Guidelines for Effective TAP (Translation for Academic Purposes) Tutorial Courses

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Abstract

An increasing need is felt by the university students, especially at Master's or PhD level, to get a satisfactory command of English so as to manage great amounts of technical materials and articles published internationally. Public and private language institutions, however, have not responded to this need properly specially in non-English speaking countries including Iran. Therefore, the only way left for the students is to demand tutorial sessions which are rare, and if existing, of diverse questionable quality. There seems to be a dearth of base-line or criteria released in any form to define and guide the tutors' approach and techniques which can be in accordance with university students' needs and purposes. Aiming to fill this gap, the present paper attempts to be a pioneering research in the realm of TAP (Translation for Academic Purposes) tutorial courses and intends to provide guidelines on text selection, role allocation, timing, rate, assignments and other relevant issues in this area. The guidelines are provided based on a post facto case study carried out by one of the authors which created the motive for this research and may further clarify the significance of the issues discussed. The recommended guidelines consist of 5 basic elements and 3 principles. It was discovered, and is expected for others as well, that following these guidelines helps to manage a TAP course in the best and most fruitful way with the least time wasted and with satisfactory result.

Keywords: Translation for Academic Purposes, Guidelines, Tutorial courses, Iranian Students, Needs Analysis

1. Introduction

The mere mention of "translation" is to associate it with transformation of a text or speech from one language to another and usually the unmarked form is from another language to our native language. As for the functions, and applications of this job is concerned; the first and foremost idea is to make that text or speech comprehensible. Though this is perfectly true; however, other underlying aspects are of concern too. As Gerding-Salas (2000) describes, the main aim of translation is to serve as a cross-cultural, bilingual communication vehicle among peoples. It sounds logical when we take a look at the history and background of translation use.

In the past, the need for translation was admitted in accordance with the rise of cross-cultural and multilingual trade. Passage of time added an ever-increasing rate of immigration and globalization to these roots and people, more than before, needed language contact. Now, we are well aware of the need to communicate globally and realize the value of an international language serving to connect people worldwide. In this regard, these days, English is perceived to be an international language being taught in non-English speaking countries as a foreign language. In this process of teaching and learning a foreign language like English, almost everyone is familiar with the grammar-translation method which dominated the fields in 18th and 19th centuries. This traditional method was later abandoned and replaced with various communicative methodologies in which the role of L1 was either erased or simply marginalized. That is, little value was given to the role of translation in foreign language learning. However, the role of L1 in L2 learning is acknowledged again, reviving the past (though not necessarily in the same way as was two centuries ago) but in a revised beneficial shape (Duff, 1989). Wherever we are, and in whatever position we are, it should be remembered that translation is a tool that, on its own, has no guarantee of prospective achievement. The hands which are going to employ it would give quality to that achievement.

2. Translation for Academic Purposes and Need for much required Guidelines

English for Academic Purposes is subsumed under the umbrella term English for Specific Purposes. From the early 1960s, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has grown to become one of the most prominent areas of EFL teaching today. Its development is reflected in the increasing number of universities offering an MA in ESP (e.g. The University of Birmingham, and Aston University in the UK) and in the number of EAP courses offered to overseas students in English speaking countries.

In non-English speaking countries, university students of all majors are required to pass both a GE (General English) course and an EAP or Technical English course before they can graduate. As Fiorito (2005) describes, EAP students are usually adults who already have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate a set of professional skills and to perform particular career-related functions. An EAP program is, therefore, built on an assessment of purposes, needs and the functions for which English is required. The requirement is that the students at EAP courses have already passed General English course and now seek to get acquainted with more complex, technical vocabulary and texts related to their fields of study. In this respect, the researchers' experience, both as university students and GE and EAP university lecturers, has indicated that what the students are taught during these courses at university is inadequate for producing independent translators of L2-to-L1 or vice versa. While the goal of these courses is to prepare students to comprehend international academic papers and books, in actuality this is hardly ever realized. Desperately, the students are pushed towards one of the following solutions:

- Paying translators or translation companies to do the translations when required
- Taking part in EFL classes held at private language institutes

