

Arabic Alphabet Learning for Students with Hearing Impairments: A Phenomenological Exploration

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Abstract:

The research aimed to explore Arabic alphabet learning for Students with Hearing Impairment. Inclusive education should not merely be a particular school's slogan or categorization. It must also be able to implement inclusive education processes, including in Arabic language learning. This research employed a qualitative phenomenological model. Data collection techniques included interviews, observation, and documentation. Data sources were determined using a purposive sampling technique: caregivers, religious teachers, and students. The research location was Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. The results showed that the characteristics of deaf students at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta ranged in age from 7 to 20. They were categorized as mild, moderate, severe, and profound. The majority were proficient in standard and non-standard Indonesian sign language (SIBI), but they could not initially sign Arabic letters. The Arabic letter learning process took place in the main hall of the Islamic boarding school. However, the students are divided into several groups according to their abilities and attendance at the Islamic boarding school, namely the Abu Hurairah class, the Ali bin Abi Thalib class, the Usman bin Affan class, the Umar bin Khattab class, the Abu Bakar As Siddiq class for boys, the Fatimah class, the Maryam class, and the Khadijah class for girls. The strategy used in the learning process is the Cooperative Learning strategy.

Keywords: Santri with Hearing Impairment; Sign Language; Arabic Alphabet Learning

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Pembelajaran Huruf Arab bagi Santri dengan Keterbatasan Pendengaran: Sebuah Eksplorasi Fenomenologis

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Abstrak:

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pembelajaran alfabet Arab bagi siswa dengan gangguan pendengaran. Pendidikan inklusif seharusnya bukan hanya sekadar slogan atau kategorisasi sekolah tertentu. Lembaga ini juga harus mampu menerapkan proses pendidikan inklusif, termasuk dalam pembelajaran bahasa Arab. Penelitian ini menggunakan model fenomenologi kualitatif. Teknik pengumpulan data meliputi wawancara, observasi, dan dokumentasi. Sumber data ditentukan menggunakan teknik pengambilan sampel bertujuan: pengasuh, guru agama, dan siswa. Lokasi penelitian adalah Pondok Pesantren Darul Ashom di Yogyakarta. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa karakteristik siswa tunarungu di Pondok Pesantren Darul Ashom di Yogyakarta berkisar usia 7 hingga 20 tahun. Mereka dikategorikan sebagai ringan, sedang, berat, dan sangat berat. Mayoritas mahir dalam bahasa isyarat Indonesia standar dan non-standar (SIBI), tetapi awalnya mereka tidak dapat memberi isyarat huruf Arab. Proses pembelajaran huruf Arab berlangsung di aula utama naskah Islam. Namun, para siswa dibagi menjadi beberapa kelompok sesuai dengan kemampuan dan kehadiran mereka di naskah Islam, yaitu kelas Abu Hurairah, kelas Ali bin Abi Thalib, kelas Usman bin Affan, kelas Umar bin Khattab, kelas Abu Bakar As Siddiq untuk laki-laki, kelas Fatimah, kelas Maryam, dan kelas Khadijah untuk perempuan. Strategi yang digunakan dalam proses pembelajaran adalah strategi Pembelajaran Kooperatif.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Isyarat; Pembelajaran Huruf-Huruf Bahasa Arab; Santri dengan Keterbatasan Pendengaran.

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INTRODUCTION

Students who have hearing limitations or can be called deaf-disabled usually have several problems in the learning process in class, such as difficulty communicating with others, difficulty conveying information to them, and limited vocabulary possessed by deaf-disabled students (Rahman et al., 2023). Furthermore, not many educators or teachers can use sign language to deliver material to deaf students (Amin, 2019). Furthermore, differences in ability are found in the classroom between deaf and hearing students (Az Zahra et al., 2022). Genetic and environmental factors contribute to children developing disabilities or special needs (Syah Roni Amanullah, 2022). It has been found in practice that students with hearing impairments also have speech impairments (Fakhiratunnisa et al., 2022), Pitaloka, and Ningrum 2022).

