

Syntacto-mantic Analysis of Transliteration in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* and Okara's *The Voice*

Edenowo P. Enang, PhD

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Iniobong Utin, PhD

Department of English, Akwa Ibom State Univerisity
Obio Akpa Campus, Nigeria

Abstract

*Two outstanding identification marks Nigeria as a country has are multilingualism and multiculturalism. These features in turn pose serious challenges to Nigerian writers in their efforts to communicate with their reading audience/public in a metropolitan Standard English. The difficulty stems from the fact that Nigeria is a conglomeration of many ethnic nationalities with each practising as many cultures as possible. This makes a systematic study of language a prerequisite for a down to earth appreciation of literature since language is the expressive medium of literature. In their attempt to give their works a distinct African flavour, Nigerian authors such as Achebe, Soyinka, Nwampa and Okara, among others consider the employment of transliteration in their use of English. The usage of this linguistic element is seen as one of the stylistic efforts on the part of African writers and also adjudged as a deviation from the metropolitan norm and literary convention by linguists and critics. This study focuses on Nwapa's *Efuru* and Okara's *The Voice* whose review of related literature sorted out basic stylistic concepts,*

Key Words: Outstanding Identification Marks, Multilingualism, Multiculturalism, Transliteration, Metropolitan Standard English

Introduction

Language question is one of the outstanding problems confronting African literature because most of the written African literature is in European languages, largely because of the colonization of African continent between the 16th century and the middle of the 20th century. It was a period when European languages supplanted African languages in all the fields of human endeavours, such as government, education and to a large extent, daily communication. On the lead of European language in use was English,

followed by French and Portuguese ,Asoegwu-ijezie, G. C. (2011:1). Transliteration is a language area that underscores the stylistic effects of most African writers. It is an area that has to do with deviation from the normal or accepted convention for literary writing.

Therefore, transliteration is a healthy development in the emergence of the African novel. Transliteration has a creative capacity that is to be associated with African or specifically, the Nigerian novel since each society has its own distinct pattern of literary creativity which includes the manner of language use. It should not be regarded as an index of inferiority or imperfection in communication but as a mark of acculturation and groundbreaking in solving communication problem in Nigeria, and indeed, Africa (Asoegwu-ijezie, G. C. 2011:9).

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is a conglomeration of many ethnic nationalities with the people speaking at least 513 and practicing as many cultures as possible. This multilingual/multicultural posture of Nigeria has been a major source of problems facing African and indeed Nigerian writers in effort to communicate to the reading audience. This problem of communication stems from the fact that African/Nigerian writers do not have any alternative medium of communicating with their readers other than the English and French languages, one of the legacies left behind by colonial masters after their imperialistic imperialism in Africa. To meet this desire, writers like Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo and J. P. Clarks began the tradition of transliteration in order to overcome the problem of communication. This idea has also been adopted by the new generation writers like Nwapa and Okara in order to meet their quest of communicating their ideas, and customs to all. The extent to which this linguistic element (transliteration) affects the Nigerian literature, the impact it has made in the search for an answer to the national language question are what constitute a further drive behind this research undertaking. It is hoped that with this adventure into the study on the application of transliteration in language use in this second part, more researches will be carried out making use of other literary genres like drama and poetry.

English Language usage in Nigeria has been traced by Eka (2000) to “pre-Atlantic slave trade era, specifically in 1553 when some British were said to have paid what scholars have described as “very brief visits to the Nigerian

coasts especially the ports of Benin and of the Old Calabar". At the initial stage, the medium of communication between the English men and the natives was a kind of English-based pidgin. Therefore, the candidature of English language in Nigeria as a language that was to be chosen and or embraced for use as a tool for communication and transaction could be said to have been purely circumstantial. This is because Nigeria is a multilingual nation. Eka (59)

The history of the use of English in Nigeria maybe traced to the first part of the 19th century, though English-based pidgin is known to have been in use as far back as the 16th century. That was the time of the great influx of colonizers, missionaries, even undisguised exploiters to the coast of West Africa. A specific instance here may be cited of Missionaries who arrived in Badagary in 1842.

