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An Analysis of the Translation of Cultural Humor in the Novel “Huo Zhe”

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ABSTRACT

Verbal humor is often found in literary works, but not all the translations of verbal humor in the TL (target language) can adequately convey the sense of humor that contained in the SL (source language). Different cultures and languages cause difficulties in the translation, and usually different types of verbal humor do not always match the same translation strategies and methods. In the process of translating verbal humor, what is essential is successfully conveying the exact information and the same or similar effect of humorous. Thus, functional equivalence theory is needed in the process of translating verbal humor to achieve the formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence on verbal humor. This article uses a Chinese novel which has been translated into Indonesian, “*Hidup*” as a research subject. It found that in this novel contained three types of verbal humor: universal humor, linguistics humor, and cultural humor. Among them, the translation of cultural humor is the most difficult to achieve functional equivalence. Thus, this article studied the translation methods for cultural humor. The findings revealed that it was not always successful because the translation methods mismatch with the types of verbal humor. Therefore, this article proposes some suggestions for translation methods for unsuccessful cases in cultural humor.

1. INTRODUCTION

Humor is an ability to find, express, or appreciate something funny (Yuniarti, 2014, p. 225). There is humor everywhere in our lives. Humor can cross tribes, cultures, genders, class barriers, and plays an indispensable role in different cultures and languages. Humor has a close relationship with religious beliefs, ideology, social concepts, political systems, and cultural customs. Usually, humor is relied on the language and culture, whereas culture and language have ethnic differences, so we believe that humor has differences in ethnicity and culture.

Based on the relationship between humor and language, humor can be divided into verbal humor and non-verbal humor (Ping, 2007, p. 28). Verbal humor also includes several types, such as universal humor, cultural humor, and linguistic humor (Ping, 2007, p. 29; Li, 2014, p. 96). Whether in comic, sitcom, audiovisual, or novel, the translation of verbal humor is very important because it will affect the reaction of

the target reader. If the target reader cannot feel the sense of humor, the translation could be said that it is unsuccessful. The function of verbal humor is getting the laugh of the reader in order to achieve equivalence on the effects of humor. While the translation of verbal humor is not simply because the translation does not only involve the transformation between the two languages, what is more important is the cultural differences between the two countries. Some translations of cultural humor in the novel can not together convey the same information with different cultures and achieve the equivalent of meaning with different humorous powers. Usually translators tend to emphasize the ST (source text) but rarely pay attention to cultural factors that are recognized by the target reader, the form of local language expression, the situation factors needed in the TL so that the translation methods on verbal humor are complicated to maintain the equivalence of information, the power of humor and the effect of humor. According to Nida, equivalence includes formal equivalence and dynamic

equivalence, where formal equivalence focuses on information, not only focusing on the form of information but also focusing on the content of information. Thus, the information in the TL should correspond with different factors in the SL information (Nida, as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 68). Meanwhile, dynamic equivalence is referred to as "the principle of equivalence effect", it means that the relationship between target reader and the information to be received should correspond with the relationship between the source reader and the information to be received (Nida, as cited in Munday, 2016, p. 68).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The results of research on the translation of verbal humor in English are already quite a lot both in films or novels because of the status of British and American cultural dominance along with dominant English throughout the world in long history (Biao, 2012, pp. 229- 230; Xia, 2015, pp. 52-54; Li, 2014, pp. 96-98; Herman, 2013, pp. 36-37; Qiong & Ling, 2014, pp. 137-141; Ju, 2017, pp. 61-67; Wei & Nian, 2018, pp. 157-161; Lutviana, Tursini & Subiyanto, 2016, pp. 448-454; Attardo, 2017; Zolczer, 2016, pp. 76-92; Okyayuz, 2016, pp. 204-224; Yuliasri, 2017, pp. 105-116). Where the results of research on verbal humor are mainly divided into four types: (1) discussed the translation of verbal humor from the perspective of GTVH (General Theory of Verbal Humor) or relevance theory (Ling & Jian, 2012, pp. 108-112; Li, 2014, pp. 96-98; Qiong & Ling, 2014, pp. 137-141; Run, 2018, pp. 82-88); (2) discussed the translation of verbal humor for subtitling or dubbling in films, series, or sitcoms (Li, 2014, pp. 96-98; Rui & Wei, 2015, pp. 59-63; Ju, 2017, pp. 61-67; Wei & Nian, 2018, pp. 157-161; Okyayuz, 2016, pp. 204-224; Zolczer, 2016, pp. 76-92); (3) discussed translation strategies of verbal humor such as domestication and foreignization (Qiong & Ling, 2014, pp. 137-141; Hua, 2014, pp. 98-101; Rui & Wei, 2015, pp. 59-63; Ju, 2017, pp. 61- 67; Wei & Nian, 2018, pp. 157-161; Yuliasri, 2017, pp. 105-116); and (4) discussed the translatability and untranslatability of verbal humor and the reader's acceptability or reader response to the translation of verbal humor (Lutviana, Tursini & Subiyanto, 2016, pp. 448-454; Ju, 2017, pp. 61-67; Yuliasri, 2017, pp. 105-116).

