

# **Parents, Teachers and Peers Effects on University Students' Motivational Intensity to Learn English Language: the case of Ambo University 1<sup>st</sup> year Fresh man students in focus**

**By: Fekadu Dagmar Aweke ( MA in TEFL), Ambo University, Ethiopia**

## **Abstract**

The significant roles of human motivational factors such as parents, peers and teachers in influencing students to learn English language have generated so much attention among scholars over the years. However, very few experimental research have been carried out to determine the effect of each motivational component on students' motivational intensity which is a factor to measure the level of effort students' exert on English language learning. The aim of this paper is to investigate the level of motivation and support students' receive from each human factor and how each of the factors affects students' motivational intensity. The data obtained through survey questionnaire administered to 46 students comprises of both second year pre-university and first year degree students showed that teachers' factor is perceived to be the most influential component while the most highly correlative human factor with students' motivational intensity is parents. This suggests that students' effort towards learning of English is as a result of parental encouragement even though teacher is perceived to play the most significant role in motivating students to learn English.

**Keywords:** Parents, Peers, Teachers, Motivation, English, Ethiopia

## **Introduction**

The English language, widely considered as a global language, has been identified by Ethiopian government as the most important foreign language at all national Education levels in Ethiopia, particularly in higher education as a result of Globalization. It has been highlighted in the legal documents issued by the Ethiopian government and the Ethiopian Ministry of Education that Higher education students need to acquire an English level proficient enough to communicate effectively in a global working environment.

In second language learning research, motivation has been identified as one of the most important predictor of students' success in learning any target language (Gorges, Kandler, & Bohner, 2012; Yu & Shen, 2012). This has led to excess studies investigating different socio cultural factors influencing the generation, sustenance and promotion of learner's motivation (Heinzmann, 2013; Williams & Burden, 2004). However, few pragmatic studies have been conducted to ascertain the role of human factors such as parents, teachers and peers in Students' motivation to learn second or foreign language. This is necessary especially in Ethiopia where several studies on this discourse have attributed students' low proficiency and performance in English to lack of motivation (Pardeep Kumar, 2014; Rao, 2014). Therefore, this study is mainly concerned with the

investigation of the extent parents, teachers and peers motivation and encouragement influence students' to learn English language and how such motivation affects their motivational intensity.

## **Literature Review**

One of the most significant factors that determine the success rate of a second and foreign language learner is motivation. According to (Dörnyei, 1998), motivation is a catalyst needed to initiate second language learning process and later act as the driving force that sustain the process. However, motivation as a concept and factor is a multifaceted constructs which is cognitive, connective and affective in nature (Gardner, 1985; Williams & Burden, 2004). All these constructs have been used to explore and develop second language motivation research in the past two decades which consecutively define different perspective views of motivation in language learning. According to Robert Gardner who is one of the pioneers of research in second language learning motivation, he described motivation as a combination of three components which includes effort or motivational intensity, desire to achieve the goal of learning the language and favorable attitude towards learning the language (Gardner, 1985). Among all these three components, motivational intensity as a component has been stressed extensively in the body of literature because effort as a common measure of motivation has been identified as the pivotal needed by any L2 learner to succeed in learning the target language successfully (Pintrich & Schunk, 2002).

Many scholarly research works have also examined the effect of social demographic factor variables on learner's language motivation. According to (Dörnyei, 1994), the development of motivational psychology originates from numerous studies conducted in socio cultural context rather than Self concept paradigm. Since the emergence of socio cultural theory propounded by Vygotsky, findings on the effect of Socio-cultural factors such as age, gender, culture amongst other on students' motivation have been widely reported in the field of secondlanguage learning research (Donato, 1994; Lantolf & Pavlenko, 1995). Considering the fact that socio-cultural factors of language learning are set of variable factors capable of influencing student language learning process and ability, hence, languages in every speech community are held in either high or low prestige because of economic, political or cultural values associated with them (Stern, 1983, p. 273). Therefore, learners are compelled to enter into L2 learning process with positive or negative attitude derived from the society which in turn affect their motivation to learn the target language (Chambers, 1999, p. 44).The discourse of the effect of socio-cultural factor on English language learning has also generated so much attention in India because of the prestigious and official status English holds in the country (Agarwal & Thakur, 2014; Sridhar, 1996).This is the main reason English language has been made a compulsory subject offered at every level of the country's educational system .However, learning and teaching of the language is accompany with

so much challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching materials, de-motivated teachers amongst others (Anjini, 2012; Nabanita, 2011). However, in order to surmount these challenges, educators and scholars have been investigating and suggesting various ways to improve students' English language learning ability of which low motivation to learn English among students has been identified in some quarters as a major impediment to learners' high English achievement. Lukmani (1972) established that among group of Marathi speaking students learning English as a second language in India, those with instrumental orientations scored higher in English proficiency test.