The author further posits that during the period under review, it was naturally authentic that no known Nigerian could speak English acceptable to any users, whether native or nonnative; whatsoever (audience) of English. Secondly, it is an established fact that the only varieties of English for communication at that time were "Broken English", "Minimal Pidgin" and "Middle Arts" English which dominated Nigerians' daily communicative traffic. From the foregoing, it has to be agreed that English has come to Nigeria and has co-existed in Nigeria with its background languages as far back as 19th century. It follows that the number of years by which English coexisted with Nigerian indigenous languages and its consistent use in representing every Nigerian experience and situation has led to the development of prototypes which have actually identified and recognized it as a divergent variety of the world Englishes

As would have been expected, the European imperialists to the coast of West Africa were confronted with some problems which included the difficulties of communicating with the large groups of indigenous speakers of West African languages (Eka, 60). The first obstacle confronted by the visitors was communication barrier between the natives and the English men. Therefore, there was then a pressing need to dislodge this obstruction, hence the need to use the teaching of basic English to the locally sourced interpreters for communication, business transaction, missionary activities and for the other official functions. It could be explained from the foregoing that the cornerstone of the British introduction and use of English language in

Nigeria was not based on evolution of an “accepted” English but on the emergence of a fairly communicative English largely because the traders, colonial administrators were not willing to learn the indigenous language(s). This is why English language had to be imposed and taught in order to train clerks, interpreters, stewards and messengers to help white men in administrative and domestic activities. It is with this humble beginning of English language usage in Nigeria since the 16th century that has enabled it (English) to settle down, co-exist with a large corpus of uncounted background languages to this day.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on Systemic Transliteration which is a mapping from one system of writing in a particular language into another. Most transliteration systems are one-to-one, so that a reader who knows the system can reconstruct the original spelling. What is done in the works of these two authors is the transliteration of the sentences, clauses, phrases and words of the source language into those in the target. This frame work is relevant to these works analysed in this study. From the skillful and artistic prowess of Flora Nwapa and Gabriel Okara in the novels, *Efuru* and *The Voice*, we see this literary ingenuity fully at work. According to Ugwu (1990), “Through the use of this singular linguistic element in communicating their ideas to the readers, the literary drought which be-deviled African and Nigerian writers'-reading audience's communicative platform has been brought to an end”.

Transliteration as a tool in Communication

According to Oha (2003:219), transliteration refers to the realization of L1 linguistic forms in an L2 aesthetic composition in order to draw readers close to the L1 devices in an L2 situation. “It means one expressing himself in English words but in a manner consonant with the idioms and structures of his mother tongue”, (2003:500). Asoegwu-ijezie (2011:15) opines that this type of expression is of interest to linguists because the language is extraordinary, being a departure from the Standard British English norms.

Adeigbo (1965:3) describes transliteration as the transfer of oral source language (L1) to written target language (L2). This is because English language is so dynamic that it can mix with the registers of foreign languages without distortion of meaning. Therefore, an African or Nigerian writer takes his audience into consideration. This audience is made up of two groups: the local audience and the

foreign audience. The foreign audience is the native speaker of the English language. The local audience is made up of three types, namely the intellectual elites who are the well-educated and talented members of the society. They are those who have received various forms of Western education on different levels. The semi-literate groups are not intellectuals but are well-off. The illiterate groups are the lowest on the intellectual ladder.

He treats his local audience (Africans) with appropriate dose of transliteration in order to carry them along while he gives his foreign audience a treat with what fulfills the metropolitan norms if he insists on doing so, otherwise, he brings all the members of his reading audience to bear on the direct translation of the source language and its devices into the target language.

This process is a total indigenization of the English language whereby an African writer buds the source language into the target language without any form of refinery or transformation. This definition agrees with Asoegwu-ijezie's (2011:16) postulation that:

“transliteration can therefore, be seen as a deviation of language where elements of language are tossed about in an entirely new way, from one language to another. According to the scholar, there are no guidelines to the mode or extent of linguistic experimentation with the English language”.