Based on the literature review above, it can be seen that the results of research on the translation of verbal humor in English are sufficiently successful and so that in most of the countries can translate the language

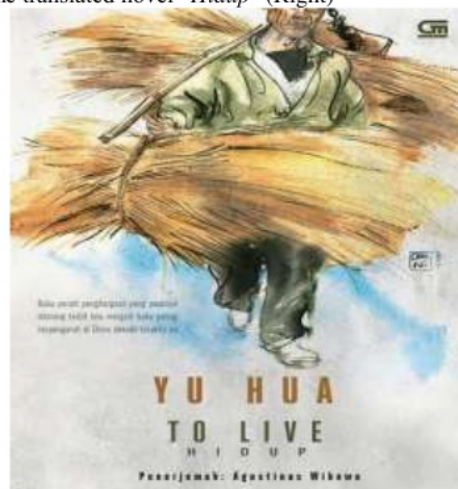
into English or vice versa because of both linguistic humor and cultural humor already researched. However, regardless of the number and quality of research results on the translation of verbal humor, translation studies are rarely found in Mandarin and Indonesian. In addition, the results of the translation either translate Chinese literary works into Indonesian or translate Indonesian literary works into Mandarin is very limited, for example Chinese literary works like "San Guo Yan Yi", "Huo Zhe", "A Q Zheng Zhuan", "Kuang Ren Ri Ji" and others are translated into Indonesian, and Indonesian literary works like "Bumi Manusia", "Lelaki Harimau", "Laskar Pelangi" and others were translated into Mandarin. Nevertheless, the numbers are still tiny, and the translation is not always perfect.

Therefore, in this article, the author uses the theory of functional equivalence as a theoretical basis to discuss the translation of cultural humor in the novel "Hidup". By reading and analyzing the cultural humor in the novel "Hidup" with Chinese and Indonesian versions, the writer wants to try to answer the following questions: How about the translation methods for cultural humor in the novel "Hidup". Thus, the results of this study not only add to the linguistic treasure, primarily related to the translation of the language of humor but will also be a reference in the translation of cultural humor scripts in literary works between Mandarin and Indonesian.

3. METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative research. In this article, the research subject or data source is the original novel "Huo Zhe" (To Live) in Mandarin and the translated novel "Hidup" (To Live) in Indonesian. The focus of this research is a lingual unit that contains cultural humor. The original author of the novel "Huo Zhe" is Yú Huá, one of the most famous and successful writers in China. Novel "Huo Zhe" (3rd edition) used in this research was published in November 2018 by Writer Press. The name of Indonesia is "Hidup", it was published on February 7, 2015, by Gramedia Pustaka Utama. The Indonesian translator is Agustinus Wibowo. It is the only translation in Indonesia for this novel so far. The novel "Huo Zhe" is called "a novel full of black humor in the Chinese style". Verbal humor is used in many places in this novel. Therefore, the writer takes the data source from this novel. Below is the cover of the original novel and the translated novel.

