

Professional Success among Iranian University Professors of TEFL: A Study on the Basis of Goffman's Footing Theory

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Abstract

This study aimed at exploring the influence of the role that a teacher employs on his/her professional success. The teacher role was investigated from a new outlook, Goffman's footing theory. According to Goffman (1981), a speaker's role can be classified into three categories of animator, author, and principal, characterized as the repeater of the ideas made by the others, the paraphraser of concepts, and the creator of original ideas, respectively. Applying this theory in the educational context, the researchers selected 36 university professors of TEFL in the MA level and asked their students (N=118) to identify their professors' dominant role as animator, author, or principal, both generally and individually, via a metaphor checklist and their professional success via the Characteristic of Successful Iranian EFL Teacher Questionnaire. The results of Chi-square analysis indicated that the professors dominantly take on the author and animator roles respectively. One-way Anova results also demonstrated that the professors taking on the principal role enjoy higher professional success than those adopting the animator and author roles. The results offer implications and suggestions for pedagogical consideration within the Iranian university context.

Keywords: animator, author, footing theory, principal, professional success

Introduction

Educational system is a place where new social, academic, and intellectual changes originate (Velea & Farca, 2013). In such a place, consideration of teachers' roles is highly significant as their implementation in the educational process influences the quality of not only educational aims but also human resources (Fareh & Saeed, 2011; Sahan, 2009; Stojiljkovic, Djigic, & Zlatkovic, 2012). Traditionally, it was possible to distinguish only two main groups of teachers' role: active and passive (Larsen-freeman, 1986, Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Contemporary intellectuals, influenced by the tenets of postmethod pedagogy, however, have identified a wider range of roles. Kumaravadivelu (2003), for instance, argued that, empowered by postmethod pedagogy, teachers are to follow their teaching process based on their teaching experiences as critical thinkers, theorizers, and field practitioners. Teachers should explore their own teaching approaches which are socially realistic and contextually sensitive.

Competent postmethod teachers are self-directed theorizers who construct their own theory of practice (Khatib & Fathi, 2012), critical thinkers who constantly evaluate and observe their teaching practice (Khani & Darabi, 2014), reflective practitioners who refrain from just the transmission of a preselected body of knowledge (Tasnimi, 2014), and decision-maker agents who are critical examiners of classroom practices to come up with different ideas to enhance learners' achievement (Dagkiran, 2015). Yayli (2009) rightly stated that we need teachers who are co-inquirer, mediator, critical intellectual, and liberator. Equally convincingly, Ahmadian and Erfanrad (2014) stated that as language, culture, and identity are integrally related, language teachers are in a key position to construct learners' critical outlook toward unfamiliar belief systems, values, and practices and to lead them to both linguistic development and social empowerment.

In a seminal study done by Shirmohammadi (2012), the teacher's role was investigated via a new outlook. She applied footing theory, which is a sociological theory put forward by Goffman (1981), in educational setting. From that time on, a number of studies which exploited this new outlook to explore the teacher role were undertaken in the Iranian context. The present study also aimed at investigating teachers' roles on the basis of this theory.

Goffman's Footing Theory : Theoretical Foundations

Footing theory is the well-known theory of Goffman, who is one of the twenty century's most influential sociologists. It is defined as the alignment that participants in interaction take with regard to one another (Goffman, 1981). Footing illustrates the extent to which a speaker projects his own identity in a conversation (Deckert & Vickers, 2011).

Goffman (1981) believed that the terms *speaker* which is basic to every conversation is too oversimplified to have any meaning beyond sound and that it does not decompose the role of *the one who speaks* into more detailed elements. Hence, he introduced the concept of *footing theory* according to which a speaker can adopt the three roles of *animator*, *author*, and *principal*.

Animator is someone who repeats the sentences made by the others. He exactly expresses the ideas he does not hold himself. In fact, he speaks for someone else and in someone else's words. For instance, reciting a fully memorized text or reading aloud from a prepared script gives the speaker the role of animator. Secondly, *author* is someone who reformulates or paraphrases the words having been uttered by someone else. For example, reading off from a text or a group of utterances which has not been memorized gives the speaker the role of author. Finally, *principal* is the one who expresses his own original ideas. He is someone who projects his own true identity. Changes in footing means moving from exactly repeating what someone else said to reformulating other's opinions and stating one's original ideas (Goffman, 1981).

The combination of animator, author, and principal roles taken on by a speaker in a given conversation is named *production format*. In a conversation, when the speaker adopts all three roles, the production format is considered to be complete. In cases in which the speaker does not take on the role of principal the production format is incomplete. In this case, the language used is called the *cited language*. There are many drawbacks with the cited language. First, the cited language is not considered as the challenge of the cited code. In other words, the speaker repeats or paraphrases the words without critically challenging them. Moreover, the focus of cited language is on wording not message. This means that the speaker who imitates or reformulates the statements may ignore the real message (Hancock, 1997).

