DIGITAL LITERACY PRACTICES OF ENGLISH TEACHER PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (PPG) STUDENTS IN PREPARING ONLINE KNOWLEDGE TEST (UP)

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Abstract

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19, Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) provided by the Indonesian government to improve the quality of Indonesian education became online. The students of PPG should pass the final exam namely Knowledge Test (UP) to get the certificate. There were two kinds of the online exam system (visiting campus and from home). This research investigates the PPG students' digital literacy practices in preparing an online knowledge test (UP) both from campuses and homes as well. This research used mix method that the data gained from questionnaires, observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The result of this research showed that the top digital tools used by the participants were laptop, WhatsApp, Google, Zoom, Google Meet, Brainly.com, YouTube, Offline dictionary, and Google drive. This research also revealed the challenges the participants had to deal with. Moreover, the participants applied strategies to overcome the challenges. This research was limited to the investigation of English students' digital literacy practices of the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) in preparing online knowledge test (UP). It is suggested to investigate the participants' perceptions towards the system of the test or students from different disciplines.

Keywords: Digital Literacy Practices; PPG; Online

INTRODUCTION

The teacher professional education program (PPG) is held by the Indonesian government as an effort in improving the quality of Indonesian education (Fauzan & Bahrissalim, 2017; Hidayah, 2013; Putri & Fatimah, 2021). The program is intended to train selected teachers to join the program. The teachers who passed the requirement and were able to join the program were required to follow the system and pass the final exam called Knowledge Test (UP). The participants who passed the final test would get a certificate indicating that the participant was considered a professional teacher. Therefore, the program became very important.mThe system of education in Indonesia including PPG was offline before the Covid-19 outbreak while after the outbreak, the system of Indonesian education had to struggle to change the system to become online (Abidah et al., 2020; Pradana & Syarifuddin, 2021). In the online system, the participants of the Teacher professional education program (PPG) are required to have online learning. Regarding the final exam called the knowledge test (UP), there were two kinds of systems. The first was by visiting the campus that held the knowledge test (UP) while the second one was by doing the knowledge test (UP) from home. Looking at the system of the Teacher professional education program (PPG) after the Covid-19 outbreak, the participants need to be able to make use of the technological advance. During the study, the participants fulfilled the requirements online like having a video conference and discussing with lecturers, admins, peers, and others. The tasks of the study were also submitted online (Quddus, 2020).

The Teacher professional education program (PPG) implemented a Learning Management System (LMS) that became a solution to hold online learning where all the activities related to teaching and learning are held through the LMS (Putra et al., 2020; Saputro & Susilowati, 2019). LMS was a system designed for specific purposes. In this case, the LMS was designed to facilitate the online learning of Teacher professional education program (PPG) students. At the end of the program, the participants were required to pass the final exam namely the knowledge test (UP). The participants would get the certificate as professional teachers after they passed the knowledge test. As the participants struggled to pass the final exam and graduate from the university, the preparation before having the final exam became very important (Simanjuntak, 2018; Zerdani & Lotfi, 2021). The participants would do lots of effort to pass the final exam, graduate from the university, got the certificate, and be considered professional teachers (Entwistle & Entwistle, 2003). At this point, the participants needed to master digital literacy. Mastering digital literacy is beneficial for the students of the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) since the students were required to do lots of online things using digital tools (Azizah et al., 2021; Harmoko, 2021). Digital literacy is defined as the ability to find, evaluate, and communicate information through digital media. It is not only about the students' digital skills but more about the way they find, select, evaluate and make use of information to communicate digitally to achieve the goal (Forutanian, 2021; Hariati, 2021). Digital literacy has eight dimensions namely functional skills, creativity, critical thinking, cultural and social understanding, collaboration, finding and selecting information ability, effective communication, and e-safety (Nabhan, 2021; Rinekso et al., 2021). Functional skills mean the ability to operate various digital tools for certain purposes while critical thinking in the digital literacy dimension means the ability to think and evaluate information from digital tools critically. The third dimension is cultural and social understanding and the students are using digital tools to understand the cultural and social aspects of digital media. The next dimension requires the students to collaborate on several aspects of digital things such as the internet and laptop to achieve certain purposes. The students also need to develop skills in how to find and select information. Then, effective communication becomes the next dimension of digital literacy that helps the students to communicate using digital tools effectively. The last is e-safety which requires the students to ensure the things found online are safe to use. The framework of digital literacy was including three things namely technology tools, digital technology skills, and knowledge performance (Adil & Izhar, 2016). The students of the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) need to make use of the technology tools with the skills to operate them collaborated with the knowledge performance for certain purposes. It will be beneficial when the students of the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) can do that in preparing for the online knowledge test. There were several previous research related to teaching speaking in the Indonesian context. The first previous research was entitled Obstacles Faced by Pre-Service English Teachers during Teachers' Professional Education Program (PPG) (Warahmah et al., 2021)w. The result showed that there were seven obstacles faced by the pre-service PPG students. The obstacles were one in the first semester related to the theory and six in the second semester related to the practicum program called PPL. This research did not explore the digital literacy practices of English PPG students in preparing for online Knowledge Tests (UP). The second previous research was entitled The Online Learning of Teacher Profession Education Program (PPG) for In-service English Teachers: Challenges and Accelerated Learning Factors (Lokita & Utami, 2018). The result showed that there were four challenges of online learning during PPG. The challenges were lack of ICT skills, incomplete uploaded modules, unfamiliarity with learning software, and limited time to finish excessive assignments. The research also revealed four factors in accelerating teachers' learning. The factors included mentor, participants, managerial, and

