

TIPS & TRICKS FOR TODAY'S STUDENTS AND TOMORROW'S TRANSLATORS: INTERACTIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING METHODS

Asist. univ. dr. Andreea-Maria SĂRMAȘIU
Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: Numerous scholars (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958; Nida, 1964; Newmark, 1988; Baker, 1992; Chesterman, 1997; Venuti, 1998) state that texts are translated for a purpose or specific needs depending on the context, personal or professional. Under these circumstances, the translator should possess the ability to understand the context of the source text in order to identify the problems and the strategies for the translation. In other words, the translator should find the answers to the questions **why, for whom and for what purpose** the source text is translated to be able to determine the level of translatability of the text. Therefore, translation can be described as discipline-based and language-oriented research in connection with traditions, methods and priorities, as a communicative action with a communicative purpose and as a professional practice. This paper emphasizes this particular interdisciplinary approach in translation didactics through interactive teaching and learning methods chosen for specific purposes and needs depending on particular contexts.

Keywords: tips & tricks, students, translators, interactive teaching and learning methods, interdisciplinary approach

1. Introduction to translation techniques

From the perspective of a translator and teacher, the notion of *translation techniques* acquires two valences, which at first glance may seem different but, at the same time, complement each other, becoming complementary ideas. On the one hand, -translation techniques-, in the narrow sense of the word, in a particular context, refers to the name of the discipline with the same name, taught to first-year students in the Department of Applied Modern Languages (Faculty of Letters, UBB, Cluj-Napoca) – *Introduction to translation technique*. The ten tips and tricks presented in this paper are discussed and applied within this practical course.

On the other hand, -translation techniques-, in the wide meaning of the term, can be defined in various ways, within a debate on this subject concerning translation scholars, researchers, trainees, translators, teachers and students in Translation Studies who use this term either as a definition for the decisions taken before engaging in a translation process (translation strategies) or a definition for the methods or procedures applied during a translation process (the operationalization of the translation strategies under the form of a solution).

After a review of these two different points of view, we can retain that *translation techniques* can be used as an academic concept, describing the object of an academic practical course, but also as an operational concept, describing the tool(s) used during a translation process. Moreover, this concept can be associated

with a third element, didactic strategies, which “are considered procedures and actions”¹ because teachers use “various methods and techniques, to carry out the educational process where students must develop skills and competencies to achieve their learning”². In this context, translation techniques can be associated with didactic techniques, both leading to an interdisciplinary approach in translation didactics.

In what follows, we will present a reinterpretation of interactive teaching and learning methods based on a merging of translation and didactic strategies or techniques used as tips and tricks for today's students and tomorrow's translators.

2. 10 TIPS & TRICKS for Today's Students and Tomorrow's Translators

Teaching and learning translation involve a transfer of meaning and content from a source language to a target language, based on some key aspects. First of all, we need to be aware of the role of language proficiency. A good future translator should master vocabulary, grammar, syntax, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances of both source and target languages. Also, the same future translator should understand translation theory or grasp the concepts and principles of a theoretical framework specific to the translation field.

Secondly, practice is another aspect to consider. Practising a variety of text types, such as literary, technical, legal, medical or business texts, requires different skills, different steps involved in analysing those texts, or different decisions taken in order to realize the linguistic and cultural transfer from the source language to the target language. Additionally, placing all these text types in a real-life context can be considered real practice, bringing the translator closer to what a translation process entails. Besides that, discussing with other colleagues or specialists in the field can lead to constructive criticism that can help the future translator identify different ways of improvement.

Moreover, familiarizing students with computer-assisted translation (CAT) tools, or using specialized dictionaries, glossaries and other online resources can help them develop their work mechanisms and build their databases, while also learning to filter recommended sources and empower themselves to assimilate truly useful elements in this process.

