

AN ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION PATTERNS APPLIED BY A THAI ENGLISH TEACHER IN AN ENGLISH FOR YOUNG LEARNER CLASSROOM AT SUANSANTI SCHOOL IN BANGKOK

Azizah Mutiara Venski¹, Surono²

Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

¹ azizah2008042027@webmail.uad.ac.id, ² surono@pbi.ad.ac.id

Abstract

Classroom interactions are believed to play important role in determining the success of teaching and learning process. This study aims to find the types of classroom interaction pattern applied by a Thai English teacher in an EYL classroom, show the dominant pattern applied, and reveal the impacts of applying the classroom interaction patterns applied to the EYL teaching and learning. The descriptive qualitative method was used in this study. The data were gained through classroom observation and semi-structured interview involving a Thai English teacher and 42 students in class 5/2 elementary school at Suansanti school, Bangkok. This study used video recording, as the data collecting technique and analyzed by adapted Miles' et al. (2014) procedures. The results indicate that there were five classroom interaction patterns applied by the Thai English teacher. Three dominant patterns applied were choral responses (36.52%), teacher talk (27.54%), and close-ended teacher questioning (26.96%). The patterns applied lead to the positive impacts including build a sense of comfort and belonging, promote students' motivation, and enhance social development. However, the overuse of the pattern limits students' individual expression and peer-to-peer interaction, leading to negative impact such as passive participation.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, Thai English Teacher, Teaching English to Young Learner

INTRODUCTION

The study of English as a Foreign Language has become an essential aspect of education. In Thailand, English has been determined to be a foreign language taught as a compulsory subject in school or formal education (Trakulkasemsuk, 2018). Since 2009, the Basic Education Core Curriculum has been implemented as the national curriculum that students in Thai schools are required to study English lessons for 12 years from grade 1 to 12, while for university students, English subject is necessary for a minimum of 12 credits (Ministry of Education, 2008). Hence, English teachers need to master foreign language learning specifically since English has become the required subject in the national curriculum (Vibulphol et al., 2021). Moreover, the recognition of the importance of English nowadays improves the number of English programs in most Thailand schools (Cuessta & Madrigal, 2014). Despite these innovative ideas and efforts to improve students' competence in the English language, it has been shown that Thai students' English ability is relatively low (Bolton, 2008; Bruner et al., 2015; Charoensap, 2017; Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021; Khamkhien, 2010; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015).

Although the learners have been studying English for 12 years, the results are still unsatisfactory. Phothongsunan (2014) concluded that the English teaching and learning process in Thailand schools, even at the university level, may not achieve the curriculum's goal due to the unsatisfactory levels of English language ability, either in academic or professional contexts. This

changed many people, who consider age to be the priority to start learning English, also known as young language learners (Prihatin et al., 2021).

Based on the preliminary observation of the fifth grade of elementary school at Suansanti School in Bangkok, it was found that Thai young learners tend to find it hard to learn and master the English language. During the teaching and learning process with 42 students in a class, the Thai English teacher taught by using the English language, but only a few students were able to respond to the teacher. Researchers found some challenges faced by Thai young learners in learning English language including lack of opportunities to use the English language in daily life, low motivation, being passive learners in the classroom, uninteresting English lessons, lack of confidence to speak English, and the low responsibility towards their learning and education (Copland et al., 2014; Hayes, 2008; Noom-Ura, 2013; Orosz, 2007; Prihatin et al., 2021; Ulla, 2018; Wiriyachitra, 2002).

According to (Chanaroke & Niempaan, 2020; Rasri, 2005), there are many factors contributing to the low English proficiency of Thai young learners, including teaching methods, students' effort, teacher's insufficient English language skills, classroom interaction, cultural knowledge, etc. However, it has been suggested that the teacher is the most crucial element in determining how well students will learn. Moreover, teachers' quality and interaction in the classroom are affected more significantly than other elements like financing and class size (Rasri, 2005). It can be concluded that modifying interaction patterns guides to varying the progression, while selecting and applying the appropriate pattern assists in achieving learning goals and increasing learning productivity. A considerable amount of classroom interaction researches focusing on teacher and student talk at the Secondary, Primary school, and University level has been conducted by (Farrelly & Sinwongsuwat, 2021; Hikmah, 2019; Mardiyana et al., 2018; Martina et al., 2021; Ramadhani, 2018; Sari, 2018; Selamat & Melji, 2022; Sundari, 2017; Teng & Sinwongsuwat, 2015), but little research focused on the patterns of classroom interaction applied in the Thai young learners' classroom.

