

# A Lessons in Pandemic Autonomous Learning Conflicts of Communicative Methods in English Curriculum 2013 along COVID-19 in Indonesia

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## ABSTRACT

*Communicative competence is the goal of language learning, for which students have to learn language in a real context; and it also becomes the focus of Curriculum 13 in Indonesia. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there are conflicts in realizing communicative competence for the students online. This study aims to identify conflicts faced by the teachers in integrating communicative language teaching method and online platforms used during the pandemic, as the lessons in long distance learnings. This study is qualitative with in-depth interview as the main data collection technique. The respondents of this study cover 137 senior high school teachers. The data is analyzed by identifying the relevant interplays between graduate competences, language learning methods, online platforms used, and conflicts on the teachers and students learning autonomously along pandemic. The findings show that there are conflicts among the teachers and students in implementing online communicative language teaching autonomously, since the method and the used online learning platforms are irrelevant and internet literacy and infrastructure are still poor. There must be comprehensive understanding and skills of the teachers and students in handling autonomous learning digitally along the pandemic including learning outcome, materials, learning methods and process, and testing the outcome. These conflicts bring about lessons of adaptability, collaboration, communication, and resilience, they have learned valuable skills that will serve them well in their future education and careers.*

## KEYWORDS

*english; communicative; autonomous; pandemic; lessons*

## INTRODUCTION

There are many big conflicts in education along COVID-19 pandemic, mainly the conflicts of the interplays between four curriculum main components and long-distance learning: predetermined graduate competences, materials, teaching methods, evaluation of foreign language learning in autonomous learning or independent learning using long distance learning tools. The pandemic obliges the education process with physical distance, at-home-learning, and uncrowdedness, which make teachers have no choice to use the autonomous learning methods in teaching the foreign language communicatively using in online mode. All learning previously done conventionally, however, it must be converted to virtual (Haiyudi & Art-In, 2021). This condition makes the teachers and students adaptable with all the accompanying problems and conflicts. The source of conflicts and its adaptation can be

of: the communicative language teaching method ascribed by the Indonesia national curriculum 2013, the poor internet literacy, and students' high dependence on the teachers, low information technology infrastructure (hardware or software). The pandemic pushes the teachers and students for adopting a new way of teaching and learning process using the internet-based tools and more autonomous learning for learning the English as a foreign language in Indonesia. This article explores the learning conflicts of autonomous long distance tools, communicative language method prescribed by Indonesian 2013 curriculum, and the teaching learning process adaptability in Center Java Indonesia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Curriculum is defined as a guide used to achieve the goal of teaching and learning in school (Nugraheni, 2015). Besides, curriculum also covers strategies and preparation standard in determining the content and learning materials (Ojong & Enyimba, 2013: 94). The intentions of education are embodied in the curriculum as well (Mulenga, 2019). Curriculum change obviously depends on how educational institutions formulate policies (Fuadi, et al., 2021). Furthermore, Subandi (2014) points out that curriculum is the basis of teaching learning activities that covers subject matters and the expected learners' experiences based on their educational needs (Aleyidemo, Oyedegi, & Muazu, 2006). Thus, a curriculum becomes the core of education, designed to assist not only teachers, but also the school as a whole (Colin, 1992). Curriculum evaluation is a procedures for measuring value and effectiveness an educational activity (Yusuf, 2022). Curriculum, based on Republic Indonesia law, no.20 year 2003, is defined as a series of planning and organization of goal, content, and learning materials used as the guidance to learning activities done in order to accomplish a specific educational aim. In regard to communication matters, curriculum 2013 covers communicative approach to help learners to be communicatively competent on each subject matter. Specifically, for English language teaching and learning, in order to be communicatively competent, learners hopefully learn how to use the language as per to the context, since language skill and finesse are not innate; they derive from the learning processes (Chaer & Agustina, 1995).

The Curriculum 13, latest curriculum in Indonesia, emphasizes communicative approach for teaching and learning in Indonesia (Masduqi & Prihananto, 2021). The national curriculum of foreign language learning assigns that students' final competence is being able to communicate using the language in real situation and contexts effectively, no misunderstanding and translation (using mother tongue). Effective communication refers to the ability in using channels: signs, symbols or verbal/written language (Kumar, 2013), appropriately in a given specific context (Alisi, 2020) including in an educational context (Brown, 1994; Diloyn, 2017; Kumar, 2013). Good language, polite and polite is a tool in interaction and communication that reflects a person's character (Prayitno, et al., 2022).

