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WRITING STRATEGIES USED BY EFL STUDENTS IN WRITING UNDERGRADUATE THESIS AT UNIROW TUBAN

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Abstract
Keywords Writing strategies; EFL students; Undergraduate thesis.	*One skill that is considered as the most difficult in English is writing, especially for university students who have to master academic writing because they have final project in writing undergraduate thesis. In order to solve their writing problem, students can apply writing strategies. Therefore, this study is about writing strategies used by EFL students in undergraduate thesis writing process at English Education study program. This study's objectives are to find out the kinds of writing strategies, and the dominant writing strategy applied by EFL students in writing undergraduate thesis. This research employed procedure of qualitative. The source of the data is eleven EFL students of 2019 class at UNIROW. The data were taken from the questionnaire and interview. The result showed that there are 8 strategies found in before writing, 14 strategies in during writing, and 16 strategies in after writing used by EFL students. The dominant strategy applied is during writing with the average score of 3.68, which can be categorized as high frequency, followed by before writing (3.54), and after writing (3.23). In conclusion, writing strategies are essential in assisting students during writing undergraduate thesis.*

INTRODUCTION

In this era, students face many written communications as a demand of academic scopes (Rizqiya et al, 2017). One of them is academic writing (Salsabila et al, 2023; Dari et al, 2022). Students need to give more attention for academic writing to cope with both communicative and academic requirements (Ajmal & Irfan, 2020; Ismiati & Pebriantika, 2020). Academic writing is considered as complex skill (Iqlima et al, 2023) and difficult assignment for EFL/ESL (Mudra, 2023). Academic writing is also a demanding task towards EFL students (Derakhshan & Shirejini, 2020). It is because they must effectively express their intended message in order to reach a language's academic standards (Abas & Aziz, 2018; Arifin, 2020; Cheung, 2021). According to Abas & Aziz (2016), the students from English Education major in university level in Indonesia are required to produce tasks, projects, even theses in English as part of academic writing. Academic writing can be a medium for formal communication (Fajrina et al 2021). Unfortunately, many students lack abilities needed to develop successful writing communication (Virdyana, 2016).

One form of academic writing that should be completed by the higher education institutions students as final project is thesis (Wahyuni et al, 2019). It becomes one requirement for students to graduate from bachelor level (Panggabean, 2015). Thesis plays important role as writing activity of research (Turmudi, 2019). When writing thesis, students require organized thinking, strong organizational skills, and unique language proficiency (Mahbubah et al, 2021;

Syafryadin et al, 2023). Not only that, students also have to follow the format given by university because each university has different provisions for writing thesis.

However, writing undergraduate thesis is not easy. The students often face some problems during the process of writing thesis. Al Mubarak (2017) stated that writing thesis is hampered by grammatical errors, particularly those involving marks, the use of prepositions, weak sentences, unmatched structure, steadiness, and irregular verb usage. Another problem is the students frequently do not understand about the writing conventions, which leads them to plagiarize (Silfiani et al, 2018). What makes writing thesis more difficult is because it involves cognitive process which requires the capacity to use appropriate language repertoires (Kasiri & Fazilatfar, 2016). In addition, students have to write in English, therefore this will be one of the extra challenges for them (Nenotek et al, 2022).

Concerning to the difficulties of writing undergraduate thesis, each student needs to learn how to communicate the argument rationally and provide evidence in intellectual perspective to present the arguments in a logical order (Lestari, 2020). Azizah & Budiman (2018) stated the researcher should develop ideas from the perspective of experts. Rahayu & Moesarofah (2022) said that the assistance from the thesis advisor, family, and friends also help students to compose the thesis successfully. In other words, in order to solve the problems during writing undergraduate thesis, students should have a good writing strategy. The application of the right strategy can have an influence on the success of language learning for students (Panggabean & Triassanti, 2020).

According to Mastan et al (2017), strategy in writing guides students to create a good writing. Fajrina et al (2021) stated that higher English achiever students apply strategies in writing theses more than those with lower achiever. Writing strategy is essential in both academic context and professional area (Noviasari et al, 2023). Petric & Czarl (2003) categorized writing strategies into three stages. Those stages are before, during, and after writing. There are five strategies in before writing; time planning, mental planning, expert model's reference, and outlining. In during writing, there are ten strategies; introduction first, sentence verification, paragraph verification, outline revision, language transfer, sentence simplification, positive grammar and vocabulary, synonym, dictionary, and peer cooperation. As for the after writing, there are eight strategies; reading aloud, no revision, revision, drafting, instruction matching, respiting, collation, and self-rewarding.