This research concentrates on teaching English to Thai young learners, where the setting of this research has its own cultural and linguistic characteristics that affect teaching, and there's limited existing research in this area. By exploring how a Thai English teacher engages with EYL students, this research is expected to reveal effective strategies and practical insights for educators teaching young learners in similar context.

METHOD

This research utilized descriptive qualitative approach in order to get the information and explored about the types of classroom interaction pattern performed by a Thai English teacher and students of fifth-grade in the English for young learner classroom, the dominant patterns used, and how those patterns can lead an impact to the English for young learner teaching and learning. The research subjects in this study were a Thai English teacher and 42 students in class 5/2 elementary school in Suansanti Bangkok. 25 students identified as female and 17 are male, with the average aged between 10 to 12 years, and had various educational backgrounds. The Thai English teacher has earned a Bachelor's degree in English literature of Humanities faculty in Kasetsart University (Bangkhen Campus) in 2022 and experienced in teaching English to young learner for a year and the only Thai English teacher in Suansanti school. As a Thai national, cultural and linguistic background has the potential to influence the teaching methods and classroom interactions applied, particularly in the context of a young learner classroom in Suansanti School in Bangkok.

This research used observation, interview, and document analysis to collect the data. The instruments consist of 32 indicators of classroom observation checklist adapted from classroom interaction patterns according to Ur (1996) and 20 questions of semi-structured interview.

Besides, this research also adapted Englehart (2009) theory to explore the impact of classroom interaction pattern applied toward EYL teaching and learning. In addition, the interview guideline was made by adapting interview guideline procedure provided by (Dornyei, 2007). After collecting the data, the data were analyzed by adapting (Miles et al., 2014) procedures, they are: data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the three times observations on EYL classroom data that transcribed, reduced, and analyzed, it can be found that there are five out of ten classroom interaction patterns by Ur (1996), applied by the Thai English teacher in teaching grades 5/2 of Elementary school that are: choral response, teacher talk, close-ended teacher questioning, individual work, and open-ended teacher questioning. However, the result of the observation revealed that the other five patterns were not founded in the three meetings of classroom observation were; group work, collaboration, students initiates-teacher answers, full-class interaction, and self-access. Below is the result of the observation:

Table 1. Frequency Table of Types of Classroom Interaction Pattern

Classroom Interaction Pattern	Observations			Total Average of the Pattern
	Meeting I	Meeting II	Meeting III	
Group work	-	-	-	-
Close-ended teacher questioning	38.46%	13.04%	21.52%	26.96%
Individual work	-	4.35%	15.19%	7.78%
Choral Responses	35.39%	43.48%	35.44%	36.52%
Collaboration	-	-	-	-
Students initiate, teacher answers	-	-	-	-
Full-class interaction	-	-	-	-
Teacher talk	26.15%	39.13%	25.32%	27.54%

Self-access	-	-	-	-	
Open-ended questioning	teacher	-	-	2.53%	1.20%
Percentage Total of Each Meeting		100%	100%	100%	100%

Based on the observation data, the Thai English teacher applied Choral Responses most dominantly, averaging 36.52% of the overall engagement time during the three observations, while other patterns were accommodated. The teacher involves a demonstration related to the topics and subjects discussed in the class, which is then repeated by the whole class in unison. It can be concluded that the interaction between teacher and students was balanced because this pattern involves the whole class responding simultaneously with a specific answer or phrase. Unfortunately, collaborative activities such as group and pair work were limited and could not be found during the observation.

The Thai English teacher used choral responses pattern to keep the students paying and engaging in the teaching and learning process. Besides that, the teacher argued that the most frequently used pattern has such a connection to the other patterns applied and this pattern becomes the most important and the bridge.

Teacher : Yes, there are. If I get to choral responses, I get their interaction with me. Then I know what they are understanding and then I can give them the instructions. It goes with teacher's talk and then we can go on to do individual work. Then, we can know what they are doing, what they understand, what they don't. It is really okay if they don't. And we can end up having open-ended questions and more of close-ended questions. Whatever they want to answer. It correlates in some way.