Transliteration is a direct equivalence of the L_1 in the target language, and since it is an apt representation of the L_2 as it is in L_1 , it should be seen as a variety of the language it represents. If it is English transliterated from Anaang, it becomes one of the New Englishes Asoegwu-ijezie (2011). Transliteration as a linguistic property is demonstrated in English out of the background language and so should be regarded as a variety in its own right. This is because all the devices of the L_1 are fully actualized and transferred to English without any measure of modification or parameter re-setting and or any form of syntactic or semantic change of values or imports. Therefore, transliteration is a down to earth equivalence of the target language concerned. Transliteration can also be seen as the syntactic and semantic imports of the background or indigenous language reproduced in the forms and devices different from those of the target language. This characteristic is

what qualifies as a new variety of the world Englishes, Asoegwu-ijezie (2011).

The Novel: *Efuru*

Efuru is the title of the novel and the name of a central character, a beautiful young woman who operates at the centre of the story. Unfortunately, she always seems to have had an ill-luck with men. She is a strong, struggling and a successful woman in her West African Village. She is known in the entire village and often, she is described as "...a remarkable woman. It was not only that she came from a distinguished family. She was distinguished herself" (P.7). *Efuru's* elopement with an unknown person, *Adizua*, her family and friends are stunned and disorganized, but *Efuru* never failed to maintain the bond she has with her father and her parents in-law. *Efuru* has a child, but at about the same time started disappearances for days per time. The child dies shortly after being sick, the father, *Adizua* can't be found for the child's burial, but is confirmed to have married another woman. Not being able to cope with the accompanying shame returned to her parents after which another suitor. *Eneberi* appears and marries her.

Eneberi tried to accord *Efuru* a blissful marriage but also disappears in the like of *Adizua's* and is not available at his father's in-law burial. Left alone, husbandless, without family and childless, *Efuru* decides to re-enact her belief in *Uhamiri*, the goddess of the lake to worship it. At the end, she questions her decision to worship *Uhamiri* when understands that *Uhamiri* itself has no children and so is capable returning those people she has lost in her life.

The Voice

The story in this novel evolves around, *Okolo*, an educated young man who finds it hard to come to terms with the taboo of questioning the elders and a result faces banishment from the village through the rivers to the big town. During this journey he thought he was being kind by giving shelter to a married woman and is accused of sexual misconduct which forces him to return to his village before he later died. We see *Okolo* as an inquisitive educated young man. The oppositional relationship that *Okolo* enjoys from his people in the story is glaring at the early stage. When he is forced to return to his village, *Amatu*, uncontrolled rumours spread concerning how odd he is with societal issues mostly sponsored by one Chief *Izongo* and other elders. At a stage, it was *Okolo* on one side against all others on the other side.

The entire village leads a campaign of whispers, branding Okolo as a trouble-maker, who is fond of asking implication questions and finally isolated him from the surrounding villages. Tuere (regarded as a witch) and Ukele (a cripple) take side with Okolo fighting against a corrupt and conservative socio-political order of the day led by Chief Izongo and his cohorts. It is a surprise to see that one of them in the conservative camp is Abadi (holder of M.A. and Ph.D certificates) chooses to attack Okolo for being “subversive”, questioning societal values. Okolo is christened “a coward and a madman”. Izongo has succeeded in turning the entire village to himself, leading in the attack against Okolo who just returned from his trip to Sologa to stage a confrontation against Izongo, is unfortunately tied to Tuere by Izongo's group and together, they are thrown into the rivers for a ritualistic death.

Transliteration in *Efuru* and *The Voice*

According to Asoegwu-ijezie (2011:39-41)

Lexical and syntactic transliterations occur in a sentence when the author uses a word that seems unconventional or unacceptable. They are otherwise known as Nigerian Expression (NE). This is quite different from the English Expression (NE). This deviation may affect the nominal or the verbal group...On the hand lexical and syntactic transliteration is a deviation that occur when the structure or order words in a sentence is contrary to what is allowed in standard English.

This is shown in the dialogue between Dibia and Efuru's father:

“Kola has come”, the Dibia said. “Kola is yours”. *Efuru*. P. 25).

The above expressions are lexical transliteration. In a conventional English expression, the statements should read as follows: “Here is Kolanut...”. “Go ahead and break it”.

We see another use of lexical transliteration in the words of Ajanupu (Sister to Efuru's Mother-in-law) during a conversation with Efuru:

“So this is your eyes, Efuru.” *Efuru*. P. 27). In a conventional English expression, this expression should read thus: “So this is you, Efuru.” Ajanupu makes another use of lexical transliteration in a conversation with her sister: “You are just a woman for nothing. You can't see, you can't even hear smell” (*Efuru*. P. 27). The statement “...you can't even hear smell” is a lexical

transliteration. In Standard English, the sentence should read: “You can't even perceive the smell” or “You can't even smell it”. This deviation is in use of “hear” to indicate an action performed by organ of smelling- the nose.

