

Application of Project-Driven Teaching in College English Class

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Abstract—Project-driven teaching is a student-oriented teaching strategy to cultivate the autonomous learning ability of students. This paper tries to effectively apply project-driven teaching in college English class through a comparative experiment. The experimental results show that project-driven teaching greatly enhanced the satisfaction and learning effect of classroom English teaching. Throughout the teaching process, teachers are responsible for project design, project proposal, and dynamic monitoring of teaching effect; the students are responsible for accepting and completing the projects. Teachers work with the students to evaluate the completion of the projects and give feedback. The application of project-driven teaching in English class makes the classroom atmosphere more active, boosts the participation enthusiasm of students, and increases the attentiveness of students in English classroom. The research results provide theoretical evidence for English education reform.

Keywords—project-driven teaching, autonomous learning, English class, satisfaction, learning effect

1 Introduction

As mutual exchanges between countries around the global are becoming increasingly frequent these days, English proficiency has turned into an indispensable ability in modern society, thus the teaching of English language has received more attention from parents and schools [1, 2]. Project-driven teaching means to set certain project tasks during the teaching activities and enable students to acquire language knowledge in the process of project completion [3, 4]. This teaching method takes specific projects as learning motivation, takes the project completion process as the learning process, and uses project results to reflect the teaching results [5, 6]. In addition, by carefully designing the teaching tasks, project-driven teaching constructs real scenes to carry out multi-dimensional interactive teaching activities [7].

Project-driven teaching manifests the student-centered and people-oriented educational philosophy, it designs different task-based activities for students of different levels [8, 9], closely connects with students' actual cognition levels and personal life experience, thereby better showing the humanistic spirit [10, 11]. Project-driven teaching emphasizes the teaching theories of "using language to do things" and

"learning by doing", and has been gradually introduced into English teaching in China [12, 13]. In project-driven teaching, the English language is an organic whole which cannot be separated simply, students must understand, use, and master it through their own efforts of learning and analysis [14, 15]. Compared with traditional teaching methods, project-driven teaching requires learners to participate, perceive and experience more in the project process; moreover, the interaction, communication, and cooperation among teachers and learners are also regarded as primary learning methods [16, 17].

Purposeful, cooperative, subjective, communicative, and realistic are the major characteristics of project-driven teaching [18]. In project-driven teaching, knowledge is constructed based on the learner's existing experience, psychological structure, and beliefs [19, 20]; the teaching is conducted under the guidance of teachers, learners dominate the learning, and teachers act as guides [21]; learners are the subjects of learning information processing and sense-making, not the passive receivers of knowledge indoctrination [22, 23]. English education in schools is a process for students to learn and practice English, master English knowledge and skills, and improve actual language use ability [24]. This paper attempts to study the project-driven teaching method, and explores its application in English class, in the hopes of providing theoretical evidence for the reform of college English education.

2 The research of English teaching in colleges

2.1 Status quo

As a lingua franca, English is an important tool of international communication [25-27]. Since colleges vary greatly in terms of faculty level, student source, students' English foundation, and hardware facility, there're large differences in their English teaching situations [28, 29]. Our research team conducted a questionnaire survey in 6 colleges in Hubei Province to investigate college students' interest in English and their learning habits. Figure 1 shows the statistics of students' English learning habits. Most of them are used to learning English via homework completion, few of them have the habits of reviewing homework, preparing before lessons, and practicing English speaking and listening, etc. Students' learning initiative is insufficient, they just learn English by completing homework using their after-class hours, few of them have the habit of using other channels to learn English, students generally pay less attention to English learning and they are not proactive in learning. Our survey revealed a few problems existing in current English teaching, as summarized in Figure 2, including the aimless teaching management, the timeworn teaching facilities, the inability to meet teaching requirements, the stagnant textbook compilation, and the abstruse teaching content, etc. Many teachers are of low level and their teaching methods are outdated. Students only have a poor English foundation and they generally lack of self-confidence, manifesting as weak English basis, bad English learning habits, insufficient learning motivation, and low self-evaluation.

