

Module 1:
**Supporting mentoring:
developing professional agency**



Part 1: Developing professional agency for lead teachers of Asian languages and cultures

Overview

This part consists of two segments:

1a. Expanding knowledge and expertise

- Beginning with what we bring and know

1b. Reflection and reflexivity: practice and praxis

- Working through
 - reflection, reflexivity
 - practice, praxis
- To find
 - agency and voice

Objectives

In Segment 1a we will:

- reflect on what we already know of the theory/theories of language, language learning, and culture
- identify gaps in what we know
- check that we know where to locate essential resources on language learning, teaching research, and the theory of language
- participate in a reflexive process, which may be used as a model for mentoring

Connecting to the standards

- Professional standards for accomplished teachers of languages and cultures
- Language-specific annotations for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese
- Professional standards for lead teachers of languages and cultures (draft only)
- AITSL standards

Modelling the mentoring process

- Acknowledge what the participants bring and what they know
- Establish a foundation of trust in order to embark on a collaborative journey
- Discover the gaps
- Locate the theoretical context



Segment 1a: Overview

Knowledge of theory: language, culture, and learning

What knowledge do we already have of the theory and practice of language teaching and learning?

What do we know of each other's theories of

- Language and language learning?
- Culture and the role of culture in language(s) learning?

How do we use this knowledge in our practice?



Reflections about theory

Group discussion task

- How would we describe our theories of language?
- How did we come to have these theories?
- From whom have we learnt about language(s) or language learning theory?
- From whom have we learnt about culture(s) and the role of culture in language(s) learning?

Reflections about practices of language learning and teaching

Group discussion task

What are our practices?

- How do we go about teaching and intervening in the learning processes?
- Are we clear about what we actually do in our teaching, learning, and mentoring actions?
- Can we identify a practical example of a language teaching challenge for which we have not yet found an adequate solution?

Reflexivity in language learning and teaching processes

Group discussion task

- Can we share instructive anecdotes of what we have learnt from our students/colleagues?
- How has this changed our teaching practices?
- Discuss any consequences of these changes.
- When practices do not work, how do we respond, or what actions do we take?

Gaps in our knowledge

Group discussion task

- Can we identify any gaps in our knowledge about the theory/theories of language, culture, and learning?
- Can we identify any gaps in our knowledge about practices of language teaching?
- Which resources will address some of the gaps?

Educational linguistics

Draws together theory from:

- Neurobiology
 - 'wiring of the brain'
- Psycholinguistics
 - how languages are learnt/acquired
 - processes in language learning/acquisition
- Sociolinguistics
 - linguistic repertoires
 - context: socio-cultural-economic, etc.
- Applied linguistics
 - pedagogy, curriculum, assessment

Core themes in educational linguistics

- Linguistically and culturally responsive education
- Language education policy and management (planning)
- Literacy development
- Language acquisition
- Language assessment

(Spolsky & Hult 2010)

Piecing the theory together for the present context

21st century: changing contexts

- Position and status of Asian languages
- Shift from the 'communicative approach'
- Content and language integrated language learning (CLIL)
- Rapidly changing hybridity of language use
- Convergence of various branches of linguistics to inform a 'linguistics of language and learning'

What would we change?

Group discussion task

Each participant offers one example of a teaching practice that might be changed, after considering the discussions.

Group discusses suggestions and feasibility.

Group members edit earlier record of challenges, etc.

Segment 1b: Reflection and reflexivity: practice and praxis

This segment includes discussion of processes that enhance critical language teaching, namely the dialectical relationships between practice and theory, and involving:

- Reflection
- Reflexivity
- Practice
- Praxis.

A key to the inner core of professional agency



Segment 1b: Overview

Developing professional agency

Section 1: Reflection and reflexivity

Section 2: Practice and praxis

Section 3: Professional agency



Objectives

In Segment 1b we build on some of the concepts introduced in Segment 1a to consider four key concepts in the development of the professional agency of teachers and mentors.