The teacher believes that getting students' attention building interaction would be easier, likewise giving instruction because the students are ready to receive and take the instructions, questions, and activities provided by the teacher. In addition, the teacher's experience also influenced and took part in the teaching style applied. Those are why this pattern becomes the most frequently used and applied by the teacher in the classroom.

Teacher : Well, when I was young, I usually like this. I don't really like the style of teachers asking questions. I understand they get nervous. But if I incorporate them with the questions that are quite easy at first, like not that challenging, and then grow up higher as we go, then the kids might be able to grasp the subject. So, yeah. The asking questions, making them think a bit and then, you know.

The second dominant pattern was teacher talk, averaging 27.54% of the overall engagement time during the three observations. This pattern dominated the teacher's speaking time during the lesson in which the teacher's role was controller, and the teacher also transferred knowledge and

information. The third dominant pattern was close-ended teacher questioning, with the total percentage being 26.96% of the overall engagement time during the three observations. The teacher likely used this pattern in the mix with the most dominant pattern applied, namely choral response. The teacher believes when asking students a question, the teacher needs to engage students' attention first to build an interactive learning environment. In addition, the dominant use of this pattern can be a result of the teacher's belief that types of questions promote the way students' respond. The teacher also preferred using this pattern for formative assessment purposes, ensuring students grasp the material.

Teacher : I also apply that to check their understanding about the material we have learned. So, I can know their understanding, what they understand and what they are not. Then, I can give them feedback on their answer, that's why it is okay if they cannot answer my question.

The third dominant pattern was close-ended teacher questioning. This pattern occurred in the three meetings observed by the researcher with a percentage of 26.96%. It can be seen from the observation that when the teacher raised a question, students actively participated and engaged in the interaction by answering and responding to the teacher's questions. The teacher would provide any feedback, both praising or evaluating the student's response. Here are some excerpts from the observation transcript:

Teacher : If I say three + zero, what is the answer?
Student : Three
Teacher : Three, good job!

Close-ended teacher questioning, also referred as Initiation-Response-Feedback or Initiation-Response-Evaluation, where the teacher's question indicates initiation, students' answer indicates response, and the teacher's feedback or evaluation given to the students initiates as feedback/evaluation (Ur, 1996). Based on the observation transcript, the Thai English teacher always gives feedback on student's answers or responses in the form of confirming the correctness of the responses or answers, and when the student cannot answer the question, the teacher helps the student to answer.

Teacher : So, where is the bird?
Student : (silent)
Teacher : The bird is on the tree

The teacher likely used this pattern in the mix with the choral response, where the teacher engages students' attention and then goes on to check their understanding of the material learned.

The fourth pattern found was individual work, which students were engaged in tasks or exercises independently, without direct interaction with their peers or groups. This pattern allows students to focus on their understanding and complete assignments or worksheets at their own pace (Ur, 1996). As can be seen in the result of the observation table above, the total percentage of this pattern is 7.78% which occurred in the second and third meetings:

Teacher : Write down on your notebook and do the exercise, answer the exercise correctly!

In the second meeting, the teacher gave a writing task or comprehension exercise to the students. The students then worked individually to complete the task while the teacher walked around the classroom to provide guidance, support students, and check their tasks.

The last pattern applied by the Thai English teacher was open-ended teacher questioning. This pattern gives the students freedom to respond answer because the question has no specific correct answer, which means all responses are correct. Therefore, this pattern encourages individuals' critical thinking, creativity, and active participation. Unfortunately, this pattern was rarely used by the teacher, constituting around 1.20% of the observed interactions, which only appeared in the third meeting. This pattern occurred when the teacher and students checked the task given by the teacher on the board together. This finding was indicated the teacher active and the students were mainly receptive form since the teacher aimed to check student's comprehension and critical thinking by giving open-ended questions, although some students that kept silent rather than answer the question.

Teacher : Why that someone say no?

Teacher : Are you sure? Can you prove it? Why?

Student : Silent

Teacher : Okay, that's enough. It is correct, don't listen to them. It is correct! Okay, you're good! It is correct

Even if the student could not answer the question provided by the teacher, it was acceptable because what the teacher did was encouraging thinking time.