facility factors. However, the research did not explore the participants' digital literacy practices in preparing for the online Knowledge Test (UP). The third previous research was entitled Evaluation of The Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG): English Students' Perspective (Daud et al., 2020). The result showed that in terms of curriculum, it was suitable for the student's needs while in terms of learning facilities, only 23.1 percent considered it as satisfying. In terms of the impact of the program, 69.2 percent agreed that the program had a significant impact on the teaching profession's development. This research also suggested to the organizer the future to renew the curriculum content and provide more sufficient learning infrastructure. However, the research did not explore the students' digital literacy practices related to the preparation of the online Knowledge Test (UP). Based on the previous research, there was a research gap because no research has been found that reviews digital literacy practices carried out by teacher professional education participants, especially those who use the online system in preparing for the final exam called the knowledge test (UP). Thus, research related to this is very necessary because the implications and contributions will be very useful for all those who are involved in the world of education, especially for the teaching profession education participants who will also face the knowledge test. After all, with the results of this study, the teacher professional education program students who will carry out a knowledge test can find out what is needed, challenges, and strategies they can do to prepare for the knowledge test (UP). This research intended to fill the gap by researching digital literacy practices of English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students in preparing online Knowledge Test (UP) needs to be conducted. Therefore, the objective of this research was to investigate the English PPG students in preparing online UP related to digital literacy practices. This research leads to answer four research questions namely: (1) What digital tools do the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students use in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP)? (2) How do the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students deal with the digital tools in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP)? (3) What challenges do the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students face in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP)? (4) What strategies do the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students apply in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP)?. This research will provide novelty to research in the field of digital literacy and related to teacher professional education because the results of this study provide additional information related to digital tools needed by teacher professional education participants in preparing for the Knowledge Test (UP). In addition, the results of this study also provide additional information regarding how the teaching profession education participants use and utilize digital tools to prepare themselves for facing UP. Concerning the challenges and strategies of the participants in the teaching profession education, the results of this study provide an overview of the challenges faced by the participants in the teaching profession while preparing to face UP and what strategies were applied by the participants to face these challenges to prepare yourself to face UP better and confident. Previous research did not explore the digital literacy practices of the teaching profession education participants specifically with the online system, so the results of this study provide a novelty that can be used as a reference and additional knowledge, especially in the field of digital literacy practices related to teacher professional education programs.