The intention is to ensure an understanding of:

- reflection about action and cognitive decisions to change action (reflexivity)
- the difference between practice and praxis
- reflexive praxis
- how reflexive praxis democratises education and develops professional agency

Connecting to the standards

- Professional standards for accomplished teachers of languages and cultures
- Language-specific annotations for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese
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Reflection and reflexivity

'...to be reflexive is to self-examine, to consider internal conversation, and use this voice to guide, support, and enhance work. Reflexivity is linked to introspection and the moment of action. Reflection is the act of looking upon the action after it has passed. The term reflexivity is less common yet there are several forms of reflexivity. Becoming aware of the types of reflexivity and the relationship with reflection helps researchers make sense of their own reflexivity and reflections...'

(Thomas Ryan 2005)

Reflexivity

'Reflexivity is the key concept underpinning a view of teacher education that binds together the orientations of action research and personal development in a way that establishes common ground, common purpose, and common experience between teachers and teacher educators.'

(Julian Edge 2010)

Practice and praxis

The term, praxis, was first used by Aristotle, and subsequently, by Marx, Hegel, and Freire (amongst many other scholars) who have considered the dialectical relationship between practice and theory.

A basic definition of praxis

1. Practical application or exercise of a branch of learning.
2. Habitual or established practice; custom.

<http://www.thefreedictionary.com/praxis>

'The ancient Greeks used the word praxis to refer to thoughtful practice or practice that was informed, purposeful and deliberate (Willower 1998, p.123).

http://www3.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/eldevnet/NAFPhk_SP/SpNAP_ReflectivePracticeandPraxis.asp

Difference between practice and praxis

'Marx suggested that **the difference between bees and architects** is that **bees build marvellous structures based on practice**, while **architects build marvellous structures based on praxis**. The difference is that architects are involved in reflective practice. They 'think' about what they are doing. They constantly re-evaluate their values, skills, theories and knowledge as it applies to the structure they are building. Praxis, however, is more than just the application of theories and learned skills.'

http://www3.fed.cuhk.edu.hk/eldevnet/NAFPhk_SP/SpNAP_ReflectivePracticeandPraxis.asp

Reflexive and non-reflexive praxis

Praxis that occurs as a result of habituated practices and uncritical acceptance of prevailing assumptions is regarded as non-reflexive praxis.

Praxis that occurs as a result of a critical unsettling of prevailing assumptions (mindsets) is reflexive.

(Bourdieu 1990, Foucault 1980)