Figure 1 Cover of the original novel "Huo Zhe" (Left) and the translated novel "Hidup" (Right)



In the process of collecting data, the authors read and marked verbal humor in the novel, so the techniques used in data collection are reading and note-taking techniques. Moreover, the instruments used in this study are human instruments and verbal humor criteria, namely whether verbal humor has the characteristics and forms of cultural humor expression and whether verbal humor violates the maxim of cooperation in order to produce humorous effects and make the target audience smile or laugh. During the process of analyzing data will analyze, including verbal humor and verbal humor's translation methods.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Types of verbal humor contained in the novel "Hidup":

- (1) Universal humor;
- (2) Linguistic humor;
- (3) Cultural humor.

The translation methods used in the process of translating the verbal humor in the novel "Hidup":

- (1) Literal translation method;
- (2) Free translation method;
- (3) Replacement method.

Suggestions for translation methods for unsuccessful cases in cultural humor:

- (1) Replacement method;
- (2) Literal translation with a detailed explanation;
- (3) Free translation method;
- (4) Literal translation method.

Discussion

A. Humor and Verbal Humor

a. Definition of Humor

The word "humor" comes from in Latin language. An ancient Greek doctor thought that in the human body, there were four bodily fluids. In history, the notion of humor underwent several changes. The meaning understood by humans now includes two aspects: (1) refers to the phenomenon of humor, mainly formed from language behavior and non-human language behavior; (2) refers to the ability to understand, appreciate and create humor (Hua, 1996, p. 4).

b. Definition of Verbal Humor

Verbal humor is the application of language, referring to humor expressed through language. Verbal humor is humor that is expressed in language, including humor seen from language and humor created by language (Bergson, 1991, as cited in Li, 2014, p. 96). In the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, "humor" is defined as "the ability or tendency to think that things are funny, or funny things you say that shows you have this ability." Based on specific contexts, verbal humor takes language as a medium, uses humorous writing style to criticize and expose ambiguous and unreasonable phenomena in real life by insinuating, mocking, exaggerating and pun (a word or phrase with double meaning) in order to express their own opinions, inspire others to think, and produce meaningful artistic effects (Hua, 1996, p. 10). In short, in verbal humor, the writer or speaker does not express his thoughts directly but instead uses a metaphor to clarify the facts or reasons. However, not all of these methods can produce a humorous effect, especially after switching the translation, verbal humor in the SL often cannot produce the humor effect in the TL.

c. Type of Verbal Humor

Verbal humor in the novel includes several types, the most agreed and used is division as three types, namely universal humor, linguistic humor and cultural humor (Debra & West, 1989, p. 130; Spanakaki, 2007; Ping, 2007, p. 29; Li, 2014, pp. 96-97; Juan, 2015, p. 40). Where the three types of verbal humor will rely on language to transfer humor, this is different from non-verbal humor.

Universal humor is based on reality, mainly depend on the surrounding environment and situation, and does not depend on the characteristics of language, nor does it depend on cultural background (Xia, 2015, p. 53). The effect is often obtained through non-coordination, absurdity, unexpectedness, surprise, and violation of the maxim of cooperation (Biao, 2012, p. 230). Therefore, readers with a different language and cultural environments can also easily understand their meaning with knowledge and experience. Meanwhile, the target reader can get the same or similar humor effect and produce a response that is consistent with the original reader on universal humor.

Linguistic humor is the verbal humor most often used to create humor by applying the characteristics of language. Linguistic humor depends on the characteristics of the language, as well as the use and application of vocabulary and tenses. This is a vocabulary game that seeks to use some rhetorical means to achieve the effects of humor (Juan, 2015: 40), such as metaphors, exaggeration, pun, or use fuzzy meaningful words and strange sentence patterns. (Biao, 2012, p. 229; Xia, 2015, pp. 53-54).

While cultural humor depends on the cultural reality hidden in the structure of language (Biao, 2012, p. 230), cultural humor is produced in specific regions and specific histories. Understanding and appreciating

cultural humor requires the reader to understand the relevant culture. People in the same culture have the same perception and understanding of humor. However, if the reader does not know the culture, it will confuse the reader, let alone achieve a humorous effect. Usually, such humor is associated with specific background knowledge in a language, namely borrowing something traditional, figurative, or mentioning a celebrity, the title of a film, or song (Juan, 2015, p. 40).