Furthermore, we need to be sensitive to cultural differences, because translation goes beyond linguistic transfer and involves cultural understanding through different nuances, contexts, or socio-cultural factors. Additionally, we need to be aware of ethical considerations, especially in aspects like our possible documents' confidentiality and clients' privacy, but also the accuracy of our translation because misinterpretations can have serious consequences. In this context, explaining to students how to implement quality control processes in their

¹ Cecilia Delgado, *Didactic strategies to strengthen creative thinking in the classroom. A meta-analytic study*, in *Revista Innova Education*, Instituto Universitario de Innovación Ciencia y Tecnología Inuidi Perú, Perú, 2022, Vol 4 No 1, p. 55.

² Cruz A. Hernández, Ana Yelena Guaraté, *Modelos didácticos para situaciones y contextos de aprendizaje*, in *Tendencias Pedagógicas*, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Madrid, 2019, p. 188.

translation process can improve their work and lead them to adhere to honesty, integrity and professionalism.

The continuous update of knowledge and skills through professional development opportunities (e.g., workshops with specialists, conferences, academic and professional exchanges) can represent another key aspect, encouraging the continuing education process, but also the specialization in a particular field.

Reviewing all these key aspects, we can conclude that teaching and learning translation, namely translation techniques, involves theoretical knowledge, practical exercises combined with professional skills, real-life contexts, cultural awareness and ethics. Suppose we return to the theoretical context of translation theory. In that case, we can mention Nida who exposes two types of procedures: technical procedures, for example, the analysis of the source and target language, source text, semantic and syntactic elements, and organizational procedures, such as the continuous re-evaluation of the translator's work, as consulting parallel texts or checking the text's communicative effectiveness³. Also, regarding the organizational procedures, the scholar proposes some strategies concerning the organization of translation projects: determining the need for a translation, establishing the planning (types of translation, level of language, qualifications and training, organization and procedure), involving the community; finding the right translator(s); working out basic principles and procedures; preparing and checking the drafts, but also final documents⁴.

Thus, the transfer of meaning and content is possible due to the balanced approach maintained between translation and didactic techniques used under the umbrella of some specific tips and tricks. These tips and tricks can be implemented during the entire translation process: pre-translation phase, translation phase and post-translation phase, under the shape of decisions taken before the translation act, strategies applied during the translation act, or continuous professional development performed after the translation act. In what follows, we will talk about these tips and tricks, mentioning from the very beginning that each method of teaching and learning translation techniques represents a mixture of classical translation strategies and pedagogical methods. The term is proposed by us (the author) for better monitoring and understanding of the entire process/mechanism presented.

a) Interactive Translation

The first method implemented was named “Interactive Translation” (*Traducerea interactivă*) because interaction means that “all the stages in the process interact” (OxfordLanguages)⁵, and if we transpose the idea into the context of our translation course, all students interact to reach appropriate translation decisions in the given context. This method represents a reinterpretation of the “jigsaw

³ Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: Brill, 1964.

⁴ Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: Brill, 1964, p. 174.

⁵ See also: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> (Last accessed: November 2023)

technique” which “is a research-based cooperative learning technique invented and developed in the early 1970s by Elliot Aronson and his students at the University of Texas and the University of California”⁶. This method can be described as a puzzle, each piece — each student— is essential for the completion of the task, therefore each part has to interact to achieve the goals of the activity and to meet the specified conditions or demands.

The jigsaw technique, borrowed from the didactics field, can be adapted under the form of our reinterpreted method, *Traducerea interactivă*, by associating it with the tasks assigned to translators in a translation agency. Each student has a well-defined role and he/she can fulfil it only through interaction with peers. More specifically, we implemented this method in the *Introduction to translation technique* course (ITT EN), using a text from the field of human rights (*Let’s make 2023 a year of turning the tide on human rights*⁷) in two different cases.

In the first case, the method was applied in the pre-translation phase, involving the research of the source text for translating it into the target language. Students, divided into teams of 3-4 people, were asked to compile a list of sources and resources they could use for preparing the translation in the mentioned field. They used electronic research and discussions with colleagues as working methods, each team composing a list of sources/resources. After this stage, students presented their research, discussed the collected elements, and identified similarities and differences between the proposed lists. Ultimately, an agreement was reached to compile a common list (Table 1), useful in the next phase of the translation process.