▪ Taking part in tutorial sessions to learn translation techniques

The problem with the first solution is evidently the high cost and unreliability of the quality of translation. The second solution is time-consuming, costly and possibly leading to no desirable outcome due to the mismatch between students' needs and the skills taught in class. Unfortunately, private language institutes do rarely offer any TSP (Translation for Specific Purposes) or TAP (Translation for Academic Purposes) courses. The third way is obviously costly; however, one can somehow be optimistic to the results because the money is spent on *focused* learning of what you need to enable you to work independently in near future. Your time is saved and spent precisely on what you want and need to learn. The problem is, however, that the rare tutorial sessions, which are in fact the only and the last sanctuary for university students, are devoid of the desired quality and structure. There appears to be no pre-determined or suggested guidelines in this domain.In this regard, this study aims to recommend an overall structure for the Translation for Academic Purposes (henceforward TAP) tutorial sessions. These guidelines, if followed and practiced well, can help in producing independent translators of English academic articles among university students. However, it is required that the learners be at least at pre-intermediate level of proficiency and have passed GE and ESP courses previously at university. If the student(s)' needs are properly recognized and responded to in tutorial courses, they will be released from the complex-looking task of translating academic texts related to their field of education. In an attempt to fill the existing gap of research in this regard, the elements and principles are proposed in the present paper which may help to plan well-organized, productive and motivating TAP tutorial courses both for the tutor and the tutee.

3. Review of Literature

There is a dearth of research in the realm of teaching translation of academic articles as tutorials. However, there is a body of research in the field of teaching translation and training translators at different levels. Gerding-Salas (2000) dealt with some theoretical reflections about the translational process and the various approaches to verge on texts to be translated. The author described a sequential work procedure carried out with undergraduate translation students which proved to be successful. Goussard-Kunz (2009) reviewed the trends in translation training since the beginning of the nineties and attempted to bridge the gap between the academic and professional worlds of translating. It also examined what translation trainers have in common. In this line, Newmark (1988) also distinguished some essential characteristics, that a good translator should have, including reading comprehension ability in a foreign language and sensitivity to language both the mother tongue and the target language.

Janulevièienë & Kavaliauskienë (2004) participated in a research into the use of mother tongue and translation in ESP classes. They found that, in teaching/learning ESP, it had been a long-felt dissatisfaction, mainly on the students' part, about the exclusion or minimal use of translation in mastering complex issues. Learners constantly wished to check the exact meanings of the professional terms in their native language by consulting bilingual dictionaries or asking for teacher's explanations. Kavaliauskienë and Kaminskienë (2007) also attempted to rate contemporary students' perceptions of mental translation they employed in learning. They also aimed at sharing the experiences of using translation in class activities. The implications of the usage of mother tongue in learning ESP were described in this study.

4. Methodology

4.1 Sample and data collection techniques and procedures

The present study is actually of an ex post facto design. The guidelines presented in the current study are based on a tutorial course which had lasted for one month in 2010 in the

context of Iran (a Middle-eastern country). Individual characteristics of the subject are summarized in Table 1. She was following two major goals. Firstly, she aimed to improve her general English so that she could pass the TOEFL exam. Secondly, she hoped to get a good command of technical English related to her major so that she could read, comprehend and translate English articles. At the time of study, she was at the intermediate level of English language proficiency. The researcher's impression was that this subject was really hard-working and enthusiastic about translation. She wished to become an independent translator of English academic papers and during the course, through her admirable skill and discipline, she really showed evidence of this potential to become independent.

Table 1. Individual characteristics of the subject

| Nationality	Mother tongue	Foreign language	Gender	Age	Education	Major	Socioeconomic level
Iranian	Persian	English	female	24	M.A. degree	Geography	Middle-class

At the end of the course, the subject felt very satisfied with improvement in her translation skill. Her misconceptions about the task of translating were removed and she acquired techniques which enabled her to produce more advanced translations. This satisfaction, along with that of the tutor's, motivated the authors of the present paper to contemplate the nature and process of the course and present the roots of its success in the form of a number of guidelines for TAP courses. Therefore, the nature of the collected data is qualitative and not statistical. It has also been analyzed and discussed qualitatively.