METHOD

This research used a qualitative method while the design of the research was a narrative inquiry. The method was chosen since it was able to understand a person's identity and views, able to be applied in various sciences, used when researchers want to make narrative reports from individual stories, useful when stories are arranged in a certain chronology, can be an in-depth

study of a phenomenon experienced by individuals, presenting various research results, and produce stories that allow us to understand the world (Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Suryana et al., 2021). This research involved fourteen participants who volunteered in semi-structured interviews and focus-group discussions. The participants consisted of nine male participants and five female participants. The participants volunteered by filling out their willingness to become participants through a google form distributed by the researchers. In other words, this research uses a voluntarily sampling technique to get research participants. The data collection technique using the voluntary sampling technique was chosen because the technique is simple and can easily provide rich data with minimal effort and low cost (Murairwa, 2020; Sharma, 2017). The volunteers are spread from various universities in Indonesia. The participants are teacher education program students who have completed the knowledge test (UP) as many as one students and four students who are about to face the knowledge test (UP). Related to the data of this research, the data were gained through focus-group discussion, offline and online semi-structured interviews, and documentation. Focus-group discussions were conducted to obtain quality data in a short time. Focus-group discussions were conducted by holding joint interviews with several participants at the same time led by a moderator. Focus-group discussions were chosen considering several advantages, including saving time, reducing awkwardness by participants because they were conducted together with other participants, and obtaining in-depth data (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021; Suryana et al., 2021). A semi-structured interview was chosen because it can follow up on verbal and non-verbal responses and reveal hidden information that can lead to the final data analysis (Al Balushi, 2016; Kakilla, 2021). The offline interviews were conducted by having a meeting with the participants in a certain place. The offline interviews were chosen because it was more comfortable. After all, both interviewers and the interviewees did not need to consider the problems related to internet connections (Forschungszugang, 2019; Opdenakker, 2006). Meanwhile, online interviews were done by having a meeting using zoom and WhatsApp voice messages. Online interviews were chosen because it was advantageous and became alternatives when offline interviews were not possible (Iacono et al., 2016; Lobe & Morgan, 2021; Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Related to the supporting data, documentation was done by taking pictures and videos of students' documents in preparing for the Knowledge Test (UP). The data of this research were analyzed using four stages namely data collection, data display, data reduction, and conclusion (Miles et al., 2014). After being recorded, the focus-group discussion and semi-structured interviews were analyzed to get the data. The data then were displayed as raw data. After that, the data were reduced to get the needed data. The last, the data then were drawn as a conclusion as the result of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Regarding the first research question about what digital tools the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students use in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP), the result of this research showed that the participants used several digital tools in preparing for the online knowledge tests (UP). The top digital tools used by the participants (test from campus & home) were laptops, WhatsApp, Google, Zoom, Google Meet, Brainly.com, YouTube, Offline dictionary, and Google drive.

Mr. I : "banyak aplikasi yang kami gunakan untuk persiapan UP. Yang pasti adalah alat elektronik seperti laptop. Selain itu kami juga menggunakan

media sosial seperti WA. Kami juga memanfaatkan google, YouTube, Zoom, Gmeet, Brainly.com, kamus offline, dan juga google drive"

E : "many applications that we use for UP preparation. What is certain is electronic devices such as laptops. In addition, we also use social media such as WA. We also use google, YouTube, Zoom, Gmeet, Brainly.com, offline dictionaries, and also google drive"

Figure 1. Using Google meet to prepare for the UP

related to supporting data, documentation from participants who are preparing to face UP is by conducting video conferences using Google Meet. From the picture above, it can be seen that the participants were having discussions using the Google Meet application to prepare for the UP.

Bearing with the second research question about how the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students deal with the digital tools in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP), it was found that the participants used the digital tools for several purposes. The use of laptops was to search for information, do exercises, and communicate with other people in discussion forums while WhatsApp was used to communicate and share ideas related to the preparation of the test. Meanwhile, Google was used to look for information available such as the example of questions, documents, learning materials, and discussions in the form of videos. The participants used Zoom and Google Meet to have coaching with seniors, discuss exercises with peers, and share experiences in doing the online test. Next, Brainly.com, YouTube, and Offline dictionary were used to be alternatives when the participants need more sources related to the explanation of the way doing exercises. The last was the use of Google drive. The participants used Google drive for storing and sharing documents that would be the materials in the discussion forum.