Curriculum 2013 embodies communicative method also known as communicative language teaching (CLT) method. Richards (2006) defines CLT as a set of rules about the purposes of language teaching, how learners learn a language, the types of activities that effectively facilitate learning, and both the teachers' and learners' role in the classroom. It is strongly emphasized that the goal of CLT is the use of language, communicative competence (Richards, 2006); since historically this theory was used to argue against the traditional methods which emphasized on grammar, or the usage of language (Nunan, 2003). Communicative competence itself refers to the ability to know how to use language for different intentions and functions. Besides using language for different intentions and functions, it deals with how to use language according to the setting as well as the participants. It means that, to be able to be communicatively competence, the learners should

be able to differentiate language use in formal or informal setting and for written or oral communication (Richards, 2006). Richards (2006) mentions the other two characteristics of communicative competence are being able to not only write but comprehend different types of texts and maintain communication, although there is limitation on one's knowledge, by using various communication strategies. In other words, CLT perceives language as the communication itself which is bound to the situation, participants, intention, and time. Therefore, language must be learnt contextually in order to achieve the effectiveness in communication (Richards & Rodgers, 2011), which in other words implied that classroom setting must be aligned in certain ways to ensure the properness of the context (Diana, 2014; Rambe, 2017).

Due to the demand of the properness of the context, the teachers play significant roles in CLT, since the teachers are those who design the teaching learning activities by using curriculum as the basis. The teachers should first note that learners learn language through communicating (Richards, 2006). The learners should be considered as communicators. They use language to actively negotiate meaning. Therefore, the teachers should design activities or practices that support the learners to interact and communicate and give more opportunities to actively use language. The more opportunities the learners get, the greater chance the learners be communicatively competent. Richards (2006) suggests that the practices follow the sequential flow as follows: 1) mechanical practice, a practice in which the learners are controlled to learn language without necessity to understand it before. Usually it is carried out through drilling in grammar learning; 2) meaningful practice, a practice in which the learners are to make a meaningful choice during the half-controlled practice. For example, during learning adjective clause, the learners can make sentences based on their surroundings; and 3) communicative practice, a practice in which the learners are to practice in a real communicative context, where information exchange happens. For example the learners open a shop, and they have to use any expression to sell their goods well.

Some principles should be taken into account by the teachers so that the goal to make the learners communicatively competent can be achieved. Richards (2006) suggests that, in implementing CLT, the teachers 1) set real communication as the focus of language learning;

2) provide the learners opportunities to experiment and try out what they know as well as develop accuracy and fluency; 3) be tolerant of learners' errors because it is an indication of their process in building their communicative competence; 4) link various skills; and 5) let the learners discover grammar rules. It indicates that memorizing sentences and grammatical patterns are not required. Instead, the language patterns will be reflected in its functional and communicative uses.

Through the fulfillment of these principles, learners are able to achieve the five competences of communication: 1) linguistic competence. It refers to the mastery of language elements like: grammar, vocabulary, and morphology; 2) sociolinguistic competence. It refers to the appropriateness of the language use within the society through the consideration of social values and system; 3) strategic competence. It refers to the strategies used to maintain the effectiveness of communication; 4) actionable competence. It refers to the performance of the speaker during the communication, for example: pronunciation and accent; and 5) discourse/pragmatic competence. It refers to shaping language and communicating purposively in different genres cohesively and coherently. In other words, in order to achieve communicative competence, besides setting the teaching and learning process as per to the principles of CLT, the fulfillment of these competences, comprising the communicative competence, needs to be taken account as well.