However, in the concept of language, as stated by Tarigan (1981) and Mulyati (2015), four language skills must be mastered by someone who is or will be learning a particular language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Ibda, 2019). In Arabic, these four skills are known as *istima*, *kalam*, *qira'ah*, and *kitabah* (Hermawan, 2014). Familiarity with Arabic letters is the initial foundation for students in learning Arabic. This is because Arabic letters differ from Indonesian letters in writing (Nurhanifah, 2021) and reading (Munip, 2008). Mastery of these Arabic letters is a prerequisite for someone to master Arabic or read the Qur'an (Rozani, 2022).

Darul 'Ashom Islamic Boarding School is an Islamic boarding school that has deaf students. This Islamic boarding school also teaches Qur'an memorization with a minimum target of memorizing three juz (Wintarso et al., 2023). This Islamic boarding school was founded in 2019 by Ustadz Abu Kahfi in Yogyakarta. Currently, the number of students at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School is recorded at 129 students, with 49 male and 80 female students (Radar Jogja, 2023). Given the unique characteristics of the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School, the author is interested in conducting an in-depth study of Arabic letter learning for deaf students at the boarding school, which includes the characteristics of deaf students and the process of learning Arabic letters there.

There are several studies that discuss Arabic language learning for students with disabilities. First, the research conducted by Muhammad Fuad Hasim et al. The results of this research show that Arabic teachers have independently developed adaptive teaching materials by simplifying content, using visual and audio supports, and adjusting learning activities to match the students' varied needs. These efforts reflect UDL principles such as multiple means of representation and engagement, even though no training for teachers in UDL. Adaptive materials have positively impacted student motivation and participation, especially among students with learning barriers (Hasim et al., 2025). Second, the research conducted by Fitri Zakiyah, et. al. they focused pada Arabic learning experience for Students with Visual Impairment at State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta. The finding of this study shows the diversity of Arabic learning experiences for visually impaired students in Indonesia, which are influenced by the differences in educational and social background. Visually impaired students learned Arabic with constructivism and a collaborative approach. The challenges faced by students are the limited learning resources, including materials and media that can be accessed independently. The writer highlights the positive vibes of this case with the advantages associated with visually impaired students who are concerned with



language generally as a primary means to connect with the world around them. They also have ultimate second language attainment, curiosity, and good language behavior to connect with their surrounding.

In addition, they have an excellent intrinsic motivation in learning Arabic for religious reasons. Besides that, there are some great opportunities for them to get scholarships and good jobs as government workers (Zakiyah et al., 2021). Third, The Research Conducted by Yuslam et al. the tried to explore about arabic learning process for Students with Visual Impairment in New Normal Era. The results of this study indicated that MAN 2 Sleman always strives to be committed to providing inclusive education. This is evidenced by the effort to complete physical facilities such as guiding blocks and the establishment of ULD in 2020. In addition, MAN 2 Sleman always increases the capacity for knowledge, understanding, and educational practice for HR in the madrasa by organizing various training or workshops for the MAN 2 community. Sleman, the formation of inclusive friends and assistance for students with visual impairments after the covid-19 pandemic. Specific problems in the Arabic learning process for students with disabilities are the lack of Arabic language teachers' ability to write and read Braille Arabic letters, the absence of Arabic references in braille form, and the unavailability of an Arabic dictionary either in braille form or an easily accessible application, by students with disabilities. Efforts made to overcome these problems are the provision of recordings of books or materials and even Arabic questions that teachers or friends of non-disabled students carry out. Students with disabilities can write Latin in the maharah Kitabah or Arabic and then be corrected by a companion who can write and read Arabic Braille. In addition, even though the COVID-19 pandemic has been considered sloping, applications are still ongoing, such as recording text readings or Arabic questions using VN, using the YouTube application to help deepen material and using Google Form media to answer Arabic questions (Yuslam et al., 2023)

Based on the previous research described above, the author has not found any studies that specifically discuss Arabic language learning for students with hearing impairments. so the author feels there is still space to discuss specifically learning Arabic for them. This study aims to analyze the characteristics of students in the pesantren in learning Arabic and to describe the learning strategies used by educators in teaching Arabic letters in the pesantren. The significance of this article is an in-depth study of Arabic language learning for students with hearing impairments, which consists of their characteristics, the goals of Arabic language learning for them, and the Arabic letter learning model for them.