5. Proposed TAP Guidelines

5.1 Basic elements of a TAP course

The guidelines which are proposed here consist of 5 "basic elements" and 3 "principles". The former consists of the elements as can be seen in figure 1:

Figure 1. Basic elements of a TAP course
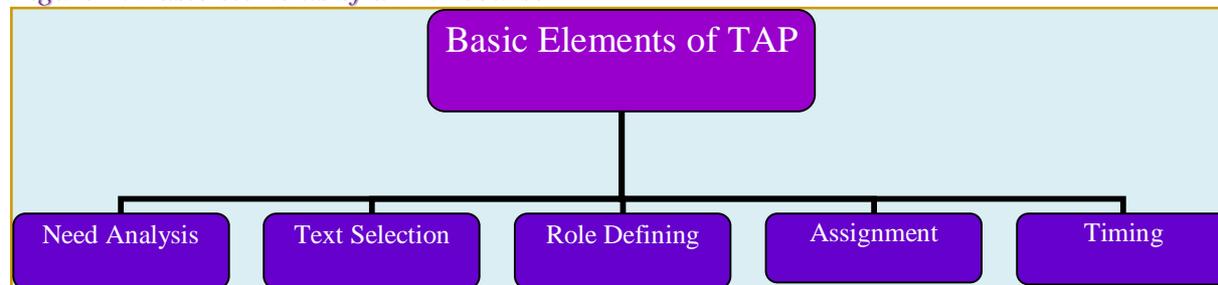
These five elements are not considered in a hierarchical order. However, it seems that the whole process begins with needs analysis. But even this element cannot be merely determined before the other elements and not to be adapted or changed. It all depends on the length of the course and the learner as well. S/he might show changes in his/her motivation and needs. Each of the elements is elaborated below:

Need Analysis

The first and foremost step in any tutorial course is to see what the exact goal of the course is. At what area(s) the subject feels to be weak and requires more instruction. For instance, in the case of the tutee of this research, besides her overall need of becoming a proficient translator of English academic articles, the subject said that she needed some instruction on the tenses. This led the tutor to provide her with some explicit instruction of tenses whenever they (the tutor and tutee) came across one in the text. For instance, it took time teaching her the functions of *present perfect* which was quite prevalent in academic texts. Evidently, the nature of this need analysis is not merely pre-determined, as mentioned

before. You get a general notion of what the tutee seeks to get out of this course. However, more detailed and specific needs come to surface during the course and have to be responded to appropriately.

Text Selection

It is recommended, in TAP courses, to make the tutee responsible for selecting the material. This way, they bring to class exactly those articles they need to translate or the ones they previously found difficult translating. This is in line with their precise needs. The tutor should have a copy. It needs to be remembered that working comprehensively on one full academic article seems to be better than rushing upon many unfinished ones and merely touching the surface of each. Our tutee brought the articles to class. They were academic articles on Geography published in credible journals. She had studied them before and was acquainted with the content and eager to learn to translate it properly.

Role Defining

What is implied is deciding upon the tutor's and the tutee's roles during the whole course. What is recommended in this study is to give an active role to the trainee as:

- Text selector
- Translator assistant in technical lexis and jargon
- Word finder and text analyzer
- Decider on the length of the course

The tutee brings the texts to class. S/he has perused the pre-determined section to be worked on at home. S/he has looked up the new words and has provided a first draft of its translation no matter how mechanical it looks; now is in class with her dictionaries, paper and pencil and a full alertness!

The tutor's role is defined as the following:

- guide and facilitator of translation
- teacher of techniques and structures
- corrector of *mistranslations*
- editor of *maltranslations*

It is important to know here that the teacher is not responsible for teaching new words, unless they are expressions. The trainee is expected to have looked up all the new words in advance. The trainer works more on the meaning at clause and sentence level. For each and every sentence the tutee is asked to produce a translation which is initially mechanical and parrot-like. Then, the tutor revises that translation and makes it more fluent and natural. Just on the spot, new techniques are taught and attention is drawn to the discrepancy between the two languages and how it can be dealt with.

It is noteworthy that we distinguished between *mistranslations* and *maltranslations*. What we mean by the former is the wrong translation which needs to be omitted and replaced totally. By the latter, we mean that sort of translation which is not wrong but can be replaced with a better one to become more comprehensible and to prevent misinterpretation.