Many studies focusing on the writing strategies, especially in academic writing context have been conducted, for instance writing strategies during writing the thesis' research background (Parwati & Sugesti, 2023), motivation-regulation strategies in writing thesis (Diasti & Mbato, 2020), and descriptive research on writing strategies (Hutabarat, 2022; Sa'diah et al, 2022; Ren & Zhu, 2023). There are similarities and differences between the current study and earlier studies. The similarities lie in identifying the writing strategies used during writing undergraduate thesis. Meanwhile, the differences are in theory used. In some previous research on writing strategies, most researchers used theories from Oxford about Language Learning Strategies. Some instruments in Oxford theory are too general so that they do not lead to writing strategies. Furthermore, there is a theory of motivation-regulation strategies in writing stated by Wolter. This theory focuses more on motivational strategies that are owned during writing, so they are less able to reach real actions in writing strategies. As for the theory of writing strategies from Petric & Czarl is still little used in research on writing strategies, so researchers are interested in using the theory in this study. The reason researchers chose Petric & Czarl theory is that this theory covers the entire writing process, from preparation, implementation, to revision. Thus, it can be concluded that the study about the writing strategies is still important to find various information about the writing strategies to solve the problem during writing process.

RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher employed a descriptive qualitative method research strategy using the case study design in order to gather and evaluate the data. Descriptive research uses qualitative methodologies to offer a comprehensive profile of an event, condition, or circumstance (Creswell, 2014). The researcher utilized the qualitative strategy to gather numerical data from close-format questionnaires. The results of the questionnaires and interview were then examined qualitatively.

The participants in this study are students who had graduated from English Education Study Program at UNIROW in the 2022/2023 year. The researcher selected 11 students who got the highest score in undergraduate thesis subject in the 2019 English Education class. The consideration of choosing the graduated students with the highest score because they had completed the final project in the form of writing undergraduate thesis. Moreover, according to Fajrina, et al (2021), students with higher English proficiency and achievement in writing apply more writing strategies than those with lower English proficiency.

The questionnaire of writing strategies was adopted from Petric & Czarl (2003) with some modifications. There are 38 items used to assess the writing strategies used by EFL students during undergraduate thesis writing. Those 38 items consist of 8 before writing strategy statements, 14 during writing strategy statements, and 16 after writing strategy statements. The researcher made slight modifications to the questionnaire to suit the research's purpose. The kind of survey uses rating scales or, more commonly, the Likert Scale (1-5). Each question consists of five available options: Never or Almost Never Used (1), Generally Not Used (2), Sometimes Used (3), Usually Used (4), Always or Almost Always Used (5) (Fajrina et al, 2021). The second instrument is interview. In order to confirm the questionnaire result, the researcher interviewed six students that have similar strategies in writing undergraduate thesis. The researcher also used smartphone to record and take documentation of the interview process. All data were analyzed qualitatively through data reduction by identifying, grouping and coding into emergent themes of each type of writing strategies, data display, describing, interpreting, and conclusion drawing.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
Research Findings
Types of Writing Strategies Used by EFL Students in Writing Undergraduate Thesis

This section focuses on explaining the result of the writing strategies questionnaire. The following is a presentation of the analysis of the collected data:

The types of writing strategies used by EFL students consist of before writing (planning), during writing (drafting), and after writing (revising).

Table 1
Overall writing strategies used in each stage

Stage	Mean	Level
Before Writing (Planning)	3.54	High
During Writing (Drafting)	3.68	High
After Writing (Revising)	3.23	Medium
Overall Writing	3.48	Medium

The table 1 above shows that all of the writing strategies were utilized by EFL students in writing undergraduate thesis. The during writing (drafting stage) is the most strategy used (M= 3.68). The second most strategy used is before writing (planning) with the mean result of 3.54. As for the least strategy used is after writing (revising) (M=3.23). Overall, the writing strategies are utilized by the participants at medium level as showed in the result of mean in the overall writing (M=3.48).