In *The Voice*, there is the use of lexical transliteration when the three messengers to Chief Izongo are conversing among themselves. The Second Messenger said: “Talk not like this. Hold yourself.” (*The Voice*, P.25). In Standard British English, the expression should read as follows: “Don't be talking this way, control yourself or control your temper.”

There is another instance of the use of this expression in the speech of Chief Izongo while exchanging some words with Okolo” with “If you waste more time wrestling with me with words, I will burn the hut down.” (*The Voice*, P.38). in an acceptable English usage, the statement should read thus: “ if you waste more time arguing with me, I will burn down the hut.”

Syntactic transliteration on the other hand is a deviation that occurs when the structure or words order in a sentence is contrary to what obtains in standard English. Some of the syntactic deviations can be seen from our selected texts: In *Efuru*, it is demonstrated in Dibia's speech with Efurus's surprise: “You are children.” (*Efuru*, P. 25). Here, the Dibia is referring to Efuru only, whereas the standard English expression should read: “You are a child”. Yet another syntactic deviation is seen the speech of Ajunupu during her conversation with Efuru: Oh, what a fool I are.” (*Efuru*, P.56). The acceptable expression of the standard English should appear thus: “Oh! What a fool I am.”

Another instance of syntactic deviation is seen in the language of Efuru during an exchange of compliment with Gilbert: “Let day break.” (*Efuru*, P. 116). Proper English usage accepts: “Let the day break.”

In *The Voice*, syntactic transliteration is seen when Chief Izongo messengers exchange of words with one another: The First Messenger said: “Me know nothing? Me know nothing? Because I went not to school, I have no bile, I have no head, Me know nothing?” (*The Voice*, P.25). Syntactic deviation occurs in the clause, “Me know nothing?” the word, 'Me' is an objective first person pronoun and so should not be used in the subjective position of the sentence or clause. The correct English expression should read: “I know nothing?” When Okolo confronted the three men who stood silently outside the door of his house, he said: “Who are you people be?” (*The Voice*, P.26).

The correct British English expression should read: “Who are you? Or Who are you people?”

From the foregoing examples, it is seen that lexical and syntactic transliterations have been highlighted from the novels under study. It is also seen that transliteration is mostly used by the characters in the novel while the author deliberately uses it in order to give these works a real Nigerian quality.

Transposition Usage in the Novels

Transposition is a semantic device which consists of placing or transferring a grammatical element from one meaning to another. According to Asoegwu-ijezie, (2011:44):

There are two types of transposition among others identifiable in language use found in our text under study. These are Nominal Transposition and Transposition proper. While Nominal Transposition is the transfer of a noun from one meaning to another, that is, from a primary meaning to a secondary meaning. Transposition Proper refers to the transfer from the first or proper meaning to a secondary meaning figuratively.

The following instances from the text under discourse are practical demonstrations in this direction. The language used by Efurū while receiving the young men from her town: Welcome, my brothers. What good wind brings you here today. I hope all is well? (*The Voice*, P. 9). This is a nominal transposition. The word 'wind' from the statement has taken a secondary meaning, which indicates 'purpose or motive' in the context used here. Another use of transposition in the text is demonstrated when Efurū's mother-in-law said: “You have not had your bath.” (*Efurū*, P.11). This is a transposition because the speaker does mean having the literal bath, but “having a circumcision”.

In *The Voice*, this linguistic element of deviation is used in the speech of the Second Messenger of Chief Izongo: “I like sleep and my wife and my own one son, so I do not think” (*The Voice*, P.25). This is transposition proper. It means his family does not allow anything to bother them. In the same vein, the narrator makes use of transposition in his narration about Okolo: “Okolo had no chest... he had no shadow”. (*The Voice*, P. 23). This is nominal transposition. The word, “chest” in the statement means “courage” while

“shadow” refers to “might”. These are only few instances used here because of the scope of the study. Many other instances abound in the texts. And the context of usage of this device suggests their real meaning to the reader (Asoegwu-ijezie, 2011).