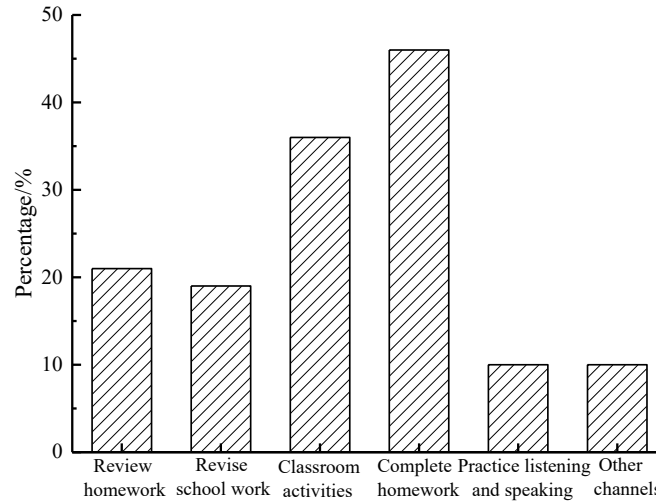


Fig. 1. Statistics of students' English learning habits

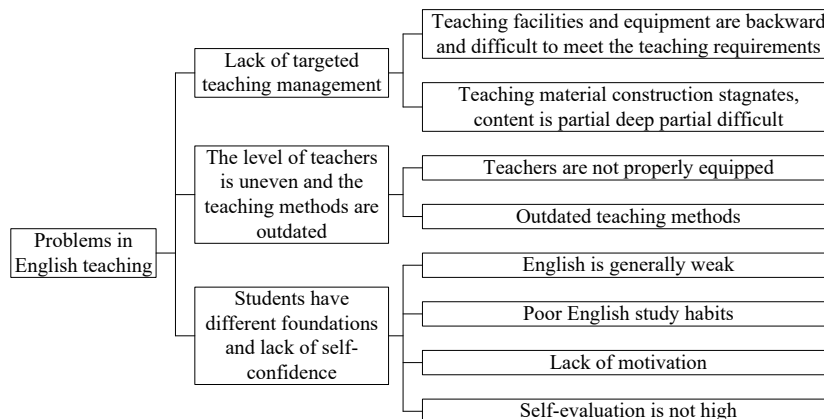


Fig. 2. Problems in current English teaching

2.2 Advantages of project-driven teaching

English teaching is the same as mother tongue language teaching, students understand, memorize, and apply the language through visual and auditory stimuli [30-31]. Project-driven teaching enables students to have a perceptual understanding of the knowledge they learnt through situational teaching, attracting their attention, and thus triggering their interest in English learning [32]. Figure 3 lists the advantages of project-driven teaching in English class. First, it can cultivate students' interest in learning English, in the entire English teaching process, teachers become guides, students take their initiative in analyzing and solving the problems, naturally, their learning interesting will increase. Second, it can motivate students to learn English, in the

process of using English to complete the projects, students are always in an active learning state, the method gives students the opportunity to experience success in learning and improvement in performance, which can enhance their self-confidence and learning motivation. Third, it can strengthen students' ability of autonomous learning, project-driven teaching is a participation-style teaching method, in the entire learning process, students are the subjects of learning, they take the initiative and actively participate in learning through multiple methods such as self-experience, discussion and exchange, team work, and inquiry learning, etc. Fourth, it can promote communication between teachers and students, in the project participation process, teachers and students work together to help students who have difficulties in completing the projects, they communicate interactively throughout the entire process. Fifth, it can foster students' all-round development, their ability of raising and solving problems could be cultivated via coping with different projects, moreover, in this process, their ability of independent learning, inquiry learning, innovation, and communication could be cultivated as well.