The classroom interaction patterns applied by Thai English teachers positively and negatively influence young learners' English language proficiency in the teaching and learning process.

The positive impacts found were creating students' comfort and belonging sense when the Thai English teacher implementing the close-ended teacher questioning pattern, choral responses, and individual work; improving students' motivation when the Thai English teacher provided close-ended teacher questioning especially positive feedback and reward to promote students' motivation to answer questions; and enhancing students' social development when the Thai English teacher provided teacher talk, including how the teacher handled the noise of students in the classroom in a calm way and appreciate disagreement towards student's opinion and fully acknowledge.

However, this research found that the overuse of the choral responses pattern applied by the Thai English teacher led to negative impact such as passive participation. The prevalence of the choral responses pattern in the Thai EYL classroom, where the students are required to respond directly to the teacher without engaging with their peers, hinders social development and contributes to passive participation among students. Although the choral responses patterns applied by the Thai English teacher likely led to positive impacts, the unintended impacts of the choral responses pattern are remarkable. The frequency of this pattern, occurring in every class meeting, indicated its dominance in the teacher's instructional approach. As this pattern becomes generous, the risk of students becoming passive in their responses increases.

Discussion

The Thai English teacher frequently gave instructions and inquired questions. Although the teacher tended to control the class, it cannot be concluded that the students were passive since the teacher frequently used interactive and communicative teaching and learning activities, including games, exercises, and simple discussions, to increase and engage students' participation and interaction. The patterns applied required students to participate actively and referred to students as the center of the activities. The findings of choral responses as the dominant pattern applied by the Thai English teacher is in line with previous research conducted by Wibowo (2017) acknowledge the frequent use of choral responses as a dominant pattern of classroom interaction applied in the EYL classroom. It shows that the teacher frequently engaged and had the entire class participate in responding to questions, instructions, or suggestions. Besides, close-ended teacher questioning becomes the third most applied pattern used mostly with choral responses. Instead of directly using close-ended and open-ended questions, getting students' interaction was another way to build a closer relationship with the whole students.

The teacher's personal experience plays a role in considering decision-making. The teacher understood that teachers asking questions could make the students get nervous. Therefore, the teacher incorporated the students by balancing the questions, which were built from the easiest to harder level so that the students could grasp the subject or material. This result is consistent with earlier research (Sihem, 2020; Ur, 1996; Weizheng, 2019; Wibowo, 2017; Zhan et al., 2021) that highlights the value of scaffolded questioning in learning a language in increasing students' knowledge and confidence. It can be concluded that the pattern contributed to students' knowledge and self-confidence, helps in increasing students' understanding the language learning materials. As a result, students can speak confidently with the class, focus more on receiving material, and foster a positive and participatory learning environment. Wibowo (2017) stated that students can learn more effectively and get the target language faster when there are interactions between the teacher and students. This encouraged teachers to create activities that stimulate conversation and collaboration in the classroom, promoted active students' involvement through interaction and participation.

One common limitation identified in both the current study and previous research conducted by (Sari, 2018) is that choral responses may not ensure that each student has understood the lesson. Some students could follow their friends when they reply to the teacher's question, causing the teacher to believe that all learners have absorbed the lesson's content (Sari, 2018). Brock-Utne (2007) argued that applying the choral responses pattern required students to answer in chorus, which referred to the secure talk for both the teacher and the students, where the teacher accepts the responses without confirming that each student has understood the lesson. It can be concluded that while choral responses create safety, the teacher has to apply individual verification to ensure that each student truly understand the lesson.

Additionally, the substantial amount of teacher talk (27.54%) points towards a teacher-centered approach to instruction in the classroom. The teacher's perception of providing brief explanations and modeling correct language use as essential components of effective teaching leads to the predominance of this pattern. This statement was supported by Walsh (2006), who said that as an educator, teachers are responsible to ensuring that students comprehend the information, knowledge, and material they are receiving from the teacher, or "modifying speech". Therefore, most of the teachers used teacher talk to help students understand the material (Afriyanto et al., 2018).