However, nowadays, teachers face different problems in designing instructions, including designing CLT, due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Li et al., 2020). To prevent the further outbreak of COVID-19, there is a shift from offline or face-to-face learning to online learning starting from March 2020 as a form of ERT (emergency remote teaching), a temporary change of teaching and learning mode as a solution for a sudden and unplanned phenomenon (Erarslan, 2021). Online learning is considered the best alternative as the replacement of offline learning during the COVID 19 pandemic (Yao et al., 2020; Mulenga & Marban, 2020). Online learning itself is the concept of distant teaching and learning assisted with technology (Onyema et al., 2020; Gonzalez & Louis, 2018). The shift surely affects the way the teachers design the instructions, since the approaches, methods, learning process, and the environment (Al- Awawdeh & Alshtaiwi, 2020) should be reconsidered and redesigned (Padmo, Adriasih, & Idrus, 2020) as per to the online format, which is basically different with the offline learning format. During offline learning, the teachers are able to directly guide the teaching and learning activities. However, in conducting online learning instructional delivery cannot be directly and precisely done; thus, the focuses of teaching and learning process; learner's frame of mind, perception, assessment, happiness, success (Sun, 2014; Gonzalez & Louis, 2018), and interactivity (Al-Awawdeh & Alshtaiwi, 2020); require the teachers to be highly adaptable.

Due to naturally different from offline learning in terms of format, online learning should follow certain principles in order to optimally achieve the aforementioned teaching and learning focuses. Lee et al (2005) list the principles in conducting online learning that it should provide:

(a) provision of authentic activities within contexts, (b) benchmarking experts' thinking and performance, (c) abundant information and multiple points of view, (d) opportunity for practical reflection, (e) cooperative construction of knowledge, (f) clarification of thinking, and (g) coaching. Besides, whenever the assistance of technology is used in learning process, in which the learners get more freedom (Andrande & Bunker, 2009), Holec in Benson (2011) states that autonomous learning must take part; hence, the learners have to be aware of this fact in order to optimize the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Autonomous learning means the learners should take charge of their own success of learning (Palfreyman & Smiths, 2003; Sanprasert, 2010) by managing the theoretical and practical matters effectively (Smith, 2008). According to Kumaradivelu (2006), autonomy refers to academic and liberatory autonomy. Academic autonomy deals with how the learners learn to learn language. It enables learners to learn effectively. Meanwhile liberatory autonomy has something to do with empowering learners to be critical thinkers. That way, the most effective methods can be implemented and the most available resources can be used.

Besides being able to take charge of their own learning, the learners should be able to have the ability in using ICT. ICT becomes important because of the shift from offline to online learning. In learning online, electronically supported learning should be involved. Therefore, the learners should join e-learning. E-learning or electronic learning refers to activities done by each individual of group with the help of ICT (Chitra and Raj, 2018). It is pointed out that e- learning has several impacts as it 1) it provides high-level of motivation (Yohannes et al., 2021); 2) nurtures the learners' self-responsibility to decide whether they study or not; 2) enables the learners to expand their learning resources through World Wide Web; 3) helps the teachers to acquire computer-related skills and supports the learners to apply their knowledge and skills; 4) improves the learners' ability to study by themselves and their critical thinking skills (Chitra and Raj, 2018).

Moreover, Chitra and Raj (2018) expounds that e-learning embodies several advantages. The first point is that e-learning accommodate everyone's needs since the content is always updated and can be accessed many times according to one's availability, comfort, and preference. Furthermore, the learners have full responsibility to define their learning speed. There is no need to depend on the speed of their peers. E-learning also saves time since the learners can learn everywhere and reduces cost as they do not need to pay for course materials and accommodation. This indicates that e-learning is eco-friendly, since when the learners do not travel; less amount of CO2 emissions are produced. Another reason why e-learning is eco- friendly is that it is paperless. Besides the importance of ICT towards learners, Sandholtz, Ringstaff, and Dwyer (1997) emphasize that ICT requires the teachers to keep learning and adapting (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018) in order to integrate these technologies with teaching and learning.

Regardless the positive preference of the learners towards online learning, Al-Awawdeh & Alshtaiwi (2020) find that there are several obstacles that need to be taken into account in conducting online class. Based on their research, the problems are: 1) some of the learners still do not have smartphone due to financial difficulty; 2) internet connection is poor due to the remoteness of the learners' houses (Efriana, 2021; Nashruddin, Alam, & Tanasy, 2020); 3) internet data is too costly for some learners; 4) some learners' digital literacy is still low, so it is hard for them to run the applications; 5) technical problems are quite common to happen both from the teacher and the learners; 6) home environment sometimes make them think they are still in a holiday; 7) it is difficult for the teacher to approach the learners personally; 8) some learners prefer to stay silent from the beginning until the end without the teacher knows why; and 9) it is hard to educate moral value .