Interference

A process whereby the elements of the source language (SL) is transferred into the target language (TL) is known as transference. This device does not only touch on the linguistic level of language use, but it also associates with the language and cultural habits of the users. Kachuru (1982:391) in his study Indian English, identifies three types of transfer process. Transfer of context, transfer of L₁ meaning to L₂ item and transfer of form context component. This device has been in use in the texts at the following situations:

In *Efuru*, “... if an old woman falls twice, we count all she in her basket” (P.17). This a caution from Efuru' mother-in-law to Ajanupu. Still in *Efuru*, when Ajanupu warns the sister, he said: “Don't you know that if you don't lick your mouth, the harmattan will lick it for you?” (P. 33). In *The Voice*, Chief Izongo's words to Okolo contain this device: “I know that you do not agree as one that palm wine has hold does not agree that palm wine has hold him”. (*The Voice*, P.38). Finally, in a soliloquy, Chief Okolo makes use of this device: “I am sure it is with the eye of sleep that I am seeing all this. I am sure I am seeing with dream's eye.” (*The Voice*, P.42).

Coinages

In his words, Ozo-mekuri (1999:66) defines coinages as: “a morphological process of creating new words to name previously non existent objects or phenomena that result from culture contact”. Asoegwu-ijezie (2011:50) agrees with above definition and states further that:

coinages are newly coined words resulting from the prevailing socio-linguistic factors in the Nigerian speech setting...Some of these coinages appear in the form of compound English words which merely paraphrase the Nigeria native concept. As in other varieties of English, coinages are the most productive processes in the creation of the variety of English found in the texts by most African authors.

The following are instances of Igbo language coinage that occur in the texts under study, and those from Ijaw and Anaang are presented below:

From Efurū

Coinage Meaning

Kola nut (P.9). In Anaang, it is called “Ibong” local fruits offered to visitors
Bitter leaf (P. 36). In Anaang, it is called “Etidot” Bitter vegetable
Father's father (P.151). In Anaang, it is called “Etebom” Grand father

From *The Voice*

Foofoo (P.76). in Anaang it is called Ayoloyo or Ukumudok Pounded Cassava
Man-Killing (P. 37) In Anaang it is called “IbokMkpa” Poisonous
Mammy water (P. 82) In Anaang, it is called “EkpoNgwoong” Marmaid or water spirit

Borrowed or Loan Words

Various aspects of borrowing have been seen as a process of lexical innovation in Nigerian English, especially, from the major Nigerian background languages and pidgin. There are many loan words in the prose text under study which invariably requires attention and further assessment. It is the consensus of scholars such as Odumuh (1987:20), Ozo-mekuri (1999:64) and Jowitt (1991:63) and Asoegwu-ijezie (2011:50). that “every mother tongue that qualifies for a count as loan-word should satisfy the following conditions”:

- it has English equivalence or
- be used in preference to English equivalence if such equivalence exists
- it occurs regularly and systematically in the English speech of Nigerian users.

It is possible to treat the loan-words in the text under study as “lexical variant” to take care of titles, food, musical instruments, religion and traditional practices (Jowitt, 1991:63). Instances include the following:

In *Efurū* “Nsala” (P. 10) “Nsala” is a kind of native soup in Igbo, also called “White soup”, Afiaefere in Anaang/Ibibio language. “Chi” (P. 172) > “One's personal god”, Called “EtokAwasi” in Anaang language.

The Voice “Foofoo” (P.76) “cooked pounded cassava”, “Usongiqwa” in Anaang. “Woyengi” (P.52) “Woyengi” is a traditional deity of the Ijaws, also called “Okpoenen” in Anaang.

It should be mentioned here that some of these loan-words are merely used to fill lexical gaps because they have no direct equivalence in English and such equivalence may not accommodate all the social and semantic imports of the

Nigerian native language items. Apart from that, though the full meanings of the borrowed words may not be understood by a native English reader, the contexts in which they are used give reasonable insight into their meanings.