Regarding the difference in learning motivation with respect to gender, Narayanan et al. (2007) finding shows that male students have less motivation to learn English language than their female counterpart which in turn cause their low English proficiency. Having established the connection between motivation and students' English performance, Scholars shifted their focus on the extent external factor such as socio-cultural factors affect students motivation which is expected to improve their learner's English proficiency. Among the socio-cultural factors are human factors such as parents, teachers and peers which have been found to influence students' academic motivation (Juvonen & Wentzel, 1996; Wang & Eccles, 2012). However, very limited studies have investigated the role play by parents, teachers and peers in motivating students' to learn English. The present study will be reviewing literature on the singly effect of parents, teachers and peers on students' motivation to learn English in Indian context.

Parents tend to strongly influence their children to learn English by holding high expectation for their learning, believing in their competence to learn, exposing them to new experience of learning and giving them moral support (Gottfried, 1994). However, this level of influence have been based on Parents' socio-economic status (SES). That is, there is a strong relationship between parents' level of education, their financial status and occupation and their students' performance in English language (Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Pérez, 2008). They argue that students whose parents have low SES tend to perform poorly in English language learning and vice versa.

From parents' level of education stand point, parents educational background can also influence students' performance in English because parents who have benefited from the value and advantage of being able to communicate in English would want exactly the same for their children. But from psychological perspective, highly educated parents tend to act as a role model to their children. This has a positive impact on students' English learning performance. for example, there is a positive correlation between number of students that did not complete university education and their parents who did not finish their university education likewise (Nannyonjo, 2007). Studies have also identified the role each parents play in motivating their children. (Okumu, Nakajjo, & Isoke, 2008) findings revealed that educated mothers are more effective in monitoring and supervising children academic progress while fathers are better in solving children academic problems. However, in as much as parents levels of education influence students academic performance, there is still need to investigate exceptional cases of students whose uneducated parents still manage to motivate them and how such motivation is being deployed.

Parent's financial status has been cited as another important factor that influence students English language achievement (Salameh, 2012, Carhill, Suárez-Orozco, & Páez, 2008). For instance, students who do not have responsibility towards income, job and economic factor have

been found to do well in English language education (Steven, 1999). Regarding parents commitment and responsibility towards financing of their children English language education, it is possible that many parents will not be able to sponsor or fund their child's education in private medium of instruction schools or colleges which is considered to offer a better English language teaching subject contrary to what is obtainable in regional medium of instruction schools or colleges because they provide a better physical infrastructure necessary for learning than regional medium schools (Gouda & Das, 2013) Parents' occupation also plays a key role in learner's performance in English language. For instance, highly professional sound parents have been found to be in best position to create enabling environment for children to learn English at home. (Sandefur, Meier, & Hernandez, 1999). Thus, since English is the language of administration and business transaction in India and most professions require the mastery and usage of English, then parents who holds such a highly skilled professions have to use English in their day to day operation which consequently aids the creating of suitable environment for children to speak and learn English.

Even though there is a consensus among scholars regarding the positive effect of parents with high SES on students' language learning achievement (Salameh, 2012, Carhill, SuárezOrozco, & Páez, 2008). However, the level of parents' involvement on children education varies across different level of education such as high school and college. Since most of the students are below the age of 18 in high school, some countries such as United State considered them as minors, therefore, teachers have a right to disclose students' information regarding their academic performance to their parents whereas information about college students' performance is confidential and can only be revealed to the concerned students because college students are considered to be self regulated English language learners which is associated to intrinsic motivation (Pintrich & Groot, 1990). This gives rise to low level of co-operation and partnership between college students' parents and teacher which reduce parents level of interest in their children English language education.