Sources/Resources (to be used in the documentation of translation from English to Romanian in the field of Human Rights)

1. **Glosar – Council of Europe:**
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/glossary>
2. **Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People**
<https://rm.coe.int/compass-eng-rev-2020-web/1680a08e40>
3. **Glossary of Human Rights Terms (American University)**
<http://fs2.american.edu/mertus/www/hr%20glossary.htm>
4. **Equality and Human Rights Commission – Glossary of terms**
<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/secondary-education-resources/useful-information/glossary-terms>
5. **GLOSAR al Convenției Europene pentru Drepturile Omului**
<https://rm.coe.int/16806f0d9f>
6. **Drepturile omului și întreprinderilor**
<https://e-justice.europa.eu/>
7. **Glosar CRCCD**

⁶ See Jigsaw CLASSROOM (2023), available at: <https://www.jigsaw.org/> (Last accessed: November 2023)

⁷ The source text is available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/let%E2%80%99s-make-2023-year-turning-tide-human-rights_en (Last accessed: November 2023)

<p>https://ccd.intercultural.ro/glosar/</p> <p>8. Consiliul Uniunii Europene https://www.consilium.europa.eu/ro/policies/human-rights/#:~:text=Anul%202023%20marcheaz%C4%83%20cea%20de,%20a%20ap%C4%83ra%20universalitatea%20acestora</p> <p>9. Parlamentul European (rezoluție) https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0086_RO.html</p> <p>10. AGERPRES https://www.agerpres.ro/</p> <p>11. RFI https://www.rfi.ro/</p> <p>12. Ministerul Afacerilor Externe https://www.mae.ro/</p> <p>13. Înalțul Comisariat pentru Refugiați al Națiunilor Unite https://www.unhcr.org/ro/homepage/despre-noi</p>

Table 1. *Traducerea interactivă* method. List of common sources/resources compiled for preparing a translation in the human rights field (Introduction to translation technique course)

In the second case, the method was applied in the translation phase. Students were assigned specific roles (translators, reviewers, domain specialists), and fulfilled these roles through continuous interaction throughout the translation process.

As a conclusion drawn after implementing this method, we can affirm that the idea of Nida regarding the involvement of community during a translation process can be transposed in this particular context, the interaction between students, who are playing different roles and are accomplishing all the tasks demanded, conducting to the involvement of an entire community aiming to obtain a final product: the translation of the source text.

b) Personification in Translation (personified translation)

The second method implemented, “Personification in translation” (*Traducerea personificată*) is based on the definition of the term *personification* which represents “the attribution of a personal nature or human characteristics to something non-human, or the representation of an abstract quality in human form” (OxfordLanguages)⁸. How could we interpret this attribution in the field of translation, and more exactly under the form of a didactic-linguistic method of teaching and learning translation? This attribution process is developed under three main stages. Firstly, the student starts by analysing the source text, because, according to Nord, “a source-text analysis is necessary in order to decide on functional priorities of the translation strategy and this analysis should be focused on subject matter, content, presuppositions, composition, non-verbal elements, lexic,

⁸ See also: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> (Last accessed: November 2023)

sentence structure and suprasegmental features”⁹. Secondly, at the end of this analysis, the student prepares a list of identified issues, both in terms of problems/difficulties and challenges posed by the text in question. Thirdly, the student chooses a style guide to find solutions for those issues, solutions that could help him understand better the source text, but also assimilate the target text and maintain a consistent content style, following specific guidelines. (e.g., *European Commission English Style Guide, How to write clearly, Interinstitutional style guide*). The student presents these solutions during an oral presentation, in front of the class, emphasizing the issue identified, the solution proposed, and a comparison between common and different elements of source and target languages.

We can retain that, by implementing this method, the student is the person who personifies his/her translation during the pre-translation phase through the research process; during the translation phase through the solutions chosen and during the post-translation phase through the oral presentation performed in front of the colleagues.

c) Translation as debate (debatable translation)

The third method is called “Translation as debate” (*Traducerea în dezbatere*) and it is implemented during the pre-translation phase and during the post-translation phase.