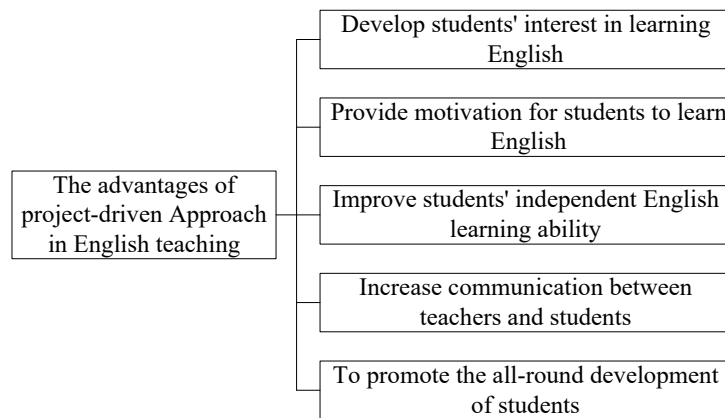


Fig. 3. Advantages of project-driven teaching in English class

3 Application of project-driven teaching in English class

3.1 The practice of project-driven teaching in English class

English teaching is a dynamic process, learners could only develop their cognition ability and language skills through active experience and participation [33]. Figure 4 shows the design principles of project-driven teaching, including the principle of authentic language scenes, the principle of form and function, the principle of step-shaped tasks, the principle of interrelated language and affairs, and the principle of stratified teaching and group cooperation. In project-driven teaching, the form and meaning of the language are closely integrated [34, 35]. Figure 5 is a structure diagram of project-driven teaching. Teachers design projects, propose projects, and conduct dynamic monitoring on teaching throughout the whole process; students accept

and complete the projects, then teachers and students jointly evaluate the project completion situation and give feedback. In order to explore the application of project-driven teaching in English class, we conducted a teaching experiment on students in a college in Hubei province, Table 1 gives the basic information of the experimental group and the control group. The project-driven teaching method was adopted in the English class of the experimental group.

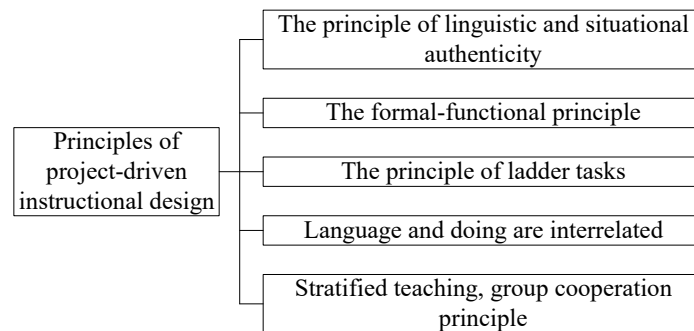


Fig. 4. Design principles of project-driven teaching

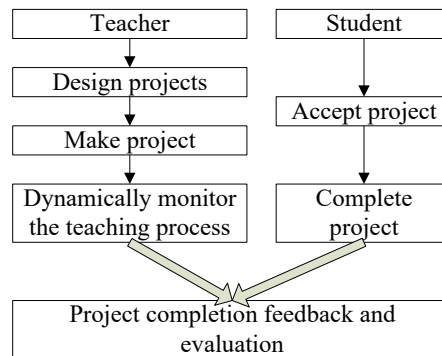


Fig. 5. Structure of the project-driven teaching

Table 1. Basic information of experimental group and control group

| Group | Number | Male | Female |
|--------------------|--------|------|--------|
| Experimental group | 60 | 27 | 33 |
| Control group | 59 | 25 | 34 |

3.2 The application effect of project-driven teaching in English class

In English teaching, the designed projects must be authentic in terms of pragmatics, context, and semantics, also the projects should be practical, interesting, and operable in teaching. During teaching activities, teachers need to reasonably group students according to their learning attitude, ability level, personality, hobbies, and spe-

cialties, and then assign the roles of each student in the project. Figure 6 and Figure 7 are respectively the English test scores of the two groups before and after the experiment, as can be seen from the figures, before the experiment, there's no obvious difference in the vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking scores between the two groups. After the project-driven teaching method had been applied, the English test scores of the experimental group were all higher than those of the control group. Figure 8 shows the statistics of the approval of the effect of project-driven teaching, as can be seen from the figure, all dimensions of the approval of the effect of project-driven teaching are above 80%, the dimensions of satisfaction with teaching method, interest in teaching mode, and improving the comprehensive English ability all gained a high approval rate. Figure 9 is a comparison of the grades of completed works of the two groups. Figure 9(a) is the grades of the completed works of the experimental group, the excellent rate is 18.33%, the good rate is 53.34%, and the average rate is 28.33%. Figure 9(b) is the grades of the completed works of the control group, the excellent rate is 1.69%, the good rate is 27.12%, the average rate is 66.11%, and the failed rate is 5.08%. These results indicate that after the application of the project-driven teaching method, the excellent rate and good rate of the completed English works had been significantly improved.