When students perceived that they are emotionally supported by their English teachers, their motivation to succeed in learning English successfully is enhanced (Wentzel, 1994).

Teacher can play a critical role in motivating students in language learning. In fact, a very good teacher consider students' motivation as part of his or her duty in English language teaching classroom (Winke, 2005). Furthermore, learner will not be positively and actively engaged in learning without receiving considerable amount of support from teacher (Ramage, 1990). This critical role has led to several propositions by many educators on different kind of strategies needed to motivate students. (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998) proposed what they called the Ten Commandments for teachers on how to motivate students to master English. It focuses on several ways of creating basic motivational condition such as maintaining of good relationship with the student, creating and maintaining a supportive atmosphere in the classroom and adopting a group norm to promote a cohesive learner's group. Another study suggested twelve ways for teacher on how to motivate students. Some of these suggestions deal with promotion of language related values and attitude and creating of realistic learner's belief (Williams & Burden, 2004). Since the proposition of these commandment and suggestions, scholars have been exploring and testing the effectiveness of some these motivational strategies on learning outcome. Investigation of students' perception on teachers' motivational strategy and vice versa have been research extensively. For example in Taiwan, some of the motivational strategies perceived to be effective by teachers in Hungary are considered to be ineffective by Taiwanese teachers (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007).

In another study to test the effectiveness of co-operation and influence as a motivational strategy on students' motivation shows that co-operation is more effective than influence (Brok, Levy, Brekelmans, & Wubbels, 2005). Considering that some of these motivational strategies yield positive result while some do not, it is still the duty of English teacher to adopt a suitable motivational strategy to encourage students to learn English. However, it is important to consider other various factors that might reduce the effectiveness of teachers' motivational strategies in class. For example, it could be difficult to motivate students in an overcrowded classroom because a good teacher-student relationship which is a rapport needed for student impetus to learn English can be disrupted. Furthermore, the task of a teacher to motivate college students could be difficult because of the ambiguity associated with the role of being a teacher or lecturer.

Teachers are mostly found in high school while lecturers are college or university faculty. Being a teacher or a lecturer is a matter of choice for an individual and the teaching philosophy of a school or college. It is easier as a teacher to implement motivational strategy than lecturer because lecturing involves delivering of instructional material through talk, acts, persuades, cajoles without questioning the students understanding on the delivered subject while a teacher is

expected to be a facilitator, planner, assessor, information provider, role model and resource developer (Waugh & Waugh, 1999). Even though both teacher and lecturer can choose to adopt a standard teaching practice, but their choice are all being influenced by different kind of motivation? As reported by Menyhart (2008), teachers are highly influenced by intrinsic motivation while lecturer is motivated extrinsically. In a nut shell, all these issues will eventually influence the students' motivation at both high school and university level.

Peer support is also considered to be very important factor in facilitating language learning in other peers. While teachers motivational support for students stem from authoritative relationship, peer support can be considered to be reciprocity because of equality status sharing (Wentzel, 1994). This is essential for learners because of considerable amount of time they spend on learning the language together, Apart from peers rendering of English teaching support for each other, a student can also serve as a role model which can enhance other students' motivation towards English language learning (Tim Murphey, 1998). This concept of peer assisted learning is defined as the acquisition of knowledge and skills through act of helping and supporting among equal status or matched companions (Topping & Ehly, 1998). Several studies have proven the effectiveness of using peers rather than teachers to facilitate language learning (Fitz-Gibbon & Reay, 1982). The major argument is that when peer instruct formality and boundary associated with teachers' instruction is reduced. In sum, peers and classmates play a huge role in motivating one another. More studies on to what extent peer can render support to other peer regarding practicing of spoken English outside classroom worth investigating.

Several studies have investigated the role of peers among other human motivational component in helping other peers to learn English. For instance, peers motivational factor have been identified as the most influential human factor in Hong Kong schools (Wong, 2007).

In another study conducted among students in Philippines schools, enhancement of student motivation to learn English was attributed to parental encouragement (Paran & Tibli, 2009).