The teacher taught that the type of question is essential for the topics to encourage students' ideas and vocabulary. This result is in line with the theory of Ur (1996), that the questions should engage the students with the language material, such as vocabulary and grammar so the questions would be practical when those bring out reasonably prompt, relevant, motivated, and complete responses. Otherwise, when the questions get long silenced responses or are answered by only the most vital students, or if the questions are regularly unsuccessful, there is probably a problem with the question. The teacher build questions from close-ended to open-ended questions in order to promote students' critical thinking ability. This result aligns with Erdogan & Campbell (2008) who stated that open-ended teacher questions required the students to analyze, synthesize, assess their thoughts, and encourage them to respond in a long way. Although the teacher liked this pattern, the use of this pattern is still rare.

The Thai English teacher also preferred to use individual work rather than pair or group work due to investigate the students' comprehension of the material learned. As stated by Gultom (2016) that a test or exercise shows how well an individual has mastered knowledge they have learned in the class and assesses how well the teacher and education is working. Individual work also provides more detailed and comprehensive feedback on the learning material demonstrated by each student (Ur, 1996).

However, there were five other patterns that missing and have not been applied by the Thai English teacher during the classroom observation, they were: group work, collaboration, student initiates-teacher answers, full-class interaction, and self-access. In teamwork activities such as group work and collaboration, it was indicated that the Thai teacher preferred to use individual activity rather than group activity. This was because the limited classroom size needed to be more conducive to group work and collaboration. This result is supported by Araos (2015), who stated that a class of more than 38 students can be characterized as large classrooms, which causes anxiety for the teachers about a lack of resources, problems with classroom management, and challenges with fostering a positive teacher-student interaction.

Although many interaction studies' findings support the use of pair and group work in the development of foreign language acquisition (Kim 2008; Storch, 2005; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009), many teachers around the world struggle with large classes, which can lead to issues with control and discipline (Copland et al., 2014). Therefore, the teacher needs to plan effective management strategies to apply those patterns.

On the other hand, as the dominant pattern that lead to positive and negative impacts in teaching English for young learner, the choral responses pattern encouraged students' participation and indicated to the sense of comfort and belonging. There were some opportunities when students seemed disengaged and unenthusiastic, especially during routine greetings. As the previous study conducted by Weizheng (2019), in order to establish a good teacher-student relationship, the teacher applied praises as the strategy to encourage the students and create a sense of comfort and belonging in the classroom, but in this study, the Thai English teacher applied choral responses as the strategy to create a sense of comfort and belonging in the classroom. This highlights the value of using a variety of classroom interaction as teaching approach to promote positive relationship between teacher and students such as creating sense of comfort and belonging in the classroom.

However, it is crucial to recognize that the positive impact resulting from choral responses pattern coexists with the negative impact when it is overused. This can be seen from students' expression and limited collaboration interaction when choral responses were applied, which leading to losing engagement and passive participation. Minalla (2022) points out that unenthusiastic or poor

engagement in interactive classroom activities affects student learning and makes it difficult for teachers to facilitate it.

Another limitation was that some students might go along with the flow, and the teacher might assume that every student has understood the lesson material without confirmation. This is in line with a previous study conducted by (Brock-Utne, 2007; Sari, 2018), which suggested that this pattern could lead to safe conversations where the teacher accepts responses without confirming each student's comprehension of the material. This lack of individual confirmation may result in some students not fully grasping the material. Students' direct response to the teacher's question without engaging with their peers also appeared to hinder social development within the EYL classroom. This is in line with a previous study conducted by Minalla (2022); when inappropriate interaction patterns occur in the classroom, students may get disinterested in the learning process and turn to passive participation, which leads to a negative impact.

On the other hand, this result builds on an existing study by Selamat & Melji (2022) that to motivate students to engage in class more actively, the teacher can employ questions by using choral responses from the students but the consideration of the questions applied when the teacher began the lesson, prompted students' understanding and offered new materials while in this study, the Thai English teacher used the choral responses not only when started the lesson, encouraged students' understanding, and provided new materials but also stimulated and boosted students' knowledge.