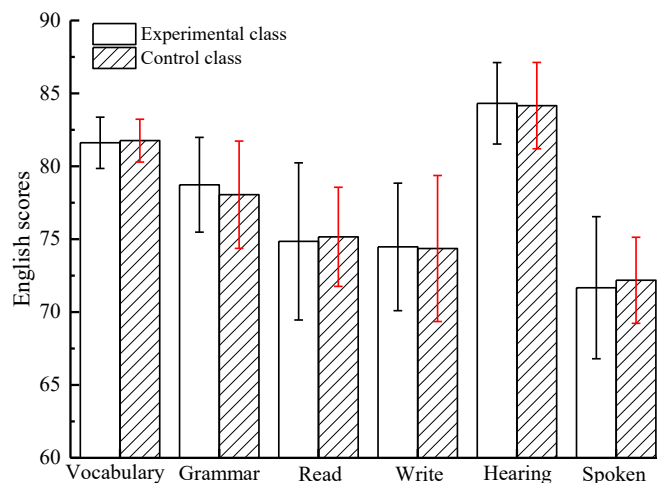


Fig. 6. English test scores before the experiment

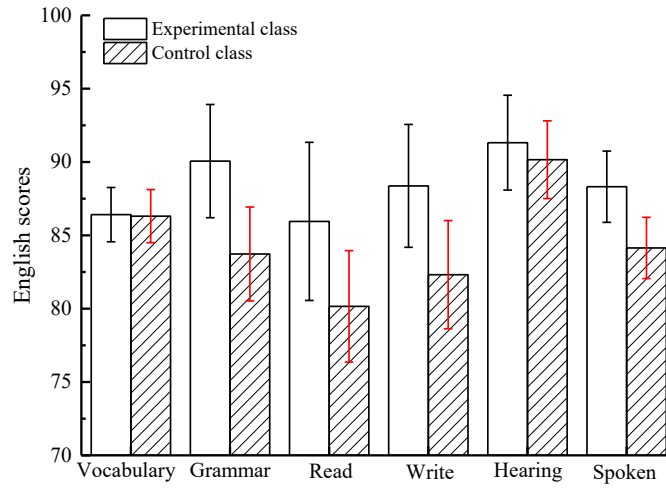


Fig. 7. English test scores after the experiment

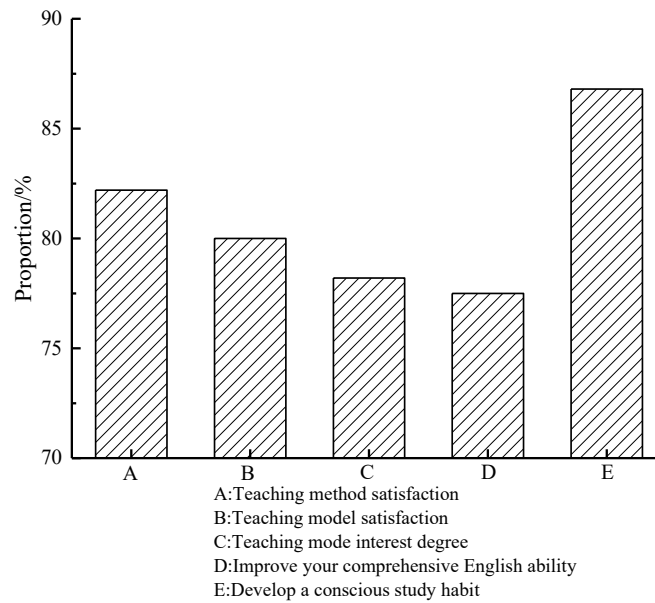


Fig. 8. Statistics of the approval of the effect of project-driven teaching

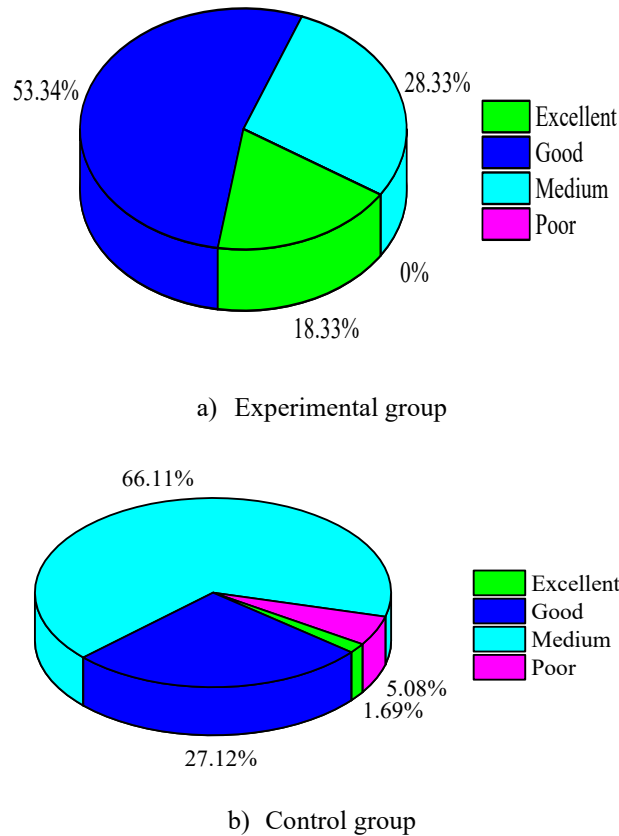


Fig. 9. Grades of completed works of the two groups

4 Evaluation of the implementation process of project-driven teaching

Teaching methods can directly affect the learning initiative and learning interest of students and the organization and management of the classroom, which will ultimately affect the teaching results and students' performance. From the English test scores and classroom satisfaction evaluation shown in Section 3.2, we can see that the project-driven teaching method had indeed improved students' course performance and their satisfaction with classroom teaching. Figure 10 shows the evaluation of the English class taught by the project-driven teaching method. The overall comment is that the classroom atmosphere is active and students generally have a high degree of enthusiasm for participation. Survey results tell us that 61.9% of the students think that the classroom atmosphere is active and their learning initiative is high; 23.81% of the students think that the classroom atmosphere is average and they hold an indifferent attitude towards the tasks; 9.52% of the students think that the classroom atmosphere