Considering Newton's third law of motion which states that "for every action there is equal and opposite reaction", it can be implied that every English learning motivation received by students from either parents, peers or teachers is equal to the degree of effort such students exerted towards the task of English learning. Thus, it is very important to investigate how students respond to human factor motivation through effort. Since, there are limited studies on the level of influence of parents, teachers and peer on students' motivation to learn English in Indian colleges and how such each influential factor correlate with students' motivational intensity. This study will shed more light on the relationship between students' effort to learn English and the received motivation from parents, teachers and peers.

## **Objective**

The purpose of this present study was to investigate teachers, parents and peers motivational factor on students' motivation to learn English language and how each motivational component correlate with the students' motivational intensity.

The questions underlying this research were

1. Which of these human factors influence the students most?
2. Is there a correlation and significant impact between human motivational factor and the students' effort to learn English language?

## **Methodology**

### **Material and Methods**

#### **Subjects of the Study**

Ethiopian pattern of education follows what is commonly called "10 +2 +3".that is, every students received 10 years of primary education, followed by 2 years of pre-university education(pre college Preparatory program) , afterward spend 3 to 4 or 5 years in a graduation program. The main subject of this study comprises of equal composition of 46 college students from second year of pre-university class in Ambo Preparatory School and 1st year Bachelor Degree students in Ambo University in the city of Ambo. The choice of combining these two groups is to determine the role of parents, Teachers and peers in motivating the students at University level. The respondents' age range falls within 16 and 19. Both groups of students are in science stream of English medium of instruction of their respective colleges. In other words, in addition to learning of Functional English as a course, all other courses such as the sciences are also being taught in English.

#### **Instrumentation**

The current investigation involved administering of structured questionnaire which was adapted from sub-motivational component of Dornyei (2001). It is an extended framework of (Gardner & Lambert, 1972) questionnaire in motivational variable in second language acquisition. It was designed to elicit information from the respondents. The first part of the questionnaire deals with respondents' demographic profile such as age, gender and medium of instruction background. The second part consists of 12 closed questions that focus on participants' perception of parents, teachers and peers influence to learn English and respondents view about their own motivational intensity towards English. Five-point Likert scale was adopted for respondents to indicate their responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

## Data Gathering and Analytical Procedures

In order to gather the data, permission of the head of the two schools were first sought. The respondents were encouraged to be cooperative and sincere in providing information for this research work by ensuring confidentiality. The questionnaire was retrieved right after the respondents had completely answered the items. The responses in the questionnaires were classified, tallied and tabulated. A reliability test was first run on the questionnaire to verify if there was an internal consistency for all the 22 items set. The results of the computations were carefully analyzed and interpreted through the use of appropriate statistical method such as SPSS software. The data use to determine the aforementioned motivational factor were interpreted by calculating the weighted mean of each human factor while Pearson product moment correlation were applied to find the relationship between each factor and students' motivational intensity.

## Results

This present study is aimed to determine and rank the level of motivational effect of parents, teachers and peers on students. The result of internal consistency (Cronbach alphas) for the entire motivational component was high with an alpha value of 0.741

### Summary Statistics of Students, Parent-Specific Motivation

Parental factor Items	W.M.	S.D
1. My parents encourage me to study English	3.80	1.108
2. My parents show considerable interest in my English lesson	3.26	1.163
3. My parents encourage English at home	3.33	1.212
4. I am learning English in order to meet my parents high expectation	3.20	1.327
Composite mean	3.40	1.20

**Table 1:** reveals parental motivational support for students' English language learning. The component record the second highest mean of 3.4. Majority of the respondents agree that parents encourage them to learn English while expectation of parents towards students English motivation receives the least mean value. Source: Compiled data

**As detailed in Table 2**, the mean value of perceived English teachers motivation by students reveal that teachers encourage them to learn English and have high expectation regarding their performances( item 1 and 3). However, very few participants agree that teachers do not insist on students using English in the class.



**Table 2: Summary Statistics of Students, Teacher-Specific Motivation**

Teacher factor items	W.M.	S.D.
1.My English teacher motivates and encourages me to learn English	4.33	.89
2.My English teacher reward me whenever I do well in English class	4.02	1.0
3. My English teacher has high expectation regarding my performance in English	4.33	.67
4.My English Teacher insists I speak in English in class	3.24	1.1
Composite mean	3.98	.93

Sources: Compiled data

**Table 3** displays peers encouragement and support to learn English, The average mean value recorded is 3.3, item 2 elicits the strongest agreement which shows that participants received encouragement from the peers while the least mean recorded is 3.04.very few participants agree that they are encouraged by their classmate to speak in English.