In short, people in all countries have the same understanding of universal humor. This kind of universal humor can almost cross language and culture barriers to producing a humorous effect that is almost the same as the universal language, such as some common jokes that can often be found in everyday life in the novel "Hidup". Linguistic humor means that the original writer intentionally changed the word composition or used language techniques to describe the effects of humor, such as some satirical verbal humor in the novel "Hidup". Cultural humor usually includes vocabulary with a particular cultural background in language expression, for example borrowing words related to traditional customs, idioms, and historical celebrities, as in the novel "Hidup" there is one funny sentence that says "Huang Di" (Emperor), but actually in the history of Indonesia there is no emperor, but "Raja". This type of verbal humor has high requirements for cultural background knowledge for translators and readers.

B. Cases of Cultural humor in the Novel "Huo Zhe" and its Indonesian translation "Hidup"

Based on reading and analyzing following the theory of verbal humor types, some examples of cultural humor as the following table.

Table 1 Examples of cultural humor in the novel

No.	Chinese	Indonesia	English as reference
1	<i>Huang di zhao wo zuo nv xu, lu yuan tiao tiao wo bu qu. (p.5)</i>	<i>Kaisar cari aku jadi menantu, mesti jalan jauh, aku tak mau. (p.9)</i>	The emperor invited me to be a son-in-law, and the road is far away, I will not go.
2	<i>Ni cai shi guo min dang, wo jian guo guo min dang, jiu xiang ni zhe me ma ren. (p.97)</i>	<i>"Kamu itu yang Nasionalis," aku berseru, "Aku pernah lihat Nasionalis, persis kamu ini maki-maki orang". (p.116)</i>	You are the Nationalist Party. I have seen the Nationalist Party, just like you are so awkward.
3	<i>Dang wo wang zhe dao chu dou chong man lv se de tu di shi, wo jiu hui jin yi bu ming bai zhuang jia wei he zhang de ru ci wang sheng. (p.3-4)</i>	<i>Ketika memandang tanah hijau menghampar di sekeliling, aku semakin sadar kenapa tanaman di sini tumbuh begitu subur dan segar. (p.7)</i>	When I look at the green land everywhere, I will further understand why the crop grows so strong.

4	<i>Wo yi kan zi ji you ying le, jiu shuo: "Long Er, ni qu xi xi shou ba". (p.17)</i>	<i>Aku lihat diriku menang lagi, aku bilang, "Long Er, kamu cuci tangan saja sana." (p.23)</i>	When I saw that I had won again, I said, "Long Er, go wash your hands."
5	<i>Wo yi bian bian jiao zhe: " Lian zhang, Lian zhang, Lian zhang..." Bie de hua...hai shi ku. Pang bian yi ge jie fang jun dui wo shuo: "Ta shi Tuan zhang." (p.62)</i>	<i>Aku berulang-ulang berseru, "Komandan Kompi, Komandan Kompi, Komandan Kompi...". Semua kata yang lain ..tetap menangis. Satu Tentara Pembebasan di sampingnya berkata padaku, "Dia Komandan Resimen". (p.75)</i>	I shouted over and over again: "company commander, company commander, company commander..." Anything else... still crying. A PLA next to me said: "He is the regimental commander."

C. The Translation Methods of Cultural Humor in the Novel "Huo Zhe"

- a. *Kaisar cari aku jadi menantu, mesti jalan jauh, aku tak mau.* (p.9)

In this sentence, the language that produces the effect of humor is "jalan jauh, aku tak mau" (the road is far away, I will not go) even though "Kaisar cari aku jadi menantu" (the emperor invited me to be a son-in-law). We can find out that it was mocking because surely the Emperor would not look for him as his son-in-law, but he said the reason it did not go was that he thought the road was too far away, so he did not want to go.

In this translation, the translation method on verbal humor is literal translation because this translation follows the sentence form and grammatical structure in the SL. It turns out that this translation adequately conveyed the message in the SL, but actually it cannot fully achieve the effect of humor because in Indonesian culture there is no "Huang Di" (Emperor), so the target readers in Indonesia do not yet know the Emperor's honor in Chinese culture, and they cannot yet understand that it is a noble if can be Emperor's son-in-law so they would not find it funny. Thus, this translation achieved formal equivalence but failed to achieve dynamic equivalence.