Table 2
Overall before writing strategies

No	Strategies	Frequency					M	Level
		N	G	S	U	A		
1.	Reread the structure/format of undergraduate thesis before writing	1	-	1	4	5	4.09	High
2.	Look at a model written by a native or more proficient writer	-	1	1	6	3	4.00	High
3.	Write an outline of my thesis	1	1	-	4	5	4.00	High
4.	Have a plan in mind but not on paper	-	1	1	8	1	3.81	High
5.	Note down words and short notes related to the topic	-	3	2	2	4	3.63	High
6.	Write notes or an outline in my native language	2	1	3	2	3	3.27	Medium
7.	Make timetable	2	1	4	2	2	3.09	Medium
8.	Start writing without having a plan	2	3	5	1	-	2.45	Low
	MEAN						3.54	High

From the findings above, it can be concluded that there are 8 strategies in the before writing stage. 5 of them are used with high frequency. Those strategies are rereading the structure/format of undergraduate thesis before writing (planning), looking at a model written by a native or more proficient writer (expert's model reference), writing outline of the thesis (outlining), having a plan in mind but not on paper (mental planning), and noting down words and short notes related to the topic (outlining). The most strategy used in before writing is rereading the structure/format of undergraduate thesis before writing. This strategy can guide students in writing a thesis correctly, according to applicable guidelines. The student 1 revealed:

Student 1: "Menurutku harus melihat ketentuan karena itu merupakan pedoman penulisan yang baik dan benar. Jadi, semisal aku tidak tahu harus menulis bagian ini seperti apa, cek lagi ketentuannya seperti apa."

Meanwhile, there are 2 strategies used in medium scale, namely writing notes or an outline in native language (outlining) and making timetable (planning). As for the least strategy used by the students, there is strategy of writing without having plan (no preparation or no plan).

Table 3
Overall during writing strategies

No	Strategies	Frequency					M	Level
		N	G	S	U	A		
1.	Reread what I have written to get ideas how to continue	-	1	-	2	8	4.54	High
2.	Find a similar English word that I know	-	1	2	2	6	4.18	High
3.	Simplify what I want to write if I don't know how to express my thoughts in English	-	-	3	4	4	4.09	High
4.	Write the thesis in sequence	1	-	2	2	6	4.09	High
5.	Write the words in my native language and later try to find an appropriate English word	-	-	4	3	4	4.00	High
6.	Go back to the outline and make changes in it	-	-	5	4	2	3.72	High
7.	Go for sure in grammar and vocabulary	-	1	3	5	2	3.72	High
8.	Write bits of the text in my native language and then translate them into English	-	-	6	3	2	3.63	High
9.	Use a bilingual dictionary	-	1	4	4	2	3.63	High
10.	Stop after a few sentences or a whole paragraph	1	1	2	5	2	3.54	High
11.	Stop writing and look up the dictionary	-	2	4	3	2	3.45	High

12.	Ask somebody to help out when I have problems	1	1	3	4	2	3.45	High
13.	Stop after each sentence to read again	1	2	4	2	2	3.18	Medium
14.	Use a monolingual dictionary	3	2	5	1	-	2.54	Medium
	MEAN						3.68	High

Based on the findings above, it can be known that there are 14 strategies used in during writing stage. There are 12 strategies utilized with high frequency. Those strategies are rereading to get ideas how to continue (sentence verification and paragraph verification), finding a similar English word (synonym), simplifying what the students want to write (sentence simplification), writing the thesis in sequence from introduction to conclusion (introduction first), writing the word in their native language and later try to find an appropriate English word, going back to the outline and making changes in it (outline revision), going for sure in grammar and vocabulary (positive grammar and vocabulary), writing bits of the text in native language and then translate them into English (language transfer), using a bilingual dictionary (dictionary), stopping after a few sentences or a whole paragraph (sentence verification and paragraph verification), stopping writing and looking up the dictionary (dictionary), and asking somebody to help out when the students have problems (peer cooperation). The strategy used the most in during writing strategy is rereading what the students have written to get ideas how to continue. This helped the students in organizing the idea and smoothening the process of writing. The students reread what they have written, then added other references to get an idea of how to continue the thesis. The student 3 explained below:

Student 3: "Kalau aku biasanya searching sih, harus cari referensi-referensi dari penulis skripsi dulu terus dibaca-baca, nah biasanya habis baca-baca langsung bermunculan ide-idenya."

