and minimize negative impact in education.

Methodology

The aim of this empirical inquiry is to contribute to the debate about the effects of Social Media in teaching English. This was done by examining the topic from the students' own perspective, which is often neglected. The focus was to reveal their perceptions of the impact of Social Media in enhancing teaching of English. The researchers have distributed a questionnaire among twenty-two Business majors at Ibri College of Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman. The results were then analyzed, interpreted and discussed in order to draw a clear picture of this impact and come up with suitable recommendations.

Participants

All participants -22- are Omanis, aged between 22-24. They come from different regions in Oman with different backgrounds- some come from cities, others come from coastal areas, while a good number comes from remote villages.

Findings and discussion

To get more information about utilizing Social Media in teaching English, the researchers distributed a survey among (22) Business students at Ibri College –University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Sultanate of Oman (of whom 10 were males and 12 were females.). The questionnaire consisted of (10) questions: (5) Yes/No, (5) Agree/ Disagree. Their responses to the questionnaire were as follows.

All of the students admitted that through using Social Media they have gained more knowledge related to their courses (see Fig. 1). This indicates that students value Social Media and use it in a constructive way, specifically for study-linked purposes. It could be that teachers’ direct or indirect guidance has helped achieve this end.

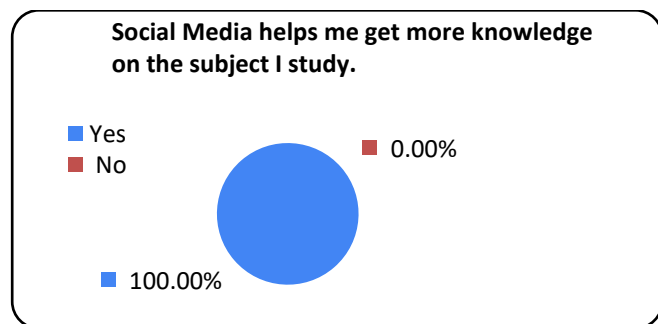
Figure 1:

1. Social Media helps me get more knowledge on the subject I study.

(A) Yes

(B) B

Social Media helps me get more knowledge on the subject I study.	Yes	No
	22	0
	100%	0%



From students’ point of view, whenever they need more information and clarification on their courses, they hurry to the Social Media technology that assists them in a short time. (100%) of students chose this option.

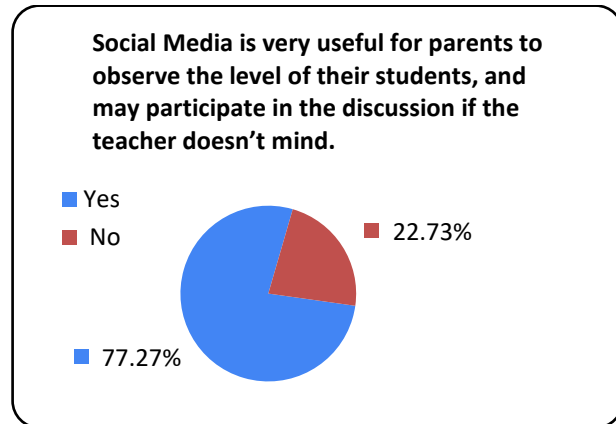
Figure 2:

2. Social Media is very useful for parents to observe the level of their students, and may participate in the discussion if the teacher doesn't mind.

(A) Yes

(B) No

Social Media is very useful for parents to observe the level of their students, and may participate in the discussion if the teacher doesn't mind.	Yes	No
	17	5
	77.27 %	22.73 %



As seen in Fig.2, Social Media is viewed useful for parents as it helps them keep an eye on their children's performance. It also enables them (parents) to get engaged in online discussions with the approval of teachers.

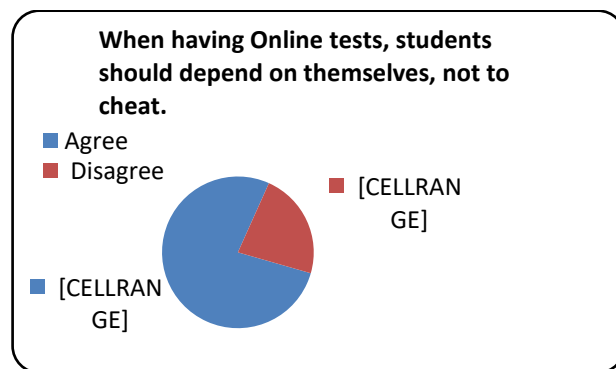
Figure 3:

3. When having online tests, students should depend on themselves, not cheat.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

When having Online tests, students should depend on themselves, not to cheat.	Agree	Disagree
	17	5
	77.27 %	22.73 %



Another finding that the questionnaire has revealed is a high level of awareness among students of the importance of relying on themselves and avoiding cheating in exams (see Fig. 3), contrary

to a wide spread idea that using Social Media in teaching encourages students to cheat in exams. This proves that using Social Media might lead to positive impact on promoting self-discipline and responsibility. However, it seems that some students might oppose this idea and though it is more likely for students to cheat during online tests.