Some previous studies have already concerned towards education in the relation with the COVID-19 outbreak. Many of them discuss broad problems, like the impact of pandemic era to the teaching and learning process (Erarslan, 2021; Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020); the raising problems and the solutions (Efriana, 2021); the impact of pandemic for teachers (Talidad & Toquero, 2020) and their perception towards online learning during the pandemic (Al- Awawdeh & Alshtaiwi, 2020; Erarslan, 2021; Rifiyanti, 2020; Yohannes et al., 2021); learners' perspective towards online learning (Saiffudin, 2018) during the pandemic (Zboun & Farrah, 2020; Farrah & AlBakry, 2020). Due to the shift towards online learning some experts, in a more specific scope, study on the learners' attitude towards the online learning itself (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010). They state that learners prefer learning online, for it provides much assistance and support for their language learning compared with what they get during offline learning. Additionally, AlHammody (2014), on his research, finds that learners, especially those with low language proficiency, feel more comfortable and less threatened during online learning; and, as stated by Haverback & Crawford (2009), learners also find that they can grasp the material easier and have a better discussion during online class; which means that their motivation is enhanced with online learning. Based on the previous studies, the researchers try to find a gap in terms of difficulty of teaching and learning process during pandemic era, and the result is that this study is focused to identify the confusion of integrating online learning, in which multiple online platforms are used, with communicative method.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### ***Field Research***

This research was considered as qualitative research. Cropley (2021) defines qualitative research as a type of research focusing on identifying real-life or concrete experiences based on the researchers' mind and words by using everyday concepts. The data of this research



were narratives. It is stated that the most commonly used source of narrative data is interview (Murray, 2018). Therefore, the researcher interviewed 137 senior high school teachers related to the teaching learning activities along the COVID-19 pandemic. In accordance to the recent implemented curriculum, the teachers should design activities that support the learners to be communicatively competent. By interviewing the teachers, the researcher then 1) classified the learning methods and platforms used; 2) identified the problems on the learning methods and the platforms used; and 3) examined whether the learning methods and platforms are relevant with the communicative learning suggested by the national English curriculum or not.

### **Data Collection and Descriptions**

Based on the interview results, it is found that some teachers still implement irrelevant methods. The methods are considered irrelevant because they do not support the learners' communicative competences as assigned by its national curriculum. The methods implemented by the teachers are Grammar Translation, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task- Based, and Audio-Lingual Method. Grammar Translation Method is the irrelevant one. Although Grammar Translation Method is effective when it comes to vocabulary and grammatical structures (Mart, 2013) but it surely does not nurture the fluency of the learners' communicative language use (Newson, 1998). Still, 44% of the respondents still implement Grammar Translation Method.

On the other hand, the other three methods are regarded relevant. The data show that 20% respondents implement CLT, 15% of them implement Task-Based Learning, while 10% of the respondents implement Audio-Lingual Method. As opposed to the language usage that deals with grammatical structures, CLT emphasis the language use that has to do with using language as a means of communication. Based on CLT, the focus of language teaching is expressing and perceiving intentions meaningfully (Richards and Rodgers, 2001). Besides CLT which is considered to promote communicative competence as it emphasizes language use, Task-Bask is also relevant method as, through the given tasks, the learners are given more opportunity to interact and use language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Furthermore, the last method seen to be relevant is Audio-Lingual Method. The method helps learners to have a better communicative competence through emphasizing the acquisition of patterns in everyday dialogues but it is limited and hard to them in pandemic and online mode.