METHOD

This research is qualitative descriptive research. In descriptive research, the current situation is well described. This research concerns existing conditions or relationships; current practices; beliefs, perspectives, or attitudes held; ongoing processes; influences being felt; or trends developing (Sugiyono, 2011). Study of events, activities, processes, or one or more individuals (Creswell, 2016, p. 19). The approach chosen in this research is the Phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a science that views and studies all aspects of phenomena that appear and are present amid human life with a view directed at humans as part of human life experiences as part of the world that has interactions with their social life (Rorong, 2020).



Phenomenology emphasizes interpretation to gain an understanding of the existential structure of a phenomenon, and then the phenomenon appears as itself (appears or presents itself) (Sudarsyah, 2013). Phenomenology is a research strategy in which researchers identify the nature of human experience in relation to a particular phenomenon. Understanding human experiences makes phenomenological philosophy a research method (Moustakas, 1994) in Creswell (2010). Data sources are determined based on purposive sampling techniques adjusted to the criteria related to the research, namely the characteristics of deaf students and the process of learning Arabic letters for deaf students. So, the criteria determined are the caretaker of the Islamic boarding school, Ustadz Abu Kahfi, the teacher of Arabic letters (al-Qur'an), namely Ustadz Kahfi and Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, and deaf students at the Islamic boarding school, namely Muhammad Gaza and Asman.

Data collection techniques used in this study include three things, namely, documentation, interviews, and observations, used to see the process of learning Arabic letters for deaf students. The observation model used by the author is non-participant observation, in which the author directly observed but as an external observer of the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta. The author observed four times during the learning process and practice of Arabic letters through sign language. Interviews were used to obtain information about the implementation of learning and techniques of sign language taught, by confirming this with the caretaker, the ustadz, and the students.

Interviews were conducted directly using a free-structured technique. The author has prepared questions about the theme and learning of Arabic letters. However, the author also developed them according to the needs in the field. The interviews asked about the students' character, the students' learning process, the reasons for establishing the Islamic boarding school, the strategies used, and so on. The documentation technique was used to obtain written data or documents related to learning Arabic letters for students with hearing disabilities. The data obtained during the research process were documents of the Qur'an equipped with sign language, the Qur'an without sign language, data of students with hearing disabilities at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta, and the results of Arabic writing of students with hearing disabilities. In addition, researchers also performed data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three steps: data reduction, data presentation, and verification. These steps ensure the validity and reliability of research findings through a structured qualitative approach.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of Students at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta

K.H. Abu Kahfi founded Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School on September 19, 2019. Until now (2024), the number of students currently studying there is 175, divided into 125 male students and 50 female students. Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School was founded on September 19, 2019, AD, formerly located in Srandakan District, Bantul, Special Region of Yogyakarta. In January 2021, Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School moved its location to Jalan Sumatera, Kayen C11 /



C13, Condong Catur, Depok, Sleman Special Region of Yogyakarta. Unlike Islamic boarding schools in general, Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School educates students who have special abilities from Allah SWT in the form of hearing abilities. By its name, Darul Ashom, which means the house of the deaf, the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School is a place for children with hearing impairments to learn religion, starting from the science of Tauhid to Tahfidz (memorizing the Qur'an) as a flagship program at this boarding school (Darul Ashom.com, 2024).

Table 1: The total number of students
at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in 2024

Male Students	Female Students
125	50
175	

All students studying at the Islamic boarding school come from various regions in Indonesia. As explained by Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, these students come from several regions, even from outside Java, Lampung, Kalimantan, and many from Java. All 175 students studying at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School have hearing limitations (hearing students are deaf) with a differences age. Deafness is a hearing impairment experienced by someone with mild, moderate, and severe gradations divided into hard-of-hearing and deaf.