From a historical perspective, a debate is “a formal discussion on a particular matter in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward and which usually ends with a vote” (OxfordLanguages)¹⁰. From a teaching perspective, a debate can be described as “the opportunity to work in a collaborative and cooperative group setting”¹¹, students being able to discuss and organize their points of view for one side of an argument and to examine controversial topics¹², but also to “strengthen skills in the areas of leadership, interpersonal influence, teambuilding, group problem solving, and oral presentation”¹³.

In our particular context, this method was applied in a specialized domain, the medical-tourism domain, for the translation of the text *Medical tourism to Mexico is on the rise, but it can come with risks*¹⁴. The debate was developed through three main rounds. In the first round, before starting the preparation of the translation, the students, working in teams, debated the priorities of translating established by Nida:

⁹ Christiane Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity*, Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997, pp. 62-67.

¹⁰ See also: <https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/> (Last accessed: November 2023)

¹¹ Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, *Classroom debates*, In *Instructional guide for university faculty and teaching assistants*, 2012, Retrieved from <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide>

¹² Northern Illinois University Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, *Classroom debates*, In *Instructional guide for university faculty and teaching assistants*, 2012, Retrieved from <https://www.niu.edu/citl/resources/guides/instructional-guide>

¹³ David M. Leuser, *Classroom Debate*, New Hampshire: Plymouth State University, 2003.

¹⁴ The source text is available at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/03/07/health/medical-tourism-mexico-trend-wellness/index.html> (Last accessed: November, 2023)

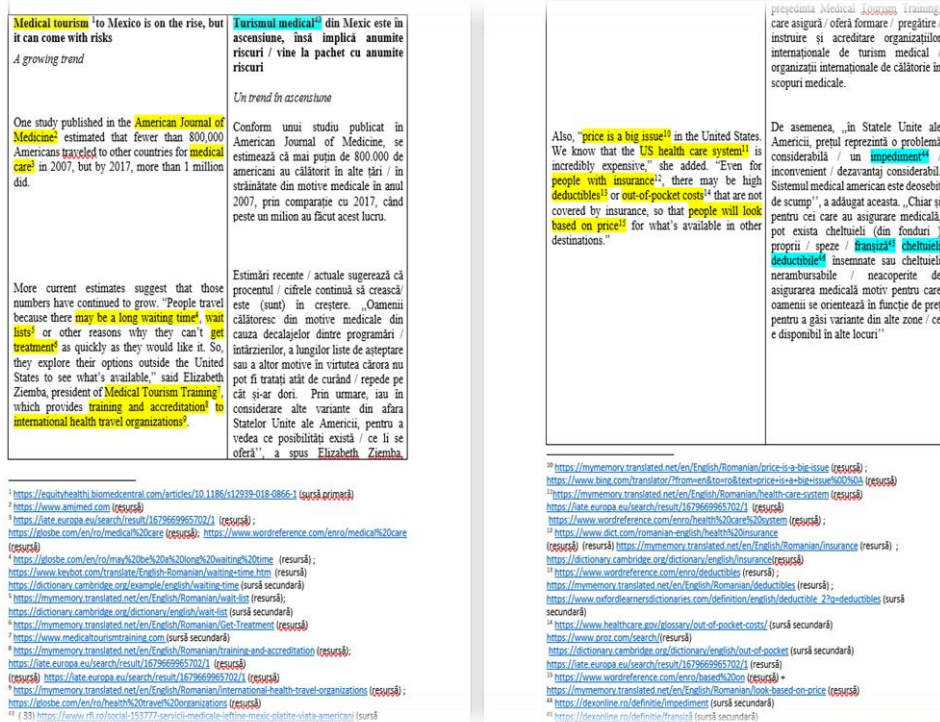


Figure 1. Translation as a debate method. First-year LMA students’ options during the translation process of a specialized text from the medical-tourism domain

how to choose the equivalents for the given text (“contextual consistency has priority over verbal consistency or word-for-word concordance”); how to adapt the given text for being accepted by the audience (“dynamic equivalence has priority over formal correspondence”); how to convey the message (“the heard form of language has priority over the written form”); and how to choose the audience (“forms that are used by and acceptable to the audience for which a translation is intended have priority over forms that may be traditionally more prestigious”)¹⁵. In the second round, during the pre-translation phase, the students composed of list of main sources/resources to be used in order to find the proper equivalents for specialized terms or phrases and they debated their options in order to find the suitable ones for the given text. In the third round, after translating the text, the students presented arguments in order to support their linguistic and cultural decisions during the translation phase and to choose the best option in that particular context (Figure 1).