Besides the implementation of irrelevant methods that do not support communicative competence. Some of the teachers also use some irrelevant learning platforms. The platforms are considered as irrelevant as they do not support the learners' autonomous learning. Besides one offline platform used, the platforms used are Google Meet, WhatsApp, Zoom, Socrative, Indoprima, LMS, Edmodo, E-learning, Google Drive, Ruang Belajar, Moodle, Ruang Guru, Google Form, YouTube, and Google Classroom. Among those learning platforms; WhatsApp, Google Form, and YouTube are irrelevant. The list of the platforms used based on the teachers' gender is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The List of the Platforms Used by the Teachers during the COVID-19 Pandemic

| PLATFORM    | GENDER             |                       |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
|             | Male Teachers (25) | Female Teachers (112) |
| Google Meet | 3                  | 7                     |
| Offline     |                    | 1                     |
| WhatsApp    | 10                 | 46                    |
| Zoom        | 2                  | 5                     |
| Socrative   |                    | 1                     |
| Indoprima   |                    | 1                     |

|                  |   |    |
|------------------|---|----|
| LMS              |   | 1  |
| Edmodo           |   | 1  |
| E-Learning       | 1 | 5  |
| Google Drive     |   | 1  |
| Ruang Belajar    |   | 1  |
| Moodle           |   | 1  |
| Ruang Guru       |   | 1  |
| Google Form      | 1 | 7  |
| YouTube          | 4 | 16 |
| Google Classroom | 4 | 17 |

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *Empirical Review*

The learners become autonomous learners when they take charge of their own learning. They are responsible to decide their learning pace, when and where they learn, and what learning material suits them. However, through WhatsApp, Google Form, and YouTube; the learning activities are teacher-centred. It is the teachers who give instructions on what they learn, where they learn, and what time they should finish the task. Thus, the learners have no chance to learn autonomously. Unless the learners are autonomous, given more chance to control their own learning, communicative competence cannot be achieved.

This confusion or disorientation related to using relevant learning platforms deals with the students-teachers' poor ICT skills beneficial to organize and convey information with the help of ICT system and devices (Blanco and Boo, 2010). The poor ICT skills surely handicap the teachers and students in managing online learning autonomously during the COVID-19 pandemic. If only the students and teachers have good ICT skills, they may manage to use various relevant platforms that suits the expected outcome suggested by curriculum 2013. The teachers have more platforms to choose if they are competent users of ICT system and devices. In details, the conflicts faced by the teachers in conducting online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic are 1) the learners' low involvement; 2) the unstable internet connection; 3) the inability to deliver the learning materials optimally; 4) the difficulty in controlling the learners' learning process and progress; 5) the problem in implementing proper teaching strategies; 6) the teachers' low self-confident; and 7) the time allotment. Related to the learners' involvement, only 15% of the learners join online class. There are various reasons why the learners skip online class. The reasons may be because of the learners themselves or even because of the teachers. The learners may feel forced to do assignment. They may also feel bored since there is no direct or face-to-face interaction with the teacher. Sometimes, they skip online class due to the unstable internet connection.

Moreover, the reasons caused by the teachers are related to the material delivery, the control, the teachers' self-confident, and the time allotment. Since the teachers cannot deliver the learning materials directly, it is obligatory for them to choose platforms that best serve the delivery. However, when the teachers already choose the platforms, they encounter technical handicaps. Online learning requires the teachers to have good ICT skills. Only if the teachers have good ICT skills, technical handicaps can be avoided. However, the poor ICT skills burden the teachers so that when it happens, the teaching learning process is distracted and when the technical handicap cannot be overcome, the class may be dismissed.

Control also becomes a problem in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the teachers' roles is the controller. It is the teachers who decide what the learners learn, how they learn, when and where they learn, and how the progress is accessed. However, because of the shift to online learning, the teachers' role may not function optimally since

according to Goldsmith (2001) and Garten (2000) “the learners tend to differ in their attitudes towards online learning. Some learners thrive on face-to-face interaction and will therefore miss this type of communication when they engage in online learning”. Hence, the teachers cannot make sure whether the material is delivered or not since they cannot control the learning process and progress. There is a greater possibility that the learners copy the work from the internet or from their peers’. This results in the unreliable score.

Another confusion deals with the teachers’ self-confident. Marsh et al. (2006) refer to self- confident as a belief that one has of self. The teachers’ self-confident is vital since if the teachers have no confidence, how they promote learning? Less confident teachers tend to only deliver the materials and avoid queries. They are hesitant to let the learners to ask questions since they are afraid that they may not know the answers. Hence, communication does not take place. It is teacher-centered and no opportunities are given for the learners to actively interact and communicate. That way, less confident teachers surely influence the learners’ communicative competence.