Figure 4:

4. Social Media is a Two-Edged means: positive and negative. One should concentrate on the positive side.

(A) Agree

(B) Disagree

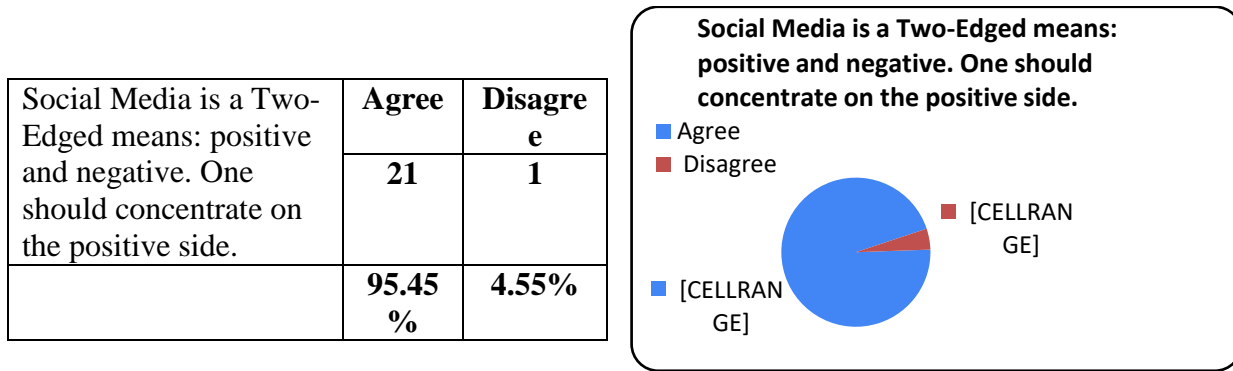


Figure (4) shows that (95.45%) of the sample agree that concentration should be on the positive side of the Social Media. This way, its users can gain benefit and promote their level of academic development.

Recommendations

-Social Media is a double-edged instrument; it might be well utilized in learning, or used in negative ways—wasting time, etc. So, students should be advised to use it in the proper way.

-teachers should form groups on Social Media to have discussion, receive reports, and conduct live conferences.

-using Social Media in teaching should not be done for its sake, rather it should be used to consolidate knowledge and skills gained in class, enhance learning and achieve higher motivation and inspirations.

-teachers need to make sure that the purpose of such groups is clear to the students and that students are not using these Social Media-affiliated groups on trivial things that could distract them from their study.

-parents should play an important role in using the Social Media technology to contact teachers in order to enquire about the performance and progress of their sons and daughters.

-all students should have accounts on Social Media, so that they can reach their teachers when they (teachers) are travelling, attending conferences, or unreachable due to weather problems.

-students should be honest and sincere when having online exams or quizzes, and should depend on themselves for fear of cheating.

-the Social Media should not be used to harass or threaten other individuals, especially children, and thus need to be presented in an attractive way.

-students, or any other users, should not access others' accounts and hack personal privileges; consequences should be clear to all.

-students should avoid spending too much time browsing the Internet lest that lead to addiction.

-Social Media is a very useful way in enhancing learning and should not be used in spreading fake news or bad information.

-technology is advancing rapidly, so teachers have to keep themselves updated on the changes and see whether these changes are useful to be utilized in classrooms.

Conclusion

Social Media is a very powerful tool in teaching and learning and thus should not be underestimated. Utilizing this equipment in teaching makes students more engaged, which is an essential basis towards realizing a well-conducted lesson. Consequently, educators have to familiarize themselves with the ultimate use of this technology.

From this study, the researchers have noticed that some students use Social Media technology on personal and trivial things, while a good number of them do make good use of it in their studies, and pay more attention while attending lectures. Students at Ibri College have set a good example in using the Social Media technology in the proper way in their studies—they refer to it when writing and / or uploading assignments, reports, etc. Keeping in touch with their teachers, colleagues, and parents when need be, is shown to be one of the greatest benefits that students at (IBRI CAS) gain from their use of Social Media.

To sum up, this study has shown that Social Media can be used in education in a variety of ways, such as sharing educational content, resources and information, creating online discussion forums, connecting with peers and experts, and facilitating communication and collaboration among students and teachers. However, it is important to consider the potential drawbacks, such as distraction and misleading information, which necessitates establishing clear guidance and setting appropriate-use boundaries that regulate the use of Social Media in education.

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