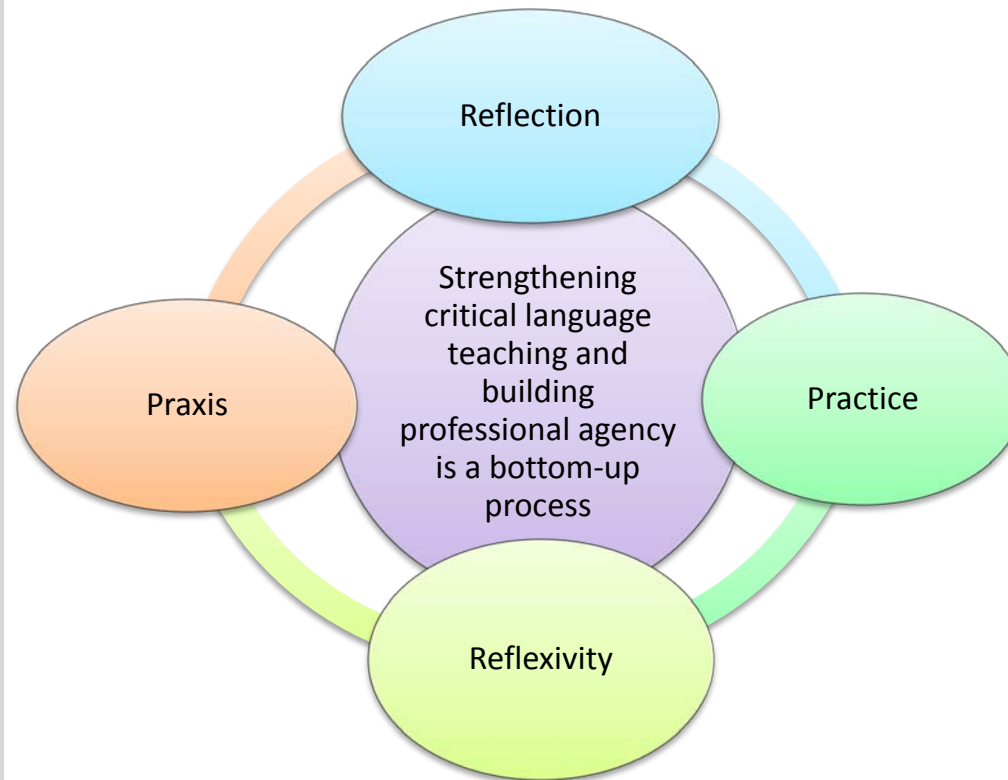
Group discussion task

Drawing on the information presented, re-consider the initial group discussion about the shared knowledge base.

As individuals and as a group, participants summarise their current knowledge, gaps, and areas to be strengthened.

Anticipated time: 15 minutes

Professional agency



Professional agency, collaboration, and mentoring



Group discussion task: collaboration and professional agency

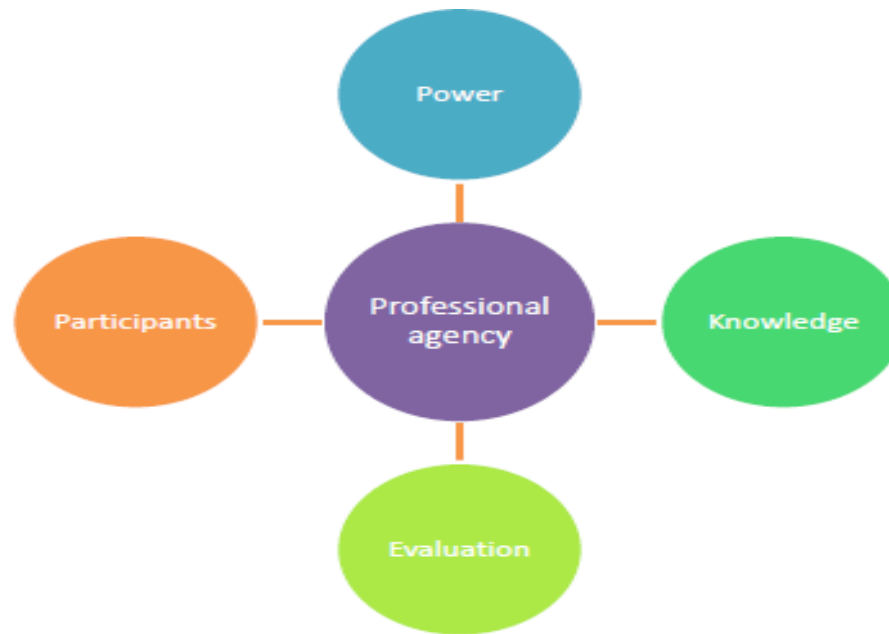
Consider the workshop content and process for Segment 1b, and how you might use this in your mentoring work.

1. What would work?
2. What wouldn't work?
3. How could you make changes to the content/ process?
4. What makes you think you can do a better job?
5. Do you have answers to the questions and challenges raised earlier?

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Part 2: Thinking about the curriculum: developing curriculum thinking



Overview

Segment 2a: Understandings of the curriculum

Segment 2b: Understanding the curriculum as holistic, as ecological, and as inquiry

Segment 2c: Investigating the curriculum as a theory of practice

Objectives

In this part we will:

- examine understandings of curriculum
- explore an understanding of the curriculum:
 - as holistic and ecological
 - as inquiry
- investigate the curriculum as a theory of practice.

Connecting to the standards

- Professional standards for accomplished teachers of languages and cultures
- Language-specific annotations for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese
- Professional standards for lead teachers of languages and cultures (draft only)
- AITSL standards

Group discussion task: reflections on the curriculum

- What are the various dimensions of curriculum?
- Are these the same for the Asian languages curriculum as for all other curriculum areas?
- What is the relationship between curriculum and pedagogy?
- Do you think that it is worth making a distinction between the planned and the enacted curriculum?
- What are some of the key issues/questions that pertain specifically to the languages curriculum and specifically to your particular Asian language?
- Why is curriculum always contested?
- Who decides the curriculum in your context?
- Why does understanding curriculum matter in the processes of mentoring and developing professional agency?