Empirical Studies in Non-Iranian Context

Skidmore and Murakami (2010) investigated the changes in the footing of a teacher-student dialogue during class discussion by marking prosodic features to show boundaries between different kinds of pedagogic activities. The result demonstrated that the teacher-led IRF (Initiation-Response-Feedback) discussion, in which the teacher's dominant role is an animator, was marked prosodically by fast interaction pace and echoing of the students' answers with minimal uptake. The teacher's principal role, however, which was identified by thought and reflection, was marked prosodically by low pace, vowel lengthening, and quickened tempo.

Su (2009) investigated a bilingual speaker's code-switching practices in conversation. The qualitative analysis of the data showed that when the speaker was dealing with a highly face-threatening situation like asking or promising, he changed his footing to create more social distance and decrease a threat in a conversation. He refrained from using pronouns 'I' and 'me' and acted as an animator through using third person singular pronoun. However, when the focus of talk shifted, the speaker's strategy seemed to reduce social distance through using the pronouns 'I' and 'me' and acting as a principal.

Empirical Studies in Iranian Context

Footing theory was first applied in Iranian educational setting by Shirmohammadi (2012). She believed that a teacher, like any other speaker, can take on three roles of animator, author, and principal. A teacher who takes on the animator role simply repeats the information presented in the books. On the other hand, the one who adopts the author role paraphrases the information. Finally, the teacher who embodies the principal role expresses his own original ideas and attitudes. In a quantitative study done via a metaphor checklist, she indicated that while the professors take on the animator role dominantly in the current situation, the students prefer to have the professors adopting the principal role in the ideal situation.

From that time on, more studies have been done on footing theory. For example, similar results were gained by Ghapanchi and Talebi (2012) when they replicated the study. In another similar yet qualitative study, Pishghadam and Shirmohammadi (2012) gathered observational data in TEFL classes at the MA level through audio-taping classroom interactions. The footing changes

were analyzed deeply on the transcribed data. The in-depth analysis illustrated that classroom practices are dominated by the author role taken on by the professors.

In another study, Ghapanchi and Talebi (2012) exploited the checklist designed by Shirmohammadi (2012) and conducted a comparative study in which they compared the roles of the professors teaching English Literature or TEFL at the BA level with those teaching TEFL at the MA level. The findings indicated that the dominant role of the professors teaching at the BA level is principal while the author role is the dominant role taken on by the professors teaching at the MA level.

Talebi and Shirmohammadi (2012) examined the differences among the critical thinking measures of the professors who adopted the animator, author, or principal role and taught TEFL. To do so, the professors' students were given the metaphor checklist in order to choose the metaphors that best characterized the role of each professor. Besides, the professors' critical thinking abilities were measured through Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal Test. The analysis of the data indicated that the critical thinking skill of the professors taking on the principal role is significantly higher than those adopting the animator or author role.

Entezari and Ghafournia (2016) aimed at finding whether the professors who adopt the animator, author, or principal role differ significantly regarding the level of burnout they suffer from. To achieve the purpose of the study, university professors teaching TEFL at the BA and MA levels were asked to fill out Maslach's Burnout Inventory in order to measure their level of burnout. In addition, the same metaphor checklist was given to their students to express their ideas about their professors. It was concluded that burnout was lower in the professors who adopted the principal role and higher in those who took on the animator and author roles respectively.

Purpose of the Study

The traditional methods of instruction which considered learning to be solely statistic, universal, and cognitive are no longer accepted. Rather, issues like identity, power, and status are highly appreciated in classroom context. Thus, new roles for teachers are identified (Hosseini, Rashidi, & Rasti, 2015). The new era requires teachers who are intellectuals rather than implementers of prescribed instructional programs (Giroux, 1988). Freire and Macedo (1987)

named this new role *teacher as initiator of change*. Although a few numbers of the studies, mentioned above, addressed the importance of the investigation into the changing role of new-millennium teachers, clearly, a need exists for sharper focus on this subject. In addition, due to the dearth of research in this domain on the basis of the new outlook of footing theory, the present study was an attempt to, first, identify the dominant role of the university professors of TEFL in the Iranian context based on Goffman's footing theory, and then to pursue whether their role affects the level of their professional success. Therefore, the present study addressed the following research questions.

RQ1: Do Iranian university professors teaching TEFL at the MA level dominantly take on the principal role?

RQ2: Is there any significant difference among the Iranian university professors of TEFL at the MA level who adopt the animator, author, or principal role in terms of their professional success?