This study also found that close-ended teacher questioning create students' sense of comfort and belonging by providing praise and correcting feedback. Contrary to Wibowo (2017), which found that close-ended teacher questioning, including praising and encouraging, is low, amounting to 2.29%, this study found the percentage of close-ended teacher questioning raised 26.96%. It indicated as the third dominant pattern applied by the Thai English teacher. Based on the observation, most students showed engagement and participation when the teacher applied close-ended teacher questioning. In contrast with the previous study conducted by Martina et al. (2021) that found only one or two students responded to the questions given by the teacher, while this study found most of the students were likely to respond to the teacher' questions. This shows the importance of teachers to flexibly adapt their strategies in applying classroom interaction pattern according to students' responses.

As well as when the teacher applied close-ended teacher questioning together with individual work. The students' enthusiastic responses and raised hands indicated their sense of comfort and belonging within the classroom. This finding supports the theory advanced by Englehart (2009) that teachers can motivate students by establishing a safe learning environment that includes extrinsic motivators like praise, reward, and feedback. It can be concluded that students are more likely to be motivated to participate and learn as much as possible when they feel accepted and appreciated for their efforts. As the previous study belongs to Martina et al. (2021), the close-ended teacher questioning included praising and encouragement only got 5.5%, which indicated that novice teacher seldom praised or rewarded the students, but, in this study, the percentage of close-ended teacher questioning raised 26.96% which indicated that the Thai English teacher was likely praised and rewarded the students.

The teacher realized that young learners need more teacher's comprehension about the interaction used, the teacher's guidance, and the types of question decision which sometimes does not suit everyone or every kid in the class, the teacher has to be able to understand their ability when sometimes can be known through psychological aspect. This is in line with the theory of Rivers (2002) that every teacher needs to consider students' age, educational background and culture, and

also reflect on appropriate ways of selecting and presenting learning materials, to achieve students' target language. It means that to promote a successful interaction, teachers are recommended to take a personalized approach by adapting an appropriate teaching method in the learning process that considers students' learning needs and characteristics, suit to students' preferences and level of understanding.

The way the teacher provided feedback in any students' responses by positive feedback and calming evaluation led to the necessity of a social behavior model. Teachers can encourage children's social development in a second approach by modeling the behavior that students want to see in the teacher (Englehart, 2009). Based on the observation, the teacher seemed to be able to control emotions when the students were unexpected. This can be seen from the positive feedback given by the teacher to any student, even if the student cannot answer the question.

While previous research conducted by Sari (2018) focused on classroom interaction pattern such as collaborative, pair work, and group which develop students' social skills, including speaking respectfully, listening empathetically, and working in a team since the students engaged in cooperative classroom interaction patterns. The results of this study demonstrated that the Thai English teacher did not apply pair, group, or collaborative work. As a result, students had limited chances to interact with peers in the learning process.

The observation results also showed that the teacher talk pattern became the second pattern applied mainly by the Thai English teacher. Besides teacher talk was appropriated to teach new vocabulary and material (Ur, 1996), it can grow the students' social development based on how teachers handle conflict in a calm, collected manner, appreciate disagreement, fully acknowledge it, and embrace other points of view (Englehart, 2009). However, teachers need to consider how to create an environment where students feel comfortable in sharing ideas learning from each other, and working collaboratively that can increase students' opportunities to interact, collaborate, and develop their social skills.

CONCLUSION

The types of classroom interaction pattern applied by a Thai English teacher in the fifth-grade EYL classroom were choral responses, teacher talk, close-ended teacher questioning, individual work, and open-ended teacher questioning. The Thai English teacher applied choral responses most dominantly, comprising 36.52%, while the other patterns can be accommodated, including teacher talk (27.54%), and close-ended teacher questioning (26.96%). The teacher frequently engaged the whole class in responding to questions, instructions, or suggestions, in order to assess overall students' understanding and engage to the learning process. However, the lower percentages associated with open-ended teacher questioning (1.20%) and individual work (7.78%) suggested that student-centered and collaborative forms of interaction underutilized by the Thai English teacher due to the several factors such as classroom size and classroom management.

The classroom interaction patterns applied by the Thai English teacher such as choral responses, close-ended teacher questioning, individual work, and teacher talk have demonstrated positive and negative impacts on the EYL teaching and learning, especially, creating a sense of comfort, improving students' motivation, and enhancing students' social development.

However, the overuse of the choral responses pattern limits students' individual expression and peer-to-peer interaction, leading to negative impact such as passive participation.

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