- b. *"Kamu itu yang Nasionalis," aku berseru, "Aku pernah lihat Nasionalis, persis kamu ini maki-maki orang".* (p.116)

In this sentence, the language which should produce the effect of humor is "aku pernah lihat Nasionalis, persis kamu ini maki-maki orang." (I have seen the Nationalist Party, just like you are so awkward) Here this teacher metaphorically became Nationalist because the teacher was abusing people. Nationalists are, in fact, *Guomintang*, a kind of party in China that used to scold people like that often, but the party has now turned into an ordinary party. This is a kind of cultural humor because in Indonesian culture, it does not have a party, so the target reader feels confused

and will ask why teachers who curse people can be like nationalists, actually nationalists are not bad people or like to curse people. Therefore, this translation did not produce the effect of humor.

In this translation, the translation method on verbal humor is free translation because the *Guomintang* Party is translated as nationalist as in Indonesia. However, it turns out that this translation is inaccurate and did not adequately convey the message in the SL. Thus, this translation did not reach formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

- c. *Ketika memandang tanah hijau menghampar di sekeliling, aku semakin sadar kenapa tanaman di sini tumbuh begitu subur dan segar.* (p.7)

In this sentence, the language that should produce the effect of humor is "ketika memandang tanah hijau sadar kenapa tanaman di sini tumbuh begitu subur dan segar" (When I look at the green land everywhere, I will further understand why the crop grows so strong) because this shows that everywhere there is an affair. This includes cultural humor because, in Chinese culture, the color green is usually meant to be an affair, but in Indonesia it is not like that.

In this translation, the translation method on verbal humor is literal translation because this translation fully follows the form and structure in the SL, so this translation adequately conveyed the message in the SL. However, this translation did not produce a humorous effect because there is a culture shock so that target readers in Indonesia cannot understand the true meaning. Thus, this translation has reached formal equivalence but has not reached dynamic equivalence.

- d. *Aku lihat diriku menang lagi, aku bilang, "Long Er, kamu cuci tangan saja sana."* (p.23)

In this sentence, the language which should produce the effect of humor is "Long Er, kamu cuci tangan saja sana" ("Long Er, go wash your hands") because here Fugui let Long Er wash his hands to mock his lousy

luck after touching a woman's buttocks. This is a kind of cultural humor because, according to the Chinese, luck will be taken to another place if that person touches a woman's buttocks. However, in Indonesian culture, there is no such story, so this translation cannot produce the effect of humor.

In this translation, the translation method on verbal humor is literal translation because the translator translates the SL directly without changing vocabulary, so this translation already conveyed information in the SL. Nevertheless, the culture shock makes this sentence fail to achieve the same humor function as the SL. Thus, this translation has reached formal equivalence but has not reached dynamic equivalence.

- e. *Aku berulang-ulang berseru, "Komandan Kompil, Komandan Kompil, Komandan Kompil...". Semua kata yang lain ...tetap menangis. Satu Tentara Pembebasan di sampingnya berkata padaku, "Dia Komandan Resimen".* (p.75)

In this sentence, the language that produces the effect of humor is Fugui exclaims "Komandan Kompil" (company commander) but someone else tells him that actually it is "Komandan Resimen" (regimental commander). It is a kind of cultural humor because this kind of position in China and Indonesia is not the same. However, both the SL and the TL all indicate that *Lian Zhang* or *Komandan Kompil* was far lower than *Tuan Zhang* or *Komandan Resimen*. Therefore, this translation reaches the effect of humor.

In this translation, the translation method on verbal humor is a replacement translation because in both cultures do not have precisely the same position, the translator translates the above position with a similar position in Indonesia, and the language is also smoother and more comfortable to understand by target readers in Indonesia. Thus, this translation has reached formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

In short, the translation methods used to translate cultural humor are literal translation, free translation, and replacement, where not all of them reached equivalence.

D. Suggestion for The Translation which do not Fully Reach Equivalence

Based on the analysis above, it can be seen that verbal humor in the example sentence did not all have reached the formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence. However, it turns out here can change some translation methods on other cultural humor to achieve functional equivalence. Therefore, for translations that did not fully achieve equivalence, the authors propose to change several translation methods that are more suitable to cultural humor so that can

achieve equivalence.