Assignment

The trainee is expected to read that section of the text which will be worked on the following session at home, look up the words and write a first draft of its translation. Our tutee was very well aware that without her preparation, holding the class was next to impossible. When, for some reasons, she could not do her job, she would call the tutor and cancel or adjourn the class to a later time.
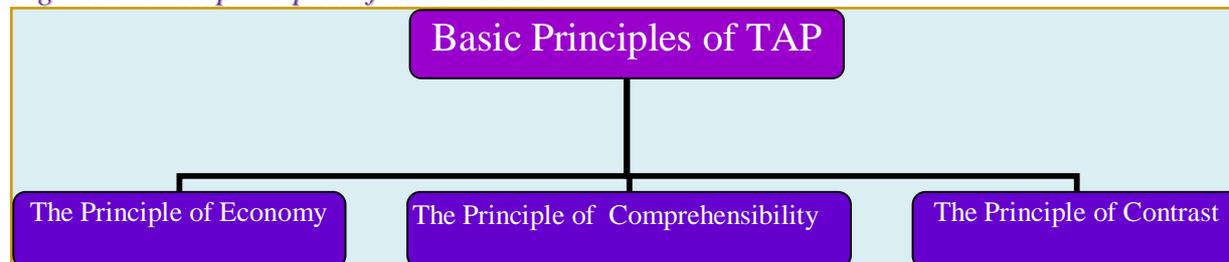
Timing

The recommended duration of each session is 1.5 hour. It is better be within the first half of the day for both the tutor and tutee to be energetic, considering the fact that translating is an unbelievably demanding task. As for the length of the whole course, the tutee decides on

when s/he feels competent enough to begin independent translating practice. From then on, the tutor can act as an advisor or final editor who can provide guidance on the phone or through email correspondence.

5.2 Basic principles

We firmly believe that what any TAP tutor should be aware of and also essentially instruct his/her tutees on, is within the framework of 3 principles which are presented in the following Figure

Figure 2. Basic principles of a TAP course

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                      Basic Principles of TAP

The Principle of Economy    The Principle of Comprehensibility    The Principle of Contrast
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The principle of economy

The gist of this principle is the fact that "quantity does not guarantee quality". This is what almost all amateur translators keep forgetting. Their perception is that long sentences should be translated as long or even longer; all words should be translated; nothing should be omitted or replaced. However, for the translation to become comprehensible (principle of comprehensibility), tutees need to learn a couple of techniques to get rid of redundancies. Some of these techniques are:

- Breaking long, complex sentences into smaller ones. The following example is from the case we mentioned earlier:

Extract from the article:

Knowing about the physical geography of the planet is important for every serious student of the planet because the natural processes of the earth (which is what the study of physical geography includes) affect the distribution of resources, the conditions of human life, and have resulted in many varied impacts to human populations throughout the millions of years (Torghabe & Yazdanmehr, 2011, p. 16) (For the whole article see Appendix 1).

The initial translation, the tutee provided, was even longer than the English sentence! The tutor, however, broke this sentence into two and modified her translation. It was observed that not only did it make its reading and comprehension easier but also reduced the length of the translated text from 59 words to 44. Here are the translations:

Tutee's translation (59 word long):

دانستن درباره جغرافیای فیزیکی سیاره برای هر دانش آموز جدی روی این کره مهم است چون فرآیندهای طبیعی زمین (که آن چیزی است که جغرافیای فیزیکی آن را شامل می شود) بر توزیع منابع و شرایط زندگی انسانی تاثیر می گذارد و به بسیاری تاثیرات گوناگون بر جمعیت انسانی منجر شده است که در طی میلیونها سال رخ داده.

Tutor's translation (44 word long):

علم به جغرافیای فیزیکی زمین از آن جهت بر هر دانش آموز سخت-کوش این کره لازم است که فرآیندهای طبیعی زمین (محتوای جغرافیای فیزیکی) در توزیع منابع و شرایط زندگی انسانی موثراست. این فرآیندها به تاثیرات گوناگونی در جمعیت انسانی طی میلیونها سال انجامیده است.

- Integrating successive synonymous words, as in the following example:

Today, human geography is still practiced and enacted and within it there are more specialized and technical fields such as… (Torghabe et al., 2011, p. 28) (For the whole article, see Appendix 2).