is not good and they prefer to do their own things in class; 4.76% of the students think that the classroom discipline is poor and they cannot complete their projects. Figure 11 shows the measures taken by students when encountering difficulties during project completion process, more students choose to turn to teachers and other group members, and 24.75% of them solve the issues by after-class self-study. Figure 12 shows the influence of project-driven teaching on students' attentiveness in class. 27.18% of the students think that their attention is much more concentrated in class when the project-driven teaching method is adopted, 53.4% of the students think that their attention is more concentrated, overall speaking, more than 80% of the students believe the project-driven teaching method had improved their learning concentration in English class.

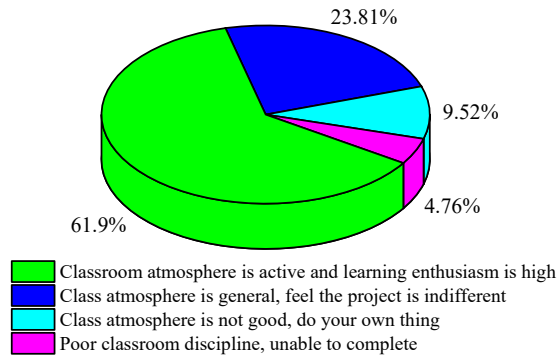


Fig. 10. Evaluation of English class taught by the project-driven teaching method

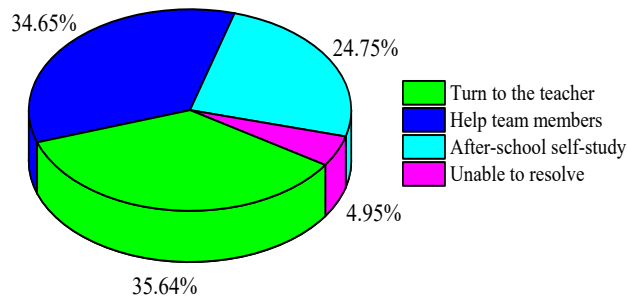


Fig. 11. Measures taken by students when encountering difficulties during project completion