The implementation of such a method is welcomed in a translation course as it develops both the critical thinking of students and their persuasive and self-persuasive power over their own decisions. It also lays the groundwork for the

¹⁵ Eugene Nida, *Towards a Science of Translating: With Special Reference to Principles and Procedures Involved in Bible Translating*, Leiden: Brill, 1964, pp. 14-15.

execution of an organized activity with clearly established objectives and targeted outcomes from the very beginning.

d) AI-powered Translation

This method, “AI-powered translation”, is used during our ITT EN courses because we are aware that, nowadays, students and teachers need to be taught how to reliably and safely use machine translation tools. We work with specialized source texts (agriculture, climate, legal, economic, political, and digital fields) and we compare machine translation recommendations and student recommendations during our post-editing sessions.

e) Translation as workshop (collaborative translation)

Another method applied, “Translation as workshop” (*Atelier de traducere*), is based on simulating different jobs in the translation industry. In 2022 and 2023, first-year LMA students applied theoretical aspects in two mock projects about children’s literature translation organized as part of the Introduction to Translation Techniques course. They simulated the activity of a translation agency, having up to one month at their disposal to provide a translation for different books: in 2022, *Ladybird Tales: The Gingerbread Man* by Vera Southgate (2012) and *It’s Mine!* By Leo Lionni (1996), and in 2023, *The Tiger Movie* produced by Disney (2000), *Zip and Zap at the Zoo* by Sheryl Webster (2010) and *Brave Little Beasts* by Wendy Meddour (2016). During this workshop, the students undertook roles such as project managers, translators, editors, proofreaders, and illustrators in an attempt to take the pulse of the literary translation field and understand the particularities and problems that define children’s literature. Starting from the idea that “analysing a translation project means establishing from the very beginning the main phases: pre-translation, translation and post-translation phase”¹⁶, three main directions were outlined. In the pre-translation phase, emphasis was placed on project management and organization. The translation phase involved the strategic planning, execution, and final proofreading of the translation process. Subsequently, during the post-translation phase, students conducted a retrospective examination of the challenges associated with translating for children. Furthermore, in 2023, the students involved in this project conducted a subtitling project for the film adaptations of these books. As a conclusion, teaching translation through this workshop enabled students to discover that translation tests the adaptability to the target language and culture, but also to the target audience, considering the three main principles of translation: equivalence, conventionality and functionality.

f) Translation as investigation

“Translation as investigation” (*Ancheta traductologică*) is another method used during the pre-translation phase. The students carry out specific activities in

¹⁶ Andreea-Maria Sărmaşiu, *Challenges of legal translation: specific problems and strategies identified through a virtual workshop*. In *Professional communication and translation studies*, 14:158-167. Available at <https://sc.upt.ro/ro/publicatii/pcts/issues-pcts/586-14-2021>, 2021.

order to prepare for the translation phase. First of all, they are investigating different corpora for the correct use of terms in context and the identification of collocations and idiomatic expressions (Sketch Engine, Corpus of Contemporary American English, British National Corpus, Corpora Collection Leipzig). Then, they create personalized glossaries, within specialized domains as well as with general vocabulary (source and target term, definition, context, source, observations). Furthermore, they select dictionaries to serve as references (Cambridge Dictionary, Collins, Oxford Dictionary); terminological databases to serve as reliable references for terminological information (IATE, TERMIUM Plus); style guides (EC English Style Guide, How to Write Clearly, Interinstitutional Style Guide). Moreover, they consult daily the press (CNN, Euronews, The Guardian, BBC, New York Times, The Washington Post, Digi24, TVR), using the quickest method, namely following on Facebook and Twitter, but also the latest news and updates from the field of translations (Slator). Last but not least, the students establish an efficient workflow (e.g., analysis of the source text - research - glossary compilation - translation - (self)revision).