Recommended translation:

امروزه جغرافیای انسانی هم چنان به کار گرفته شده و در درون آن شاخه های تخصصی تری وجود دارند از جمله ....

Redundancy should be avoided and translator trainees should be consistently made aware of this fact. Otherwise, their attempts will end up in a patchwork of long incomprehensible sentences, the reading of which requires frequent moving backward and forward in the text.

- Avoiding repetition when there is no intended emphasis implied by it in the original text. As an example:

The <u>Age</u> of Exploration or <u>Age</u> of Discovery began in the early 15th century (Torghabe et al., 2011, p. 71) (For the whole article, see Appendix 3).

Recommended translation:

.عصر کاوش یا اکتشافافات در اوایل قرن پانزده آغاز شد

The principle of comprehensibility

- Giving priority to the gist of the sentence, paragraph and the text, rather than translation of every single word.
- Use the *small to big technique*. When, as a translator, you are not sure about the meaning of a piece of text, move from smaller piece to the longer ones in this order: word → phrase → clause → sentence → paragraph

For instance, when you are not sure about the meaning of a sentence, read its preceding and following sentences in the paragraph. It indeed helps.

The principle of contrast

This principle focuses on the differences between the two languages and dealing with that in a logical way. The tutee should be made aware of differences of structure, word order and collocations between English and the target language. These features are highly determinant for the quality of translation. In the case of English and Persian languages, sharp contrasts exist in:

a) Translation of passive and active voices
b) Translation of adjectival phrases
c) Word-by-word translation

The first difference lies in the fact that English is laden with passive sentences, especially in academic texts. In Persian texts, to the contrary, active voice is prevalent and this divergence between the two languages makes translation rather difficult. Novice translators, including our tutee, force themselves to translate English passive sentences to passive Persian. It results in inauthentic, hardly comprehensible translations. However, if the same sentences are turned into active voice in translation, the whole task becomes easier and the text becomes more comprehensible and authentic to the prospective reader.

The second contrast between Persian and English belongs to the order of words in an adjectival phrase. In English, adjectives precede the noun, while in Persian this is exactly the opposite. In academic texts, we are often faced with long sentences containing long adjectival phrases. A novice translator starts with translating the adjectives to Persian, while s/he must first find the referent (head) of those adjectives, translate it and only then go back to the preceding adjectives.

A number of techniques are suggested to solve the third problem, i.e. word-by-word translations which, very often, leads to unintelligible translations:

- Use of Deletion technique, as in the following example; The underlined words are deleted in the translated text:

<u>It</u> results in close relationships with <u>those of</u> other areas.

به رابطه ای نزدیک با سایر رشته ها انجامید.

- Use of Addition techniques, as in the following example; the underlined words are added to the translation:

Having obtained the grant, the explorer began his first voyage.

<u>پس از گرفتن</u> مجوز کاوشگر نخستین سفر خود را آغاز کرد.

- Use of Conversion, that is translating negative sentences to positive sentences as in:

It was not until 1976 that…

در سال 1976 بود که...

It is expected that the majority of the problems novice translators face in their efforts can be reduced if their tutor or trainer raises their awareness of the three principles mentioned here. Such awareness, accompanied by adequate practice under the guidance of the tutor, can speed up the improvement of their translation skill.

6. Conclusion

University students or postgraduates in all non-English speaking countries need to stay updated with recent research findings. These findings can be found in academic articles or book chapters which are mainly in English. They are also required to render their own research results and writings into English in order to publish them internationally. In this regard, translation is the need of the academic world today. However, there are many problems which the avid but novice translators face in this regard. To overcome this, they might take up tutorial courses so that they can learn technical translation related to their major and do their translation task themselves, instead of paying others to do it.