Dealing with the supporting data, documentation was done by making screenshots of the participants' documents such as worksheets in both digital and non-digital forms. The recordings in the forms of audio and videos of the interviews also became the supporting data. Moreover, the participants' activities on social media used in preparing for the online Knowledge Test (UP) were also documented.
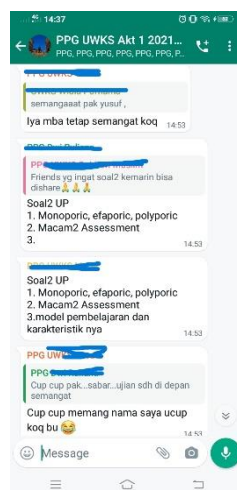
Figure 2. Using WA to discuss the materials for UP as the preparation

Figure 2 shows that the participants of this study used WhatsApp to discuss the material that needed to be studied to strengthen the knowledge test (UP). The participants discussed using the group feature available on the WhatsApp application.
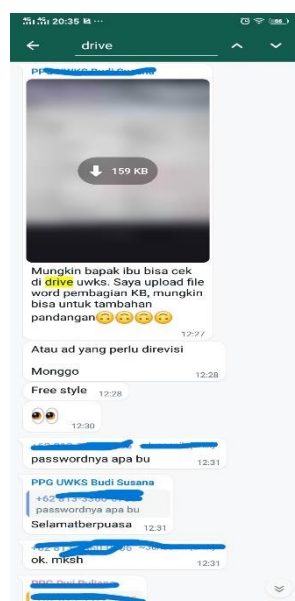

Figure 3. Using google drive to save materials and get access together

Figure 3 shows that the participants of this study used google drive for data storage efforts where access to email and passwords could only be accessed by student members who were preparing for the knowledge test (UP). The participants shared files in the form of practice questions, answer keys and all files that were considered useful for preparation for the competition test (UP).

In addition to Google Drive, the participants of this study also use YouTube to find inspiration, practice questions and discuss them. This is done to prepare themselves for the Knowledge Test (UP). YouTube is very useful because it can provide video services so that practice questions can be understood better than reading. This can be seen in Figure 4 as follows:
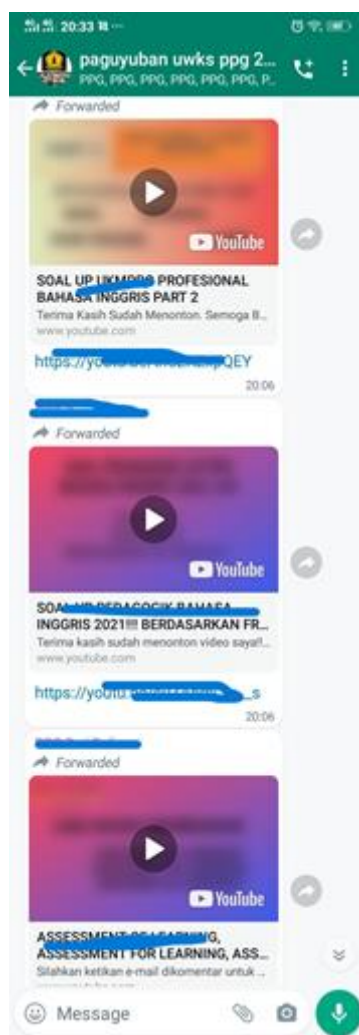
Figure 4. Using YouTube to learn the materials

The result also showed that there were several challenges encountered and strategies applied by the participants in preparing for the online Knowledge Test (UP). It answered the third research question about challenges the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) students face in preparing Online Knowledge Test (UP). The challenges were as follows:

Mr. M   : "Kuota paling sama tulisane kurang besar"

E   : "I think the quota and the text is not big"

The first challenges were the quota with internet connection and text size. In preparing for the online Knowledge Test (UP), the participants used digital tools online to search, download, and share documents and information. Quota became a big problem when there was no free wifi. The online activities consumed quota as the data package while the second challenge was the text on the cell phone was not big. The participants used a cell phone to read documents and information from the internet instead of laptops in some conditions. This made the reading process not enjoyable because of the text size. Laptops were considered better devices compared to cell phones in online learning because laptops provided larger and could do more

multitasks than cell phones. This made laptops more helpful in online learning and exam preparation.