**Table 3: Summary Statistics of Students: Peer-Specific Motivation**

Peer factor Items	W.M.	S.D.
1.My classmates encourage me to speak in English	3.04	1.010
2. .My classmates help me to solve the problem whenever I have problem with my assignment or class work	3.52	1.150
3. .If I speak in English to my classmates, most of them respond to me in Amharic or Afan oromo	3.39	1.220
4.Brilliant English students in my class influence me to work harder	3.39	1.220
Composite mean	3.33	1.172

Source: Compiled data

Overall, base on the number of mean recorded among each motivational support group, teachers' support and encouragement is perceived to be the most significant factor while peers are perceived to be the least motivational component.

**Table 4:** illustrates the measured mean value of the students' motivational intensity. As it can be observed in item 4 and 5,most of the students believe that they pay so much attention during English classes (3.85) and they are working so hard to improve their English language competency (3,78). However, small fraction of the participants (3.20) concur that they don't spend enough time studying English language.

**Table 4: Summary Statistics of Students Motivational Intensity**

Motivational intensity Factor items	W.M.	S.D.
1.Motivational intensity Factor items	3.20	1.108
2. Motivational intensity Factor items	3.72	.958
3.Compared to other students, I think I study English relatively hard	3.22	31.153
4. I work hard to improve my English ability.	3.78	1.114
5. During my English classes I am absorbed in what is taught and concentrate on my studies.	3.85	.842
6. During my English classes I am absorbed in what is taught and concentrate on my studies.	3.61	1.437
Composite mean	3.56	1.102

**Table 5:** shows the degree correlation between each human motivational component and students' motivational intensity. Since all the significant value of each motivational component is less than the P value of 0.05 and all the correlation coefficient (r) is between -1 and +1. Then, all the motivational factors is considered to have a positive correlation with the students' motivational intensity. The Pearson coefficient of correlation(r) between each human motivational component and student motivational intensity is .408, .631 and .403 for teachers', parental and peer group factor respectively. Thus, every degree of motivation students received from their parents positively influenced students' effort to learn English by 63% while the other motivational factors influence on students' effort stands at 40% each. This shows parental encouragement is strongly correlated with student motivational intensity while others are moderately correlated.

	Teacher factor impact	Parental factor impact	Peer group factor impact
Student motivational Intensity	r = .408**	r = .631**	R=.403**
	Sig= .005	Sig. = .000	Sig. = .006
	N = 46	N = 46	N = 46

Discussion Previous studies have shown the significant role that teachers, peers and parents play in influencing students to learn English (Paran & Tibli, 2009; Wong, 2007). The purpose of this study is to determine the level of support and encouragement render by each group to students' English motivation and also make an attempt to investigate the level of relationship between each motivational group factor and student motivational intensity. The findings of this paper revealed that teachers' factor is the most influential compare to parents and peers factor. This is in contrast

with a similar study conducted by Wong(2007) in Hong Kong context which reported that peers play the highest motivational supportive role in students' English language learning while parental role is recorded to play the least role (Wong,2007). Majority of the respondents claimed that their teacher motivates them and have high expectation regarding their English performance despite the fact that they hardly reward them for achieving their goals. The high level of motivation recorded among teachers is due to the fact that participants selected for this study are from government English medium University and High school. Teachers in this medium of instruction have been found to be more motivated than their counterpart in public colleges (Gouda & Das, 2013). Several studies have also shown that student's motivation is a reflection of teachers' motivation (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). For example, in a study conducted to understand teachers motivation in ten public and government schools of Ambo District in Ethiopia, unlike High or Primary school teachers, teachers in Universities are described as the one who communicate with the Students, draw energy from their interaction with the students , concerned about what and how much they have learnt (Ramachandran, Pal, Jain, Shekar, & Sharma, 2005). Students' perception regarding non-practicing of positive reinforcement by their teachers in colleges is because students' are considered to be self regulated in their English language learning at University level. Teachers do not need to reward students as a form of motivation because students are instrumentally motivated to learn English considering that they are matured enough to understand the importance of English language learning for their future. Most of them are motivated to study English as a subject because they have to meet university requirement. For instance, second pre-university students need to perform very well in the national board exams such as Grade 12 Entrance Exam or State board exam which include English examination .The overall score in either of this examinations determine the quality of university or college they got admitted to. Another good explanation to support non practicing of reward system to motivate college students' is that lecturing as a form of instruction are bound to be the norm at college level, Therefore, lecturers are not incline to the idea of rewarding students. Whereas a teacher at instructing in high school might resort to positive reinforcement in other to motivate students who needs form of external and internal motivation to learn English