Table 2. The Age Range of Students in September 2024

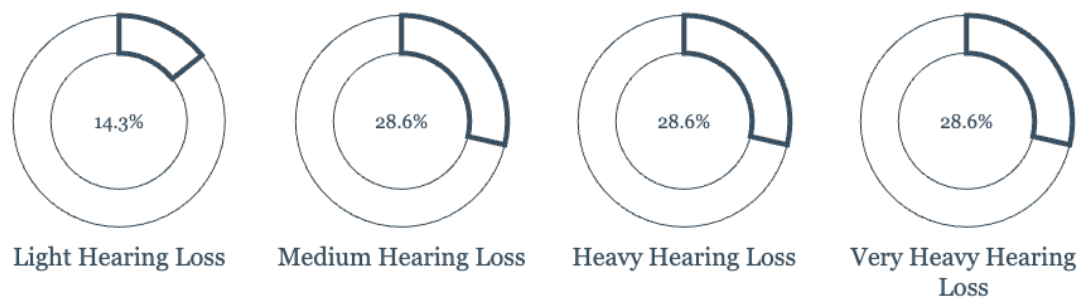
Age Range	Students
≤ 7	5
7-9	50
10-12	50
13-15	50
16-20	20
Total	175

Table 3. Distribution of Hearing Loss Levels Among Santri at Darul Ashom
Islamic Boarding School in September 2024

Hearing Loss Levels	Students
Light	25
Medium	50
Heavy	50
Very Heavy	50
Total	175



Figure 1: Percentage of students by hearing loss level



A person is said to be deaf (hearing impaired) if they lose their hearing ability at 70 dB ISO or more (Atmaja, 2019). Hearing impairment can be categorized as deaf (very severe) or simply hard of hearing. Meanwhile, the definition of hard of hearing is a hearing impairment that can be permanent or temporary, which affects the child's academic achievement. Meanwhile, deafness is a hearing impairment that is so severe that information cannot be received through hearing, whether with or without instruments (Federal Register, 1977, in Smith, 2014).

The students studying at the Islamic boarding school have various hearing impairments, ranging from mild to severe. Severe hearing loss is defined as having a hearing capacity above 90/91 dB (Smith, 2014; Atmaja, 2018, p. 67). Sign language is used daily in communication. Due to its diverse characteristics, the Islamic boarding school administrators have a policy to communicate only using sign language without making sounds. As conveyed by Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, the students studying there are diverse; some have some hearing, but most cannot hear. Communication is directed solely using Sign Language without sound. Furthermore, one reason for this standardization is to foster mutual understanding and respect. Because, according to one ustadz, sometimes students with limited speaking abilities feel superior to others. Therefore, to create an egalitarian environment, such a policy is necessary. Egalitarianism or Egalitarianism comes from the French word "egal" which means "equal", is a tendency to think that the enjoyment of equality from several kinds of general premises, for example a person must be treated and receive the same treatment in dimensions such as religion, social, or culture (Subahri & Nuha, 2022).

The age of students accepted to be able to study at the Islamic Boarding School is 7-20 years old. The reason for selecting and determining this age is related to the students' readiness to be able to separate from their parents and be willing to study well at the Islamic Boarding School. Desmita (2009), in her book *Psychology of Student Development*, explains that during the 7-11-year period, children begin to experience the concrete operational stage (Putri Rahmi, 2021). This is also known as the transition period from early childhood to late childhood (Sabani, 2019). This means that starting at the age of 7, children can be encouraged to think simply. Students who come and want to study at this Islamic boarding school have varying sign language abilities. Some students already have standard sign language skills because they have previously studied at Special Schools (SLB). However, some



students cannot understand standard sign language skills at all because they have never attended formal schools.