The last confusion is related to the time allotment. The learners need to have a good time management and discipline. Online learning does not require the learners to learn at a specific time unless the platforms used are synchronous platforms in which the teachers and the learners engage at the same time. Therefore, if the learners cannot effectively manage the time to do the tasks wisely, they feel stress since all tasks may due at the same time. In order to support the learners to efficiently manage their time, the teachers should “have clear time axe with clearly defined activities such as studying the e-textbook, making exercises, studying from other sources, making the training tests, and other activities suitable for the specific course” (Fortynek and Motycka, 2018). Unfortunately, the teachers are still unable to do so.

This pandemic learning implies the lessons that the long pandemic learning era has presented a number of conflicts, confusions, challenges for students, teachers, and schools alike. In particular, senior high school students have had to adapt to a new way of learning, with many classes moving online and in-person instruction being disrupted. One of the key lessons of the long pandemic learning era is the importance of adaptability. Teachers and students have had too quickly adapt to new technologies and platforms for remote learning, as well as new teaching technique of language learning methods, learning approaches and schedules. This has required them to be flexible and open to change, and has taught them valuable skills that will be useful in their future education and careers. Education in Indonesia is demanded to be able to produce successors of the nation with high competence intact (comprehensive), which includes the competence of knowledge, attitudes, and skills (Sutama, et al., 2020). Another lesson of the pandemic is the value of collaboration and teamwork. With in-person instruction limited, students have had to rely on each other more than ever to complete assignments and projects. This has fostered a sense of community and cooperation among students, and has taught them the importance of working together to achieve common goals. In addition, the pandemic has emphasized the need for strong communication skills. With many classes and meetings being held online, students have had to communicate effectively through email, video conferencing, and other digital tools. This has taught them the importance of clear, concise, and effective communication, and has prepared them for the increasingly digital world of work. This way is the new life way of schooling that brings about many conflicts in its implementation.

## **CONCLUSION**

The long pandemic learning era has highlighted the need for resilience and perseverance. With so many challenges and disruptions, students have had to stay focused and motivated



in order to continue their education and make progress towards their goals. This has taught them the value of grit and determination, and has prepared them for the challenges and obstacles they may face in the future. Overall, the long pandemic learning era has presented a number of challenges and lessons for senior high school students and teachers. Through adaptability, collaboration, communication, and resilience, they have learned valuable skills that will serve them well in their future education and careers. Pandemic gives a great deal of lessons in executing foreign language learning in mastering the language communicative competence. During the COVID-19 pandemic online learning, to foster the learners' communicative competence assigned by the national curriculum, the teachers implement different teaching methods; make use of various online learning platforms; and face diverse lessons of The problems. The lessons are that among the methods implemented in autonomous online: Grammar Translation Method, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), Task-Based, and Audio-Lingual Method. 44% Grammar Translation Method is considered ineffective to make the learners become communicatively competent as it focuses more on vocabulary and grammar. Regarding with the autonomous online learning platforms used, some of them, WhatsApp, Google Form, and YouTube are also seen irrelevant because they tend to be teacher- centred and do not make students use the foreign language to communicate meaningfully and contextually. It is the teacher who gives instructions on what the learners should learn and should do. Thus, the learners have no learning autonomy. Moreover, these irrelevant platforms do not allow the learners to actively use language so that they cannot improve their communicative competences. Besides the problems that deal with ineffective teaching methods and irrelevant online learning platforms, there are still conflicts on how to foster the learners' communicative competence during the COVID-19 pandemic where the classes are held online. They are 1) the learners' low involvement; 2) the unstable internet connection; 3) the inability to deliver the learning materials optimally; 4) the difficulty in controlling the learners' learning process and progress; 5) the problem in implementing proper teaching strategies; 6) the teachers' low self-confident; and 7) the time allotment. These conflicts in adaptation process above are the lessons experienced by the teachers and learners along online learning that contribute in constructing the emergent teaching learning process or emergency curriculum.

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