Method

Participants

The target participants of this study were 36 university professors (32 males, 4 females) who held PhD degrees and taught TEFL at MA and PhD levels. The participants ranged in age from 35 to 56 and in teaching experience from 6 years to 28 years. They were selected from Khorasan, Semnan, and Sistan Baloochestan Provinces and from Ferdowsi University of Mashhad, Hakim Sabzevari University, Azad University of Neishabour, Torbate Heidarie University, Semnan University, and Zahedan University.

The aim of this study was to identify the professors' dominant role as animator, author, or principal and their professional success. Both constructs were identified based on their students' perceptions. Thus, the second group of our participants consisted of 118 (86 males and 32 females) learners, the students of the teacher-participants at that time. They ranged in age from 23 to 45 and studied TEFL at the MA level at the above-mentioned universities. The number of students who provided the measures of professional success for each professor ranged from 14 to 25. For both groups, no distinction was made between the males and females.

Instrumentation

In order to address the research question, the following instruments were used.

Metaphor Checklist. To generally identify the dominant role of the Iranian professors of TEFL, the students were asked to fill out the metaphor checklist 1 designed by Shirmohammadi (2012). This checklist consists of one prompt, "*The university professors teaching TEFL are like ...*". The prompt is followed by some options which determine the professors' dominant role regarding Goffman's footing theory. The options consist of 7 metaphors, reflecting the animator role (*robot, parrot, copy machine, projector, repeater, microphone, and cassette player*), 7 metaphors, representing the author role (*scaffolder, missionary, cook, puzzle doer, mixer, summarizer, and molasses*), and 7 metaphors, identifying the principal role (*writer, power plant, sun, artist, spring, challenger, and window to the world*). The students were required to select the metaphors that best characterize their general attitudes towards the professors. The reliability of the questionnaire, computed by Cronbach alpha, was reported to be 0.81. This high value approves its reliability.

To identify each professor's individual role, the students were also asked to fill out the metaphor checklist 2. This checklist consists of one prompt, "*My professor is like a -----*", which was followed by the options similar to the checklist 1. The students were asked to select the metaphors which pictured each of their professors. Again, the Cronbach's Alpha was run to check the reliability of the checklist 2 and it was reported to be 0.77 for the whole sample.

Characteristics of Successful Iranian EFL Teacher Questionnaire (CSIETQ). To obtain the measures of teacher success through student evaluation, a 47-item questionnaire on the characteristics of successful Iranian EFL teachers, developed and validated by Moafian and Pishghadam (2008), was utilized. They reported that the questionnaire, enjoying high construct validity, measures 12 constructs: teaching accountability, *interpersonal relationships, attention to all, examination, commitment, learning boosters, creating a sense of competence, teaching boosters, physical and emotional acceptance, empathy, class attendance, and dynamism*. The learners responded on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'.

The reliability of the questionnaire was computed by Cronbach alpha and was reported to be 0.77. It shows that the results of the questionnaire are satisfactorily reliable in terms of their internal consistency.

Procedure

First of all, the students were asked to fill out the metaphor checklist 1, which required the students to select the metaphors that generally pictured their professors. The metaphors collected by the checklist enabled the researchers to identify the dominant role of the Iranian professors of TEFL in the university context as animator, author, or principal. Subsequently, using the metaphor checklist 2, the researcher asked the students to choose the metaphors that best characterize the dominant role of each individual professor. Finally, to obtain the professors' measures of teaching success, the students were asked to fill out Successful Iranian EFL Teacher Questionnaire. For the checklists and the questionnaire, the students were shortly introduced to the purpose of the research and were provided with some brief oral instruction on how to complete them. To receive a reliable evaluation by the learners, the researchers explained the purpose of completing the checklists and the questionnaire and assured them that their views would be confidential.

In the data analysis phase, the randomly used metaphors in the metaphor checklist 1 that were chosen by the students were grouped under three roles of animator, author, and principal. Then, the frequency of the metaphors of each group was computed. To find out whether the differences among three kinds of the metaphors chosen by the participants were significant, SPSS (version 16) was used in order to run the Chi-square. In this way, the professors' dominant role in a general sense was identified. To analyze the data collected through the metaphor checklist 2, the same process was repeated for each individual professor separately. In doing so, the dominant role of each professor was determined as animator, author, or principal. Subsequently, the measure of the professional success of each professor was specified. One-way Anova was run to determine whether the professors taking on the animator, author, or principal role differed significantly regarding their professional success.

Results

In this section, the results of the analysis of the metaphors selected by the students about the professors' roles were presented and discussed. Furthermore, the professors' professional success scores were statistically analyzed. First, the results of metaphor analysis for both the professors in general and each individual professor are presented.

Metaphor Analysis Results for the Professors of TEFL

Chi-square was run on the metaphors students chose to generally express their ideas about the university professors of TEFL.