- a. *Kaisar cari aku jadi menantu, mesti jalan jauh, aku tak mau.* (p.9)

This translation achieved formal equivalence but failed to achieve dynamic equivalence because the translation method used was a literal translation, where "Huang Di" in Chinese culture was directly translated into "Kaisar". This translation achieved formal equivalence because, in Indonesian, the meaning of "Huang Di" should be "Kaisar", but it failed to achieve dynamic equivalence because the target audience did not yet fully know the Emperor's position in China.

However, in Indonesia, some people have a position like the Emperor in China, namely the "Raja" (King). Therefore, in this translation, it is more appropriate to use a replacement method because this method will look for substitution of cultural substitute that contains different cultures, and this replacement is also found in the TL so that the target reader can find out the true meaning. In this way, it may not be able to fully achieved formal equivalence because "Kaisar" is replaced by "Raja", but the practical function can succeed. For verbal humor, if the function is not achieved, then the language is not included verbal humor. Therefore, this replacement method will make this translation achieve dynamic equivalence because it produces the effect of humor and pragmatic functions.

- b. *"Kamu itu yang Nasionalis," aku berseru, "Aku pernah lihat Nasionalis, persis kamu ini maki-maki orang".* (p.116)

This translation did not reach formal and dynamic equivalence because the translation method used was the free translation. In this translation, the *Guomintang* Party is translated nationalist and did not produce a humorous effect. The *Guomintang* Party is different from the nationalists, and it is so different that this translation failed to achieve equivalence.

In a context like this, it is more appropriate to use the literal translation method with detailed explanation, where the *Guomintang* Party is directly translated as the *Guomintang* Party, meanwhile, the translator can add an explanation to the footnotes to explain a little about the party's knowledge so that the target reader can find out cultural differences and produce the humor effect that was supposed to be brought about.

- c. *Ketika memandang tanah hijau menghampar di sekeliling, aku semakin sadar kenapa tanaman di sini tumbuh begitu subur dan segar.* (p.7)

This translation has reached formal equivalence but

has not reached functional equivalence because the translation method used is a literal translation. In this way, although it can achieve formal equivalence, it failed to achieve dynamic equivalence due to cultural differences between the two countries so that it cannot produce the effect of humor.

Therefore, it is more suitable to use the free translation method, which is to pay attention to the habit of expression, the ability to accept and understand the reader in the Indonesia so that the target reader can understand the humor of that kind of culture.

d. *Aku lihat diriku menang lagi, aku bilang, "Long Er, kamu cuci tangan saja sana."* (p.23)

This translation has reached formal equivalence but has not reached dynamic equivalence because the translation method used is a literal translation. In China, there is a culture that did not exist in Indonesia like this example so that if translated directly with literal translation cannot achieve dynamic equivalence because it will not produce the effect of humor.

As such, it is more suitable to use free translation methods or literal translation with detailed explanations, where the translator can use the habit of expression that is acceptable to the target reader who also has in Indonesian culture to convey the same information, or the translator can also translate literally but the explanation added at the bottom of the page, which is an explanation to explain the habit in China. Both can achieve dynamic equivalence, and literal translation with explanation can also achieve formal equivalence, but the free translation may fail to achieve formal equivalence.

5. CONCLUSION

In this article, the authors analyze the translation methods for cultural humor in the novel "Huo Zhe". At the meantime, the authors propose several suggestions to help translations that do not achieve equivalence can achieve dynamic equivalence. This article takes 5 places containing cultural humor in the novel "Hidup" to find out the translation methods that are most suitable for translating cultural humor. However, cultural humor in the novel "Hidup" is still a lot, and there are also some universal humor and linguistic humor, but due to the limited time and energy of the author, the object of research in this article did not contain all types of verbal humor in the novel.

The translation of verbal humor is a topic worthy of research because verbal humor will convey a funny message, but the translation may not necessarily convey the same information and response to the target reader because some verbal humor has language

and cultural characteristics that are difficult to translate correctly. Therefore, the authors hope that the results can be useful for researchers who would like to study the translation of cultural humor. The authors also hope that this study would be useful for Mandarin-Indonesian translators to better translate cultural humor in novels, comics, or dubbing and subtitles in films, series, or sitcoms.

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