Anticipated time: 30 minutes

Segment 2a: Understandings of the curriculum

Context:

- curriculum as the specification of content and standards
- curriculum content as prescriptive
- teacher positioned as 'implementer'
- three decades of generic curriculum development in languages education

Curriculum as a proposal

... an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice

(Stenhouse 1975, p. 4)



Curriculum-as-plan

The curriculum-as-plan is the work of curriculum planners... often elected teachers from the field, under the direction of some official often designated as the curriculum director or curriculum supervisor... it is imbued with planners' orientations to the world, which inevitably include their own interests and assumptions about ways of knowing and about how teachers and students are to be understood. These interests, assumptions, and approaches, usually implicit in the text of curriculum-as-plan, frame a set of curriculum statements: statements of intent and interest (given the language of 'goals', 'aims', and 'objectives'), statements of what teachers and students should do (usually given the language of *activities*) statements of official and recommended resources for teachers and students, and usually implicitly statements of *evaluation* (given if at all in the language of ends and means).

(Aoki 2005, pp. 202–3)

The lived curriculum

The other curriculum is really a multiplicity of lived curricula that Miss O and her pupils experience. For Miss O it is a world of face-to-face living with Andrew... with Sara... and some 20 others in class, each living out a story of what it is to live school life as Grade 5s. ... Miss O knows their uniqueness from having lived daily with them. And she knows that their uniqueness disappears into the shadow when they are spoken of in the prosaically abstract language of the external curriculum planners. (Aoki 2005, p. 203)

→ curriculum as a noun → curriculum as a verb

Understanding curriculum history

It is at the heart of the enterprise to examine curriculum development and transformation over time: such complex undertakings cannot be elucidated by 'snapshots' of unique historical events or periods. But the recurrence of events viewed in contemporary profile can help in discerning and examining explanatory frameworks and in understanding the manner in which structure and action interrelate. Curriculum history should be concerned ... with understanding the 'internal' process of curriculum definition, action and change.

(Goodson 1994, p. 53)

Group discussion task

Thinking about the curriculum in the context of mentoring and developing professional agency

For consideration:

- Why is working on the curriculum a useful site for professional learning, leadership, and mentoring work?
- In what ways can we work on curriculum in the context of mentoring?
- What are the curriculum issues that need re-thinking in (a) your particular Asian language and (b) your context (local or state)? Will the Australian Curriculum change this? If so, in what ways?
- How is curriculum decided in your context (local or state)? How are teachers positioned? Comment on this positioning in terms of developing professional agency.

Anticipated time: 20 minutes

Curriculum as a theory of practice

- Curriculum as a theory of practice (Van Lier 1996)
 - Curriculum driven by social interaction
- teachers' work as 'a process of practising, theorising and researching'. (Van Lier 1996, p. 24)

Group discussion task

Based on the presentation, develop a summary of diverse understandings of the curriculum. Identify questions and tensions that arise, particularly in your state and local context and for your specific Asian language.

These tensions may become themes for investigation and/or discussion in the mentoring process.

What do you see as areas that you might wish to consider through investigation and mentoring?

Anticipated time: 30 minutes

The curriculum as holistic and ecological

- content
 - plus*
 - teaching and learning
 - resourcing
 - assessing
 - evaluating
- all in an ecological relationship:
- all based on views of language, culture, learning, teaching
 - examining one aspect will lead to examining all other aspects

The curriculum as inquiry

- The curriculum as a *proposal* (Stenhouse 1975)
- Symbiotic relationship among curriculum, teaching and learning resources, and assessment
→ all open to investigation as parts and in their relationship
- Teacher as researcher vs teacher as implementer

Group discussion task

Based on the presentation, discuss the implications for professional learning, leadership, and professional agency of the understanding of the curriculum as holistic and ecological and as inquiry.

Consider specifically what this means in your particular specific Asian language and your particular state and local context.

Anticipated time: 15 minutes

Segment 2c: Investigating the curriculum as a theory of practice

The critical characteristics of that extended professionalism, which is essential for well-founded curriculum research and development, seem to me to be:

The commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development;

The commitment and the skills to study one's own teaching;

The concern to question and to test theory in practice by the use of those skills.