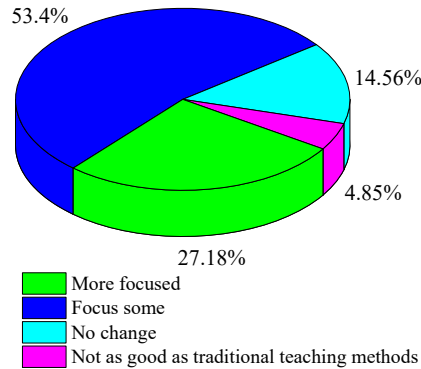


Fig. 12. The influence of project-driven teaching on students' attentiveness in class

5 Countermeasures to promote project-driven teaching

Clear objectives during the project completion process are conducive to triggering students' learning motivation, they enable students to see achievements and experience success more easily, which can greatly stimulate their learning enthusiasm. In order to promote project-driven teaching in English education, this paper proposes several countermeasures, as listed in Figure 13. The first is the construction and effective application of the teaching environment, modern multimedia technologies could be adopted scientifically in teaching, and simulation training rooms and virtual network teaching environment could be created. Second, with social and market demands as the orientation, the teaching content and English exercise content should be enriched and updated constantly, and the English teaching scenes should be close to our daily life. Third, in terms of project design, the designed projects should be effective, practical, and interesting; also, the teaching plans should be well designed for the project-driven teaching. Fourth, we should cultivate teachers to have both theoretical and practical teaching qualities, based on the market-oriented talent demands, teachers should continuously improve their knowledge and professional skills. Fifth, we should enhance English teachers' ability to monitor the teaching process and teaching quality. Sixth, a harmonious relationship should be created between teachers and students, such harmonious teacher-student relationship is usually established through the interaction between teachers and students, in the project implementation process, teachers should fully respect students' role as learners, and establish a good relationship with students by offering effective guidance.

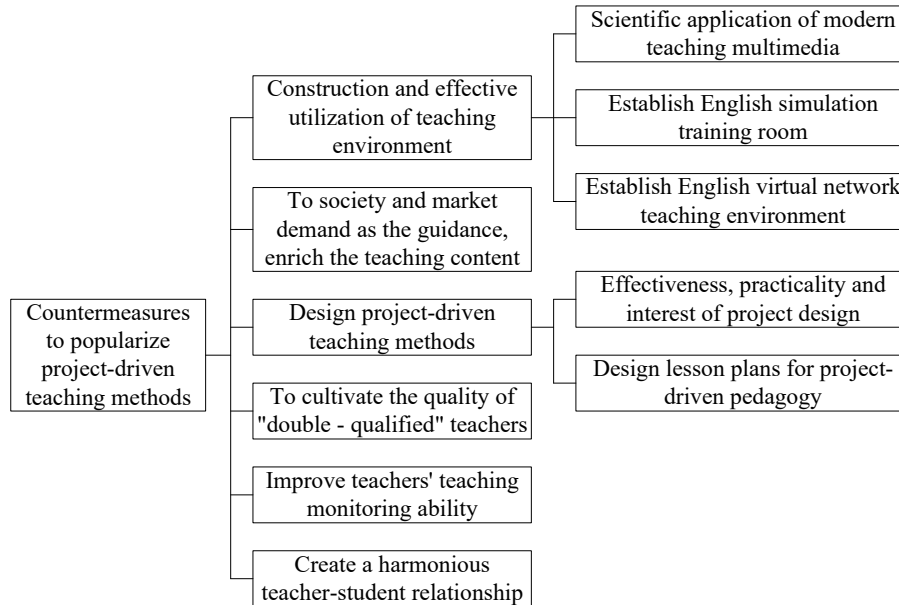


Fig. 13. Countermeasures to promote project-driven teaching

6 Conclusions

This paper studied the project-driven teaching, explored its application in college English class, and proposed a few countermeasures for promoting the project-driven teaching method, the specific conclusions are:

1. Project-driven teaching can cultivate students' interest in learning, motivate them to learn English, strengthen their ability of autonomous learning, promote communication between teachers and students, and foster students' all-round development.
2. After applying project-driven teaching, the vocabulary, grammar, reading, writing, listening, and speaking scores of the experimental group were all higher than those of the control group, and the excellent rate and good rate of the completed English works had been significantly improved.
3. After applying project-driven teaching, the overall comment is that the classroom atmosphere is active, students generally have a high degree of enthusiasm for participation, and the learning concentration of students in English class has been greatly improved.

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