Regarding the challenges of quota and text size, the participants applied strategies by borrowing a laptop from an older sibling and using the Wi-Fi available at the school. These strategies were considered a helpful alternative to encounter the challenges.

Mr. M   : "Pinjem laptop kakak sama wifi sekolah"

E   : "I borrow a laptop from my older sibling and used school Wi-Fi"

The third challenge was related to technological advances. In this case, the online Knowledge Test (UP) required specific specifications for the laptops. If the laptops did not fit the requirements, then the laptops would not be available for doing the test. Facing this challenge, the participants should borrow or find other laptops that fit the requirements.

Mrs. Y   : "laptopnya kan jadul. Harus spek bagus buat ujian jadi y acari pinjeman"

E   : "My laptop was outdated and not compatible for the online system. So, I borrowed a better laptop"

The fourth challenge was about a good source of exercise. It was not easy to find good sources because the exercises might come from untrusted sources. After all, documents downloaded from the internet are not one hundred percent safe and trusted. It was proven by the documents that were equipped with wrong answer keys and even no discussion or answers. However, the internet was really helpful for providing lots of sources of learning. The participants, in this case, looked for exercises from the Telegram group. In the telegram group, the participants were not required to join the group. The exercises from the Telegram group were considered good because it was closed to the exam clues and equipped with more accurate answer keys compared to other documents available from other sources.

Mr. I   : "aku nyari-nyari di grup telegram. Ya ndak join hanya donlot saja dan soal-soalnya bagus"

E   : "I downloaded documents containing exercises from the Telegram group yet I did not join it they are good"

Even though the documents from the Telegram group were considered the most beneficial ones, there were still several questions in the exercises that had no answer and were considered confusing for the participants. However, the Telegram Application was beneficial for online learning. Overcoming this challenge, the participants did not focus on the answer keys available. The participants prefer to read books about the materials and grammar to find the best answers.

Mrs. Y   : "ada beberapa yang ndak ada jawabannya malah salah. Jadi ya aku tidak terpaku sama kunci jawabannya. Aku buka buku-bukuku lagi sama cek grammar untuk cari jawaban yang benar"

E   : "There were several questions without suitable answers and even wrong answers. So, I open my book and grammar book to find the correct answer. I did not focus on the answer keys available"

Dealing with the supporting data, documentation was done by making screenshots of the participants' documents such as worksheets in both digital and non-digital forms. The recordings in the forms of audio and videos of the interviews also became the supporting data. Moreover, the participants' activities on social media used in preparing for the online Knowledge Test (UP) were also documented.

Discussion

Digital tools for learning are important. The use of them can help students in learning the materials (Carneiro et al., 2020; Kumar & Raja, 2019; Mucundanyi & Woodley, 2021). Moreover, the students can make use of digital tools in preparing themselves to face educational examinations. The students can use the digital tools for some purpose. In exam preparation, the students can use digital tools to find exercises from the previous year, look for exam predictions, and discuss them with other students about the exercises. This research provides new insights regarding digital literacy practices. Previous studies on digital literacy practices have not touched the field of teacher professional education, especially regarding the preparation of participants for the knowledge test (UP). The results of this study add to the findings of previous research regarding barriers to pre-service English teachers during teaching professional education (Warahmah et al., 2021). The results of the findings of this study are more specific, not only for pre-service English teachers but for in-service English teachers and those who take part in online teacher professional education programs. In addition, this research raises the topic of teacher professional education students who are preparing for the knowledge test (UP). In other words, the results of the findings of this study add insight into the obstacles faced specifically by students who are preparing to face UP. This research also produces findings on the strategies of these students to overcome the obstacles they face. Furthermore, this study also adds to the findings of previous research that reviews the challenges faced by in-service English teachers in online teacher professional education programs (Lokita & Utami, 2018). The results of this study add novelty because they reveal facts about the challenges faced by in-service teachers in the professional teacher education program that focuses on preparing students for the knowledge test (UP). Previous research did not focus on students preparing to face UP online. In addition, this study also adds novelty to previous research that reviews the students of the teacher professional education program (PPG) regarding the evaluation (Daud et al., 2020). This study explores areas that were not touched by previous research where this research presents findings of digital literacy practices for students in preparing for the knowledge test (UP). This research provides an overview of discoveries about what digital equipment is needed, how to use the equipment, what challenges are faced, and what strategies are applied to face these challenges to prepare themselves to face UP. In other words, the results of this study broaden and enrich the findings in digital literacy practices and teacher professional education where the results of this research can be useful for anyone who needs information related to these matters. Regarding the result of this research, the students used various digital tools for some purposes. The purposes were to find information, do exercises on the internet, discuss with other people about the exam in a discussion forum, and share ideas and experiences with the seniors who have faced the test earlier. Those digital tools were very helpful in supporting online learning (Mohammed Nasser Hassan Ja'ashan, 2020). For the students of the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG), the digital tools were also beneficial in preparing for the examination. Preparation to face an online examination could be