As for the medium scale, there are 2 strategies, that are stopping after each sentence to reread (sentence verification) and using a monolingual strategy (dictionary). No student used this strategy with low frequency. In conclusion, the students tend to use the overall strategy in during writing stage.

Table 4
Overall after writing strategies

No	Strategies	Frequency					M	Level
		N	G	S	U	A		
1.	Check my mistakes after I get back the thesis with feedback from the advisor	1	-	-	2	8	4.45	High
2.	Give myself a reward	1	-	1	2	7	4.27	High
3.	Check if my thesis matches the requirements	-	1	2	4	4	4.00	High
4.	Use dictionary when revising	-	2	3	4	2	3.54	High
5.	Make changes in vocabulary	-	-	6	4	1	3.54	High
6.	Focus on one thing at a time when revising or rechecking	-	2	4	2	3	3.54	High
7.	Make changes in the sentence structure	-	-	8	3	-	3.27	Medium
8.	Read what I have written when I have finished the whole thesis	2	-	5	2	2	3.18	Medium
9.	Leave the thesis aside for a couple of days and then I can see it in a new perspective	-	1	8	1	1	3.18	Medium
10.	Make changes in the content or ideas	2	1	5	3	-	2.81	Medium
11.	Show my thesis to somebody and ask for opinion	1	3	5	1	1	2.81	Medium

12.	Make changes in the structure of the thesis	2	1	7	1	-	2.63	Medium
13.	Drop my first draft and start writing again	3	2	3	2	1	2.63	Medium
14.	Compare my thesis with the thesis written by my friends on the same topic	2	2	2	4	1	2.63	Medium
15.	Read my thesis aloud	3	2	3	3	-	2.54	Medium
16.	Hand thesis without reading it	5	1	3	1	1	2.27	Low
	MEAN						3.23	Medium

Based on the findings above, it can be known there are 16 strategies in after writing stage. 6 of them are utilized with high frequency. Those strategies are checking the mistakes after the students get back the thesis with feedback from the advisor (collation), giving a self-reward for completing the thesis (self-rewarding), checking if the thesis matches the requirement (instruction matching), using dictionary when revising, making changes in vocabulary (revision), and focusing on one thing at a time when revising or rechecking (revision). The most after writing strategy used by EFL students is checking the mistakes after the students get back the thesis with feedback from the advisor. The students got feedback from the supervisor in the form of suggestions and directions on the presentation of ideas, literature review, theory, research results, and conclusions. This feedback was then used to revise their thesis, as stated by the student 5:

Student 5: "Tiap kali bimbingan, selalu ada revisi dan feedback dari dosen pembimbing. Yang direvisi banyak aspek, mulai dari penyajian ide, kajian pustakanya, teori, hasil riset, sampai kesimpulan. Tapi meski begitu, dosen pembimbing juga ngasih feedback kayak misal ngasih arahan seharusnya yang benar gimana."

Meanwhile, there are 9 strategies utilized with medium frequency. The strategies are making changes in the sentence structure (revision), reading when they have finished the whole thesis, leaving the thesis aside for a couple of days and then the students can see it in a new perspective (respiting), showing the thesis to somebody and asking for opinion, making changes in the structure of the thesis (revision), dropping the first draft and starting to write again (drafting), comparing the thesis with the thesis written by friends, and reading thesis aloud (reading aloud). As for the least strategy utilized by the students is handing the thesis without reading it.