g) Flipped translation

The flipped translation method (*Traducerea inversată*) supposes three main stages. In the first stage, students receive a translated text by a machine translation (DeepL, ChatGPT, e-Translation) and they need to revise it from the perspective of a native language reader, without consulting any sources. In the second stage, students have to re-translate the text revised in English and they can use any kind of sources. In the third stage, students compare the source text (the original one) and their re-translation, analysing the linguistic elements, the cultural level of adaptability and the message conveyed.

h) Crossed translation

Our next method, “Crossed translation” (*Traducerea încrucișată*) is based on cross-curricular learning which happens “when the skills, knowledge and attitudes of two or more subjects are applied to a problem, theme or idea”¹⁷. In our particular context, this method is applied to specialized translation fields and consists of meetings with experts from various fields. For example, we implemented this method for the translation of a technical document, from English into Romanian, a document that contained instructions for using electric devices.

i) Peer review

The peer review method (*Revizia de la egal la egal...*) is similar to the flipped translation method, students receiving two versions in Romanian of the same source texts, versions translated by two different machine translation tools (DeepL, ChatGPT, e-Translation). Students’ task is to compare the two versions and to comment mainly on the linguistic solutions, proposing a better option if necessary.

¹⁷ Jonathan Barnes, *An Introduction to Cross-Curricular Learning*, In *The Creative Primary Curriculum*, Second Edition, Chapter XIII, Sage, 2015, p. 266.

j) “I’m here NOW...”

The last method proposed is named “I’m here NOW...”, (*Sunt aici acum...*) and it is applied during the post-translation phase. Students are asked to self-question regarding their translation journey: What skills did they possess before each translation activity? What have they acquired before and during the translation activity? Where do they need to intervene further to continue their professional development? An extremely useful exercise in assessing and self-evaluating their abilities at the beginning of their academic and professional journey, with cases where students have intervened automatically, in the short and long term (portfolios with words from various fields and news from current situations; weekly readings; attendance at various workshops and thematic conferences; applied discussions with peers as well as with translators and specialists).

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the landscape of interactive teaching and learning methods, specifically in the domain of translation, emphasizes a transformative era in didactics and translation fields, bringing in dynamic and engaging strategies that surpass conventional pedagogical approaches and align with the principles of an interdisciplinary approach. The exploration of interactive translation teaching and learning methods underscores their multifaceted advantages, covering language and culture comprehension, but also the development of essential skills.

From this investigation, we can observe the impact of these methods on student engagement. The interactive nature of these approaches, whether involving collaborative translation projects, debates, or individual investigations, captures the attention of students and sparks their curiosity. By actively immersing students in the translation process, teachers create an environment where language acquisition is not a passive reception but an active one. This shift from a traditional model to a participatory approach empowers students to become active contributors to their translation learning journey, rendering the experience more meaningful and continuous.

The reinterpretation of classical teaching and learning methods proves particularly effective in accommodating diverse learning styles within the realm of translation. Recognizing the variety of strengths, preferences, and needs that students possess, educators can tailor their pedagogical strategies to address this diversity. Moreover, the cultivation of critical thinking skills emerges as an achievement of interactive translation teaching and learning methods. Encouraging students to question themselves, analyse, and apply theoretical knowledge in practical scenarios equips them with the essential tools for success in the translation field, preparing them for the multifaceted demands of the translation profession.

As we reflect on the impact of interactive translation teaching and learning methods, it becomes evident that their influence extends far beyond the translation practical course. These methods not only shape students into independent translators but also contribute to the development of language professionals. The collaborative nature of interactive learning fosters effective communication, teamwork, and

interpersonal skills, attributes that are vital in the globalized context of translation practices.

To sum up, all the methods presented throughout this study highlight the potential of teaching and learning translation approaches in enhancing linguistic and cultural engagement through diverse methods and skills. As teachers continue to embrace and transform these methods, they contribute not only to the academic success of their students but also to the cultivation of professionals who are well-prepared to meet the challenges of an interconnected world.

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