Semantic Extension

When English word is made to acquire extended meaning, it is known as semantic extension. Most Nigerian English writers often bend on reflecting Nigerian contexts in their use of certain English items in such a way that such items now acquire extended meanings in the prose text under study. Typical of this device are seen in the instances presented below:

In *Efuru*, “Nwahike himself proved himself the son of his father” (*Efuru*, P. 11). “The son of the father” in English community refers to “a male child to a biological father”, but in African context, it has an extended meaning to include one's fore fathers. Here, again, “father” may not necessarily refer to one's biological father, but by extension means his grand father or great grand father. It therefore, means that the phrase, “the son of the father” as used in the novel is a direct translation of the Igbo language, “nwannaya” or “ajejenetebom” in Anaang language.

In *The Voice*, “Our fathers',insides always contained things straight. They did straight things until the new time came.” (*The Voice*, P. 50). In the passage, “Our father” does not only refer to our biological father, but by extension our ancestors in African context. Also, the word, “insides” means by extension, heart, mind, conscience, etc., while “straight things” by extension means truthfulness, honesty, straight forwardness etc.

Collocation

Eyisi (2005:134) cited in Asoegwu-ijezie (2011:54) describes collocation as “a group of words which 'naturally' goes together through common usage”. Collocation is a word used in describing a word or words which co-occur with another word freely when such occurrence becomes impossible with any other word. For reasons of lacing their works with Nigerian flavour, Nigerian writers in English tend to use verbs to collocate with the nouns which “naturally” do no co-occur or go together in common usage. The following are instances of such occurrence in our texts under review:

In *Efuru*, “We do not know book” (*Efuru*, P. 164)

In *The Voice*, “I want to know book because of the changing world” (*The Voice*, P.106).

The underlined collocation instances of English expressions in the two, texts refer to “being educated” or “being literate”.

Here again, it should be noted that the underlined collocations in the given examples do not collocate with one another in Standard English expression. But it is a well motivated device for lexical creation by which Nigerian English writers transfer some of the Nigerian language habits into English.

In spite of the fact that the use of this device in the Nigerian English literature facilitates communication, it must be underscored that the new meanings which result from the association of words certainly poses semantic problems for non-African reader of Nigerian literature, even though written in English (Asoegwu-ijezie, 2011:57)

Summary/Conclusion

This study has so far taken a look at the choice of words and language use as an aspect of style and the choice of a writer's work of art can best be described in terms of these choices. It is clear that Nigerian writers' use English as a second language. It is also clear that in any second language situation, L1 interference is bound to take place and this also tends to result in the emergence of a new variety with a strong affinity to the first language (L1) linguistic devices. The new variety, though a deviation from the metropolitan norms is not inferior and so should be encouraged as far as it helps in solving the communication problem of the Nigerian English speech community. The influence of Nigerian speech habits on the English language, has, in this study, been identified at the lexica/semantic and syntactic levels, (Asoegwu-ijezie, 2011:54).

At the Lexical/semantic level

At the lexical/semantic level, interference, loan-words, coinages, transposition and semantic extension of meaning have been identified and presented as some of the processes of creating new Nigerian English lexical items and meanings. These linguistic features have also contributed in no small measure towards Nigerianizing English in Nigeria at the lexical/semantic level. Instances of loan blend in creating Nigerian English lexical items: “Okra soup” *The Voice*, (P. 58). “know book” *Efuru*, (P. 164). There is the semantic extension of the verb, “Know” where to “Know book” means to be educated or to be literate in Standard English usage.

At Syntactic Level

At the level of syntax, the Nigerian speech habits such as Nigeria-based utterances and loan blends have been identified to be some of the sources of Nigerian English syntax which have also contributed towards the Nigerianization of English which is also referred technically as nativization of English, (Asoegwu-ijezie, 2011:54).

This study has also identified the fact that there are strong affinities to regional or ethnic variety in the use of English by Igbo speakers of English. Again, the Nigerian English expressions used by the author in the novel were found to have obeyed the rules of English syntax and so do not constitute items of ungrammaticality. Therefore, usage that is ungrammatical in the use of English by the author should be treated as an index of the author's stylistic originality.

Finally, from the foregoing, it has been concluded that this literary work has presented a realistic portrayal of the posture of the Nigeria-Biafra war weaved around five major characters by reason of generalization. Therefore, this work remains one of the most thorough-going exposé of socio-political corruption in African literary fiction and a literary experience which will not be deleted from the sands of time and in the memory of generations yet unborn.

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