To be as fruitful as possible, a number of guidelines were offered in this paper for TAP tutorial courses, consisting of basic elements and principles. The proposed elements are exclusive to tutorial sessions. In a 1-month tutorial course, they were taught to an Iranian postgraduate who wished to become an independent translator of English academic texts. The course was found to be fruitful and led the researchers to present a number of basic elements and principles which were believably the key to its success. The principles, however, are not necessarily limited to TAP tutorial courses. They can also be applied to GE or ESP courses taught at universities. It is expected that abiding by the basic elements and application of the principles can enable TAP tutors to get straight to the key problems their tutees face in order to prevent them, or solve them, as fast and as effectively as possible. Tutees will learn how to deal with redundancies, long stretches of text, structures divergent from their own language, word order, locating referents and so on. They will learn how to avoid the simplistic word-by-word translation and how to consider the authenticity of their translation product. They will learn to value reader's ease of following the meaning of the text especially when practicing to translate their own text to English. Most importantly, they learn how to take responsibility of providing the course materials perfectly matched to their needs. Finally, they are hoped to find translation enjoyable and creative and value it as a main means of them staying updated with the world knowledge and also getting internationally published.

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Appendix 1

Physical Geography

As we studied before, environmental geography combines physical and human geography and looks at the relationship between the environment and humans. Physical geography focuses on geography as an Earth science. It includes the geographic tradition known as the Earth Sciences Tradition. Physical geographers look at the landscapes, surface processes, and the climate of the earth. Their studies are vast and time consuming.

Physical geography consists of many different *elements*. These include: the study of the earth's interaction with the sun, seasons, the composition of the atmosphere, atmospheric pressure and wind, storms and climatic disturbances, climate zones, soils, rivers and streams, weathering, natural hazards, deserts, and ice sheets, ecosystems, and so very much more. However, these elements are not independent from each other. Sometimes, more than one element are studied together.

Knowing about the physical geography of the planet is important for every serious student of the planet because the natural processes of the earth (which is what the study of physical geography includes) affect the distribution of resources, the conditions of human life, and have resulted in many varied impacts to human populations throughout the millions of years. Since the earth is the only home to humans, by studying our planet, we humans and residents of the planet earth can be better informed to help take care of our only home. This adds to the importance of physical geographic studies.

Appendix 2

Human Geography

Human geography is a branch of geography that focuses on the study of patterns and processes that shape human interaction with environments. It includes human, political, cultural, social, and economic aspects. While the major focus of human geography is not the physical landscape of the earth, it is hardly possible to think about human geography without referring to the physical landscape on which human activities are played out. Human geography can be divided into many broad categories including language, religion, medicine, cities, economics, entertainment, and much more.

Some of the main cultural phenomena studied in human geography include different economic and governmental structures, art, music, and other cultural aspects that explain how and/or why people function as they do in the areas in which they live. Globalization is also becoming increasingly important to this field as it is allowing these specific aspects of culture to easily travel across the globe.

Cultural landscapes are also important because they link culture to the physical environments in which people live. For instance, people living in a rural area are often more culturally tied to the natural environment around them than those living in a large city area. Today, human geography is still practiced and more specialized fields within it such as feminist geography, children's geography, tourism studies and political geography have developed to help more in the study of cultural practices and human activities as they relate to the world.

Appendix 3

Age of Discovery

The Age of Exploration or Age of Discovery as it is sometimes called, began in the early 15th century and lasted until the 17th century. It is a time when Europeans began exploring the world by sea in search of trading partners, new goods, and new trade routes. In addition, some explorers set sail to simply learn more about the world. Whatever their reasons, the information gained during the Age of Exploration significantly helped in the advancement of geographic knowledge.

Though the desire to simply explore the unknown and discover new knowledge is a usual human characteristic, the world's famous explorers often lacked the money needed for a ship, supplies, and a crew to go on their journeys. As a result, many turned to their governments which had their own desires for the exploration of new areas. Some important voyages of exploration that took place during the Age of Exploration were Ferdinand Magellan's navigation of the globe, the search for a trade route to Asia through the Northwest Passage, and Captain James Cook's voyages that allowed him to map different areas and travel as far as Alaska.

The Age of Exploration ended in the early 17th century after technological advancements and increased knowledge of the world. Even though much of the travel during this age was done to find new trade routes, it did have a significant impact on geography. By traveling to different regions around the globe, explorers were able to learn more about areas like Africa and the Americas. In learning more about such places, they were able to bring knowledge of a larger world back to Europe. The Age of Exploration served as a stepping stone for geographic knowledge. It allowed more people to see and study various areas around the world which increased geographic study, giving us the basis for much of the knowledge we have today.

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