challenging. The online system was different from the offline one which could provide challenges for the students. Moreover, for those who are not familiar with digital tools and online systems. The challenges could be related to the lack of digital skills, internet connections, and psychological problems (Sajida & Ranjani, 2020; Simamora, 2020). This research added more insight into the challenges faced by the students in exam preparation. The challenges were quota, digital devices, laptop specifications, and source of exercises. The students had to spend too much quota that cost a lot when they did not have free wifi access. Besides, the students felt inconvenient learning using cell phones because the texts looked smaller than on laptops (Albó et al., 2019; Şad & Göktaş, 2014). The laptops also gave more challenges when the online exam came because only laptops with a specific specification could fulfill the requirement of the online system application. Another problem was the source of exercise. The students felt uneasy finding a good source for learning and doing preparation in facing the online examination and the sources were not one hundred percent safe and trusted (Li et al., 2016). The challenges were overcome by some strategies. The use of free wifi at school and some areas in the city center. The government has provided free wifi for people. The existence of free wifi was very beneficial for the students in overcoming the challenges (Bussemaker et al., 2011; Dogruer et al., 2011). The students also upgraded their digital devices by borrowing laptops from their colleagues. The students also made use of Telegram groups because the groups provided lots of exercises and documents for exam preparation. This case proved that Telegram groups were useful for online learning (Alahmad, 2020; Prokopyev et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

This research significantly contributes to the study of digital literacy practice related to teacher professional education because there is no previous research that touches on this part. From the findings of this study, it was found that students can take advantage of digital technology to prepare for UP. Apart from that, this research also finds facts about the challenges faced by teaching profession education students and strategies for dealing with them. This is a novelty for this research as evidence to strengthen and add new findings to complement the previous findings. Digital literacy practices were important for the students of the English Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG). The system of online learning and online final exam called Knowledge Test (UP) required all activities to be online. In preparing for the Knowledge Test (UP), the participants made use of several digital tools to successfully pass the final exam and graduate from the university that held the program. There were two kinds of online systems for the final exam. The first was online by visiting the university and the second was online from the participants' homes. The digital tools that became favorites of the participants were a laptop, WhatsApp, Google, Zoom, Google Meet, Brainly.com, YouTube, Offline dictionary, and Google drive. The digital tools were used to search for information related to the exercises, discussion, answers, storing, and sharing documents with other people to succeed in the final exam. In preparing for the final exam, the participants faced several challenges because self-study can be challenging (Ritter, 2017). However, the challenges were overcome by applying several strategies considered beneficial steps. The challenges cover things such as internet connections, technology advances, and sources. The strategies were by making use of Wi-Fi at school, upgrading the digital devices, and making use of Telegram groups. This research was limited to the investigation of English students' digital literacy practices of the Teacher Professional Education Program (PPG) in preparing for online knowledge test (UP). It is suggested to investigate the participants' perceptions towards the system of the test or students from different disciplines.

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