To these may be added as highly desirable ... a readiness to allow other teachers to observe one's work ... and to discuss it with them on an open basis.

(Stenhouse 1975, p. 144)

Group discussion task

Consider Stenhouse's description of professionalism and the link to inquiry. How would you describe the link?

Provide examples from your own experiences of inquiry. In what ways is your experience similar to or different from Stenhouse's description?

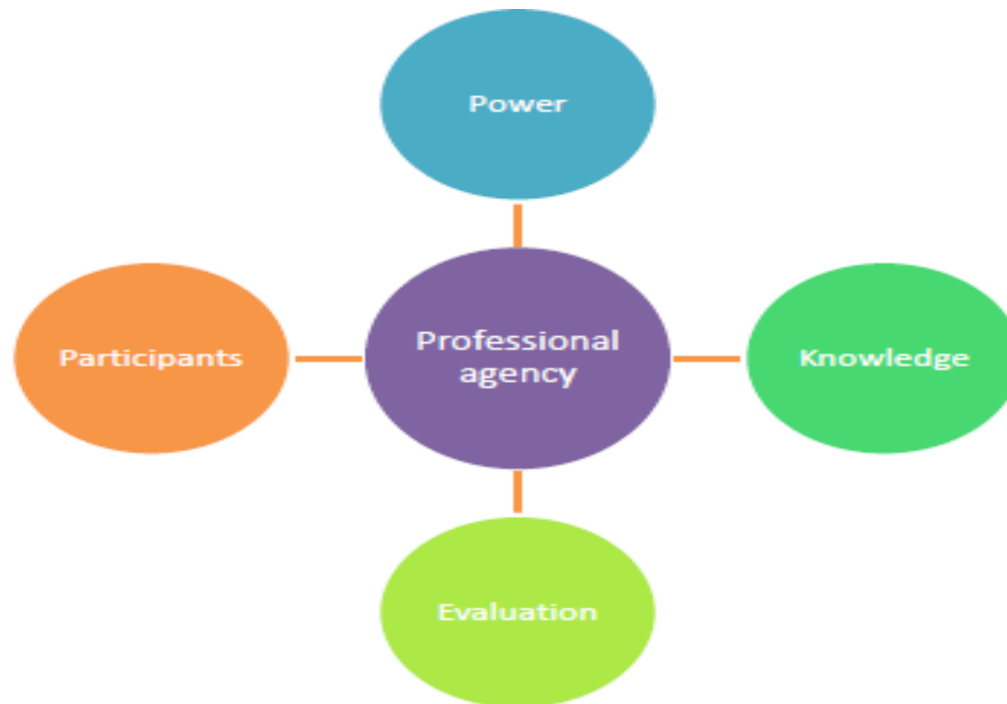
Review the areas that you have identified as possible areas that you might wish to consider in your investigation and mentoring work.

Anticipated time: 15 minutes

References

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Part 3: Considering relationships and power



Focal questions

- How do we understand power?
- Why does power matter in mentoring relationships?
- How does power frame our mentoring practice?

Objectives

In this part we will:

- consider how power is relevant to teachers' experience of mentoring
- critically discuss examples of how power shapes these relationships and their outcomes in teachers' experience
- build on teachers' own experience of mentoring in light of this understanding of power

Connecting to the standards

- Professional standards for accomplished teachers of languages and cultures
- Language-specific annotations for Chinese, Indonesian, Japanese
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Power in interaction

Power permeates and makes possible all aspects of social and professional interaction.

Consider:

- Conversations with a young child, a group of students, a parent, a colleague or a principal, or a visit to the doctor:
 - Who introduces topics? Who doesn't?
 - Who asks questions? Who doesn't?
 - Who interrupts? Who doesn't?
 - Who explains? Who doesn't?
 - Who advises? Who doesn't?
 - Who evaluates? Who doesn't?
- How such differences enable participants to achieve their purposes

Power as central to mentoring

All professional relationships, not least those aimed at group members acquiring new knowledge and experience, or at improving their professional capabilities, involve issues of relative status, power, and authority within the group. In professional learning situations, moreover, shifting, shaping, and changing the dynamics of agency and authority within and among the group is not just an incidental process to be taken account of; it is arguably the major point of the exercise itself.