For those who are not yet able to convey standard sign language, they have so far communicated using their intuition. However, of all the students, no one could convey Arabic letters by sign until they studied at the Islamic boarding school. Ustadz Bayu Pamungka explained that the students who enter our Islamic boarding school are diverse; some already speak standard sign language, but many have not yet been able to speak standard sign language. So, before this, when they communicated, they used intuition, which was important to understand. For example, eating with eating movements and drinking with drinking movements. But Ustadz, they only learned sign language here.

A statement regarding the beginning of learning Sign Arabic was also made by Muhammad Gaza, who is a deaf student from Lampung and has been at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School for five years. Based on this explanation, all students who study at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta only learned sign Arabic (Arabic letters) when they became students at the Islamic boarding school. Many students with hearing impairments do not understand and recognize Arabic letters, such as at SLB 1 Pariaman, where they only learned the letters ب, ت, and because their teachers had only taught them Latin script (Faradisya & Sopandi, 2019). Similarly, at SLB Mulya Bakti West Bandung, of three deaf students tested with seven hijaiyah letter questions, only one was able to answer correctly, and even then, only one letter correctly (Rahmatulloh, 2022).

Arabic Learning for Hearing Impairment in Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding

1. The Purpose of Learning Arabic Letters at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta

The general goal of learning Arabic letters at this Islamic boarding school is so that students can one day understand and implement Islamic religious skills effectively. Many people also learn Arabic to understand religion. This is because Arabic is one of the tools for understanding Islam (Arifin & Sukandar, 2021). Furthermore, Arabic is an essential component for understanding both the spoken and written texts of the Quran, Hadith, Fiqh, Sufism, and other texts (Andriani, 2015). Specifically, according to religious teachers, including Ustadz Abu Kahfi and Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, they learn these Arabic letters to memorize the Quran. The Quran was revealed and delivered in Arabic (Salida & Zulpina, 2023). Based on this, many people in Indonesia learn Arabic, one of the ways is to understand the Qur'an (Sya'bani & Has, 2023).

Meanwhile, the general Arabic taught at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School involves the provision of everyday Arabic vocabulary. The vocabulary taught includes introductory Arabic, vocabulary related to the environment, such as classroom equipment, Arabic language tools found in the room, and other simple Arabic vocabulary. Providing simple Arabic vocabulary is justified because the primary goal is to memorize the Quran. Furthermore, according to Ustadz Bayu and Ustadz Kahfi, one of the obstacles faced by people with hearing impairments is their limited vocabulary. As a result of the hampered development of their speech and



language, deaf children will experience difficulties in speaking and understanding reading material due to a lack of language/vocabulary (Sugiarti, 2015). This hearing impairment results in limited vocabulary mastery for people with hearing impairments (Arumsari, 2021).

2. Facilities and Locations for Learning Arabic Script at Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School, Yogyakarta

All Arabic script learning takes place in the hall of Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School. Although all lessons occur in the hall, the boarding school management has implemented a policy of classifying students based on their abilities. Male students are divided into five groups: the Abu Hurairah Class (transitional class), the Ali ibn Abi Thalib Class, the Usman ibn Affan Class, the Umar ibn al-Khattab Class, and the Abu Bakar as-Siddiq Class, also known as the Medina Class. Each class has an average of 25 students, except for the Medina Class, which has 30 students.

Meanwhile, female students are divided into three classes, namely Fatimah Class (Transition Class) with 15 students, Maryam Class with 15 students, and Khadijah Class (Medina Class) with 20 students (Results of interviews with Ustadz Kahfi, on Friday, May 8, 2024, and Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, on Saturday, June 1, 2024, and Saturday, August 31, 2024). Because they are more inclined to use body language (fingers) to communicate, they do not need tools in the learning process. However, to complement and strengthen their recognition, the facilities used in learning Arabic letters are books, whiteboards, laptops, LCDs, and projectors.