The Dominant Writing Strategies Applied by EFL Students in Writing Undergraduate Thesis

The data of different frequency of writing strategies used were displayed in the table below:

Table 5
Writing strategies rank

No	Subject	BWS	DWS	AWS
1.	SA	4.13	3.50	3.25
2.	SB	3.13	3.50	3.31
3.	SC	3.75	4.07	3.06
4.	SD	4.13	3.57	3.38
5.	SE	4.38	4.50	3.75
6.	SF	2.25	2.35	2.25
7.	SG	3.75	3.71	3.19
8.	SH	2.75	3.29	2.81
9.	SI	3.00	3.93	3.31
10.	SJ	3.38	3.64	2.88
11.	SK	4.38	4.50	4.44

	MEAN	3.54	3.68	3.23
	FREQUENCY CATEGORY	High	High	Medium
	RANK	2	1	3

From the table above, it can be interpreted that during writing strategies are the most strategies utilized by the students. The mean of the average score shows 3.68, which means the students usually use this strategy. According to the interview result, the during writing strategies can help the students to control the thesis process so that the students feel more confident when writing, as stated by the student 3:

Student 3: "Sangat penting sih, soalnya strategi ini bisa untuk mengendalikan proses menulis kita sehingga kita lebih percaya diri selama menulis skripsi."

Moreover, another student added that the strategies in during writing stage can help the students to ensure that the thesis written becomes more organized. In addition, the strategies can also be a reference during thesis writing. The student 4 said below:

Student 4: "Menurut saya tahap-tahap itu penting dalam menulis skripsi, karena saya jadi lebih bisa memastikan skripsi saya ini teratur dan lebih yakin karena ada acuan selama penulisan skripsi."

The second most strategy used by the students is before writing strategies. This strategy's mean of the average score is 3.54. The students got many benefits by using this strategy, such as having the right and structured strategy in thesis writing, easing them to carry out research, and helping in stress management, so that the thesis can be completed on time, as explained by the student 1 and the student 2 below:

Student 1: "Strategi sebelum menulis ini sangat penting agar ke depannya tidak menyulitkan kita dalam menulis skripsi, jadi bisa terstruktur dan selesai tepat waktu."

Student 2: "Sangat membantu. Karena dalam penulisan skripsi diperlukan strategi-strategi yang tepat dan terstruktur. Perencanaan topik, membuat kerangka kerja, dan melakukan riset pendahuluan bikin mudah buat kita dalam menjalani riset dan menulis skripsi. Selain itu, strategi persiapan juga bisa bantu aku buat manajemen waktu, istilahnya jadi punya patokan, jadinya skripsinya selesai tepat waktu."

The least strategy utilized by the students is after writing strategies. The mean of the average score of this strategy is 3.23. It means that the students used this strategy with medium frequency. According to the students, the after writing strategies are very helpful during the thesis finishing process. The process of checking and revising the thesis becomes easier, faster, and directed with this strategy, as uttered by the student 5 and the student 6 below:

Student 5: "Sangat membantu, terutama pas finishing skripsi. Jadinya proses pengecekan dan revisi skripsi jadi cepat dan terarah."

Student 6: "Setelah penulisan itu strategi yang digunakan sangat membantu untuk finishing skripsi sehingga tidak terlalu menyulitkan saya."

Discussion

From the findings, the students in the current study applied various writing strategies in writing undergraduate thesis. The students utilized three stages of writing strategies, namely before, during, and after writing. For preparation strategies, the students used time planning, mental planning, expert model's reference, and outlining. In addition, some students also did not prepare their writing or known as no plan or no preparation in before writing stage. Then, for the during writing strategies, the students utilized introduction first, sentence verification, paragraph verification, outline revision, language transfer, sentence simplification, positive grammar and vocabulary, synonym, dictionary, and peer cooperation. As for finishing strategies, the students used reading aloud, no revision, revision, drafting, instruction matching, respiting, collation, and self-rewarding. The strategies applied are in line with the writing

strategies stated by Petric & Czarl (2003)'s theory. Petric & Czarl (2003) categorized the writing strategies into three points; before, during, and after writing.

These results are consistent with Fajrina et al (2021) that high achiever students in writing tend to use all strategies, ranging from planning to revising. However, the present study found more writing strategies used in writing undergraduate thesis. The present study found three stages of writing, that are before, during, and after writing with the total of 38 strategies. The findings from Parwati & Sugesti (2023), Hutabarat (2022), and Sa'diyah et al (2022) found the strategies used by the students are before and after writing strategies. As for the findings from Diasti & Mbato (2020), the study found that the students used mental strategies, while the present study found that the students used technical writing strategies. Another study from Ren & Zhu (2023) found that the students used activity strategies in writing undergraduate thesis.