(Davey & Ham 2010, p. 240)

Task 1: Your professional experience

In groups discuss what power has meant in your experience of professional learning and leadership.

In your discussions you should consider:

- what practices involving power you are familiar with in your teaching contexts
- what you know of how power operates in different types of mentoring relationship
- what benefits and risk you see in the use of power in these relationships
- how you think about changing or adapting your response/s to and use power in different mentoring relationships (reflexivity).

Reading the vignette in Attachment 1 might stimulate further thinking.

Be prepared to provide feedback at the end of the task.

Power in mentoring: variation and diversity

In your groups you identified:

- a wide variety of mentoring relationships
- diverse ways in which power creates benefits and risks for these
- the need for power to be used and interpreted in ways that are sensitive to the nature of these different relationships.

In other words, power in mentoring relationships is **multifaceted** and the use and interpretation of power are central to the expertise of mentors **and** mentees.

Power as interpretation and use

Power is a feature of and shapes all mentoring relationships.

- How it is distributed between people depends on their institutional roles and their ongoing **interpretation** of each other.
- Power is **used** by mentors and mentees to develop these relationships.
- Mentoring involves at every point the **interplay** of interpretations and uses of power.

Understanding as essential

Each person exposes for public scrutiny and public testing — possibly for intolerable undermining — the one thing that he or she needs most, which is the self-evaluation that he or she has so laboriously fashioned. This means that the stakes in any social encounter are incredibly high.

(Stevick 1980, p. 7)

Power and professional agency

The interpretation and use of power enable the development of professional agency through mentoring:

- understood as:
 - mentors' and mentees' capacity to act, **reflect** on, and adjust their actions autonomously on the basis of their professional knowledge and reflection, that is, to act **reflexively**
- frames key themes in mentoring **practice**:
 - risk, trust, collaboration, support, knowledge, expertise, evaluation, intervention, learning, leadership
- requires 'respectful space' that supports the professional agency of **all** participants.

Task 2: Power and the dimensions of mentoring

Drawing on the discussion in this part so far, in groups consider how in your experience the use of power can facilitate the following dimensions of mentoring and the connections between them:

- understanding the context(s) of mentoring
- establishing the purpose(s) and anticipated benefits of mentoring
- matching mentors and mentees
- sharing the expectations of mentors and mentees
- planning the process, roles, and tasks involved in mentoring
- identifying mentoring needs and resources
- evaluating the mentoring process and outcomes.

Be prepared to provide feedback at the end of the task.

Power as positive

Power relations between people and groups are often viewed as only negative. As we saw in the earlier discussion, this is always a risk.

However, power is also essential for collaborative relationships.

- This is especially so where one person is responsible for leading or learning from another based on greater knowledge or expertise.
- Such relationships depend on mutual trust that power differences will enable professional guidance, support, evaluation, and intervention.
- This in turn requires each participant to seek to understand the perspectives of the others in an ongoing process of inquiry and reflection on their own mentoring practice.

Power as productive

Drawing together these reflections on power, in mentoring relationships we interpret and manage the power relations that obtain between ourselves and others. Our use of power:

- is sensitive to the multidimensional nature of mentoring
- makes possible the diversity of mentoring relationships
- enables us to empower participants in and through mentoring
- underpins professional agency
- requires 'respectful space' for all participants.

Task 3: Implications for your mentoring practice (praxis)

Drawing on your reflections on power in this part, discuss in groups the implications of these reflections for your own mentoring practice. In your discussions consider how:

- you now view the use and interpretation of power in your mentoring relationships
- power may facilitate a mentoring project that you are or could be involved in in your professional context
- you might continue to develop your own and others' professional agency through mentoring.

Be prepared to provide feedback at the end of the task.

References

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- Davey, R. & Ham, V. (2010). 'It's all about paying attention!' - but to what? The '6 Ms' of mentoring the professional learning of teacher educators, *Professional Development in Education*, 36 (1–2), 229–44.
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