3. Materials and Learning Strategies for Arabic Alphabet

Based on the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, information obtained regarding the material taught related to Arabic language goes through several stages: recognizing and practicing Arabic sign language letters, parsing connected Arabic words, connecting Arabic words with sign language, reading the Quran with sign language, memorizing the Quran with sign language, and writing the Quran correctly. Furthermore, the ustadz also provided some simple, everyday Arabic vocabulary to broaden Arabic vocabulary. (Results of an interview with Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas on Saturday, June 1, 2024). Specifically, the introduction to Arabic letters occurs during the first 40 days of becoming a new student. As explained by Ustadz Bayu Pamungkas, the first 40 days are a transition period and a period of observation and assessment for new students. At that time, students were focused on memorizing all Arabic letters from **ا ت ي** properly and correctly before moving on to the next stage, namely, reading the Koran with sign language. However, there are also those who, within one to two weeks, can memorize the hijaiyah letters using sign language, such as Azman from Lampung and Gaza from Kendal. He was able to complete the period in one week.

Meanwhile, Gaza was able to complete memorizing the Arabic Sign letters in two weeks (results of the interview on Saturday, August 31, 2024). The identification and assessment process for students with special needs is very important. This is to identify the abilities and needs required going forward. Identifying students with special needs is an effort by someone (parents, teachers,



or other education personnel) to conduct a screening process for students with disorders and deviations (physical, intellectual, social-emotional, or behavioral) as early as possible to provide appropriate educational services. The results of the identification process will later identify students with special needs who require special educational services (Directorate of Special Education, 2007, in Leylasari, 2015). Assessment is also crucial for mapping abilities and placing students according to well-identified classes and categories (Nugroho, 2021). The strategy used in the Arabic alphabet learning process is Cooperative Learning.

Cooperative learning is a group work approach that minimizes unpleasant situations and maximizes the learning and satisfaction resulting from working in a high-performing team (Felder & Brent, 2007). Even I'rab learning can be implemented and taught in a fun way when using the Cooperative Learning model or strategy (Harimi, 2018).

Azman, a deaf student at the Islamic boarding school, also conveyed this. He said that when he is unable to practice the Arabic alphabet effectively in class, he usually asks his friends for help in teaching the Arabic alphabet. A special characteristic when reading Arabic letters or the Quran in sign language is the need to use the right hand. This is like the specific nature of Arabic in general, where writing and reading must begin from the right (Isbah, 2023). While others also have similarities with other languages because language is universal (Zainal, n.d.). A problem often encountered in the learning process is inconsistency due to the psychological condition of students who have entered adolescence, such as wanting to play, joke, and even go out without permission. Teenagers tend to be more comfortable with friends and tend to have unstable emotional conditions (Sulhan, 2024). whereas unstable conditions will cause various problems in adolescents (Suputra, et. al., 2023)

In addition, other problems are linguistic problems, such as the process of moving letters with signs that are almost the same between the letters. Because they tend to only use their right hand, students often experience pain in their right hand, so sometimes they need to prop it up with a pillow under their elbow to reduce pain in their right hand. One of characteristic of the Arabic language that differs from Indonesian is the right-to-left writing direction (Munip, 2008). Therefore, students also use their right hand when gesturing Arabic letters. In addition, it is also to maintain proper etiquette when reading the Quran, which is essentially written in Arabic letters.



CONCLUSION

Based on the data presentation, analysis, and discussion results, it can be concluded that the characteristics of deaf students at the Darul Ashom Islamic Boarding School in Yogyakarta consist of ages 7 to 20 years. They have mild, moderate, severe, and severe hearing impairments. The majority can use Indonesian sign language, both standard (SIBI) and non-standard, but they were initially unable to use Arabic sign language. The process of learning Arabic letters is carried out in the main hall of the boarding school. However, the students are divided into several groups according to their abilities and arrival at the boarding school, namely the Abu Hurairah class, the Ali bin Abi Thalib class, the Usman bin Affan class, the Umar bin Khattab class, the Abu Bakar as Siddiq class for boys, the Fatimah class, the Maryam class, and the Khadijah class for girls. The strategy used in the learning process is the Cooperative Learning strategy.



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