Moreover, the findings also show each type of the writing strategies is utilized with different frequency. The before writing strategies are utilized with high frequency (M= 3.54). As for the during writing strategies are utilized with high frequency (M= 3.68). Meanwhile, the after writing strategies are applied with medium frequency (M= 3.23).

Those findings showed that the high achiever students tend to use all writing strategies with high frequency, which can be evidenced by two of three from the strategies were utilized with high scale. It is in line with Fajrina et al (2021). The students used more during writing strategy than other strategy because it helped them much in composing the whole thesis. However, the frequency of each strategy used by the students in the present study is different with the previous studies. The present study found that the strategy used the most by the students is during writing (drafting), followed by before writing (planning) and after writing (revising). The previous studies by Parwati & Sugesti (2023), Hutabarat (2022), and Sa'diyah et al (2022) found that the strategy used the most by the students in writing undergraduate thesis is before writing (planning) and followed by after writing (revising). Those previous studies did not find the strategies of during writing on their research. Meanwhile, the study from Diasti & Mbato (2020) found that the strategy used the most by the students in writing thesis is motivation-regulation strategy in the form of self-consequating. As for the study from Ren & Zhu (2023) found that the most strategy used by the students is activity strategy in the form of rule

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from the research that the writing strategies utilized by EFL students are planning, drafting, and revising. There are 8 strategies used in before writing stage, 14 strategies in during writing stage, and 16 strategies in after writing stage.

In addition, it can also be concluded that the strategies of before, during, and after stage were used by the students with different frequency. The strategy used the most by EFL students in writing undergraduate thesis is during writing (drafting) with the average score of 3.68, which can be categorized as high frequency. The most strategy used by the students in during writing is rereading to get ideas how to continue (M=4.54). As for the second most strategy used by EFL students in writing undergraduate thesis is before writing (planning) with the average score of 3.54, that can be categorized as high usage. The strategy used the most in before writing is rereading the structure/format of undergraduate thesis before starting to write (M=4.09). The least strategy used by EFL students is after writing (revising) with the average score of 3.23, which can be categorized as medium frequency. The strategy used the most in after writing is checking the mistakes after getting back the thesis with feedback from the advisor (M=4.45).
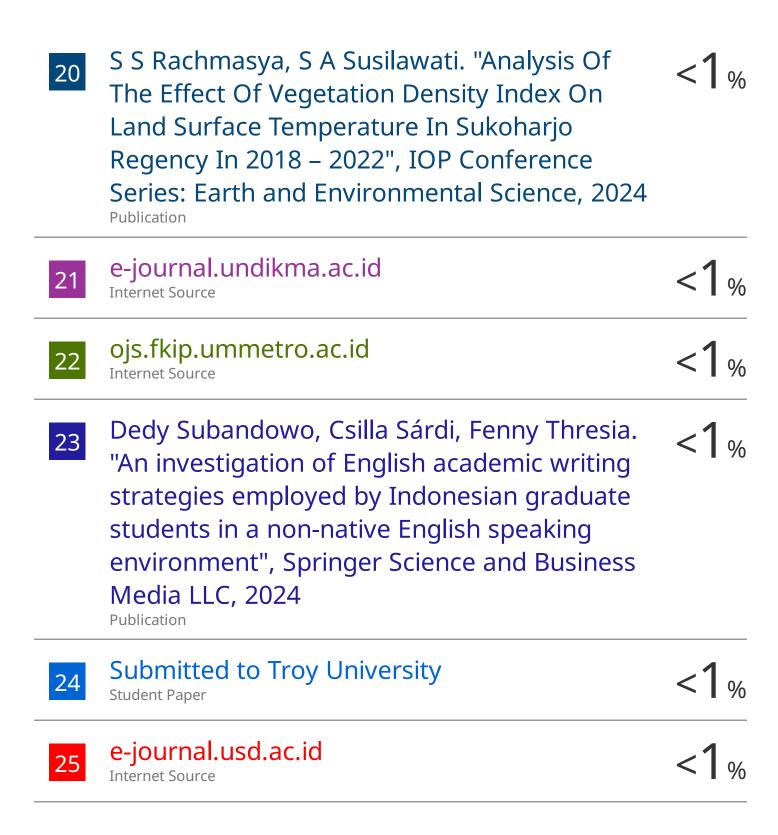
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