As per the role of parents which is ranked second in the considered three motivational components, majority of the respondents agreed that parents encourage them in learning English. However, few believe that their learning does not stem from meeting their parents expectation. This corroborates with Grolnick (2009) findings which showed that parents can enhance students feelings of competence even if they are not competent enough to assist students in the teaching of English language at home. However, in the findings of this present study, parents are not encouraging spoken English at home because of its insignificant value to pre-university degree students who are learning English as a subject in other to pass the State or National board exam in which spoken English as a task is not being assess. This result affects the level of parental support that is being offered to the students especially in the creating of enabling environment for English language usage.

Most of the respondents acknowledged that they get massive support to solve problems related to their class work and assignment from their peers. This is in line with several peer assisted learning

studies on the significant role of peers and classmates in language learning. This positive role can be attributed to the fact that English language learning is a collaborative exercise which requires peers or classmates offering encouragement and companion support for each other. Bulks of the respondents agreed that brilliant English students in their class serve as motivator for them to learn English. This is in consistent with previous studies on peer serving as a role model to others (T Murphey & Arao, 2001). However, in the area of communicating in English, respondents disagreed with the notion that they receive support from their peers .In other words, the dominance language among peers to peers or classmate is Mother tongue even though they are studying in English medium college. This implies that most of these schools are encouraging rote learning of English as a subject rather than the usage of the language. Since those that use the language frequently have higher English proficiency, Then, it is very important promote communicative language teaching in classroom and spoken English within the school as an effective approach to enhance the usage of the language which will consequently improve students' English proficiency.

Majority of the students also concurred that teachers are not encouraging spoken English in class. Several factors might be responsible for this .It is either the teachers are not competent in the usage of the language or it is a strategy deploys in order to accommodate different groups of student whose level of proficiency is unequal to others in English class Measuring student motivational intensity shed light on the level of effort students are expending into learning of English. The result of this study demonstrated that students pay so much attention during English class and they believed that they are working hard to improve their English proficiency even though they spend little time in learning the language. This suggests that English is taught as a subject and the students will have to spend quality time to attend to other subjects being taught in their colleges.

Having understood the level of motivational influence received from parents, peers and persistence. This study established the strong relationship between motivational intensity and each human motivational component. Out of the three motivational components, parental factor is recorded to have the highest of level of correlation with motivational intensity. This shows that effort exerted by the students towards learning of English is mostly influenced by parents even though teachers' influence is perceived to be the most influential factor. Contrary to less parental involvement in students' English education at secondary school level in Hong Kong (Wong, 2007). This study established that parents play a significant role in motivating student to learn English. Some of these supports are rendered by taking interest in students' English performance, encouraging students to learn English and provide the enabling environment for student to learn English.

## **Conclusion**

This study examines the level of influence parents, peers and teachers have on students' motivation to learn English. The result shows that all the motivational components play a significant role in motivating students to learn English. Teachers' role was discovered to be the most significant among other factors while peers factor is the least motivational component. On the other hand, parental encouragement is attributed as the cause of effort exerted by the students towards learning of English. This paper also demonstrates a total dependence on rote learning of English which does not encourage spoken English among the students. Therefore, the only pedagogical solutions that can be suggested in this study is the promotion of communicative language teaching and creating of enabling environment for the usage of the language within and outside the classrooms. Furthermore, most notably, this is the first study to my knowledge to investigate the perception of students on parents, peers and teachers motivation with respect to students' motivational intensity. Even though, this paper provides compelling evidence on the significance role of parents, peers and teachers. However, there is limitation that worth noting, for instance, there is need to compare high school and college students perception of human factor motivation in order to ascertain the difference in level of human influence on students' motivation between the two levels of educational system. Future work should therefore fill this research gap.

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