Table 1

The Results of the Chi-square for the Metaphors Selected by the Students about the University Professors of TEFL

	Observed N	Expected N	Df	χ^2	Sig
Animator	229	174	2	1.61	.00
Author	255	174	2		
Principal	38	174	2		
Total	522				

Table 1 presents the results of the Chi-square for the metaphors chosen by the students to identify the role of the university professors of TEFL as animator, author, or principal. As it can be clearly seen, there is a significant difference among the metaphors illustrating three roles ($p < .05$). As indicated in Table 1, the metaphors reflecting the animator role ($N=229$) and author role ($N=255$) were selected more than expected ($N=174$). The results reveal that the university professors mostly take on the author and animator roles respectively. On the other hand, the metaphors reflecting the principal role ($N=38$) are less than expected ($N=174$). It shows that the principal role is the least dominant role taken on by the professors. This confirms the first hypothesis that *Iranian university professors teaching TEFL at the MA level do not dominantly take on the principal role*. The following relationship depicts their roles:

Author>Animator>Principal

Metaphor Analysis Results for Each Individual Professor

In this stage, Chi-square was separately run for each individual professor to check the differences among the metaphors selected by their students and determine every professor's dominant role as animator, author, or principal. To exemplify the process of the analysis of the metaphors via Chi-square, the metaphors selected for the professor number 18, chosen randomly, were analyzed in detail. To avoid repetition, the detailed analysis of the metaphors selected for the rest of the professors was not presented here.

Table 2

Chi-square for the Metaphors Selected by the Learners about the Professor Number 18

	Observed N	Expected N	Df	χ^2	Sig
Animator	5	68	2	96.55	.00
Author	82	68	2		
Principal	117	68	2		
Total	204				

Table 2 illustrates the results of the Chi-square for the metaphors that represent the role of the professor number 18 as animator, author, and principal and were chosen by his/her students. Clearly enough, there is a significant difference among the metaphors determining the professor's role as animator, author, and principal ($p < .05$). Specifically, the metaphors reflecting the author and principal roles ($N=82$ and $N=117$ respectively) outnumber the expected frequency ($N=68$). The results reveal that the professor number 18 mostly took on the principal role. On the other hand, the metaphors reflecting the animator role ($N=5$) is less than the expected frequency ($N=68$). It shows that the animator role was the least dominant role taken on by the professor.

The Results of the Analysis of the Professional Success Scores

In this phase, one-way Anova and Duncan Test were run on the professional success mean scores of the professors to identify whether the professors taking on the animator, author, or principal role differed significantly regarding this variable. Previously, Levene test of homogeneity of variances and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test had been run so that the underlying assumption of the One-way Anova could be observed. In order to make sure of the homogeneity of the variances of the groups, Levene test of equality of variances was run (Table 3).

Table 3

Levene Test of Homogeneity of Variance Conducted on the Professional Success Scores of the Professors taking on the Animator, Author, or Principal role

Levene Statistics	Df1	Df2	Sig.
1.92	2	34	.16

As the p-value in Table 3 is greater than 0.05, the group variances can be treated as equal. Moreover, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test was run so as to check the assumption of normality (Table 4).

Table 4

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Conducted on the Professional Success Scores of the Professors taking on the Animator, Author, or Principal role

		Success
N		37
Normal Parameters	Mean	118.8
	Std. Deviation	53.7
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	0.31
	Positive	0.31
	Negative	-0.14
Kolmogorov-Smirnov		1.9
Asymp. Sig (2-tailed)		0.1

The P-value in Table 4, which is greater than 0.05, indicates that the distribution of the sample is not significantly different from the normal distribution.

Table 5 illustrates the results of one-way Anova run to identify whether there is significant differences among the professional success mean scores of the professors taking on the animator, author, or principal role.

Table 5

One-way Anova Conducted on the Professional Success Scores of the Professors taking on the Animator, Author, or Principal role

	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between groups	79960.8	2	39980.3		
Within groups	23859.2	34	701.7	56.92	.000
Total	103820.3	36			

As shown in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference among the professors in terms of their professional success ($p < .05$). Such a result rejects the second hypothesis that there is no significant difference among the Iranian university professors of TEFL at the MA level who adopt the animator, author, or principal role in terms of their professional success.

Table 6 depicts the results of Duncan Test employed to compare the professional success mean scores of each group of the professors adopting the animator, author, or principal role.

Table 6

Duncan Test on the Professional Success Mean Scores of the Professors Taking on the Animator, Author, or Principal Role

Role	N	Subset for alpha=.05	
		1	2
Animator	16	89.75	
Author	12	94.62	
Principal	9		200.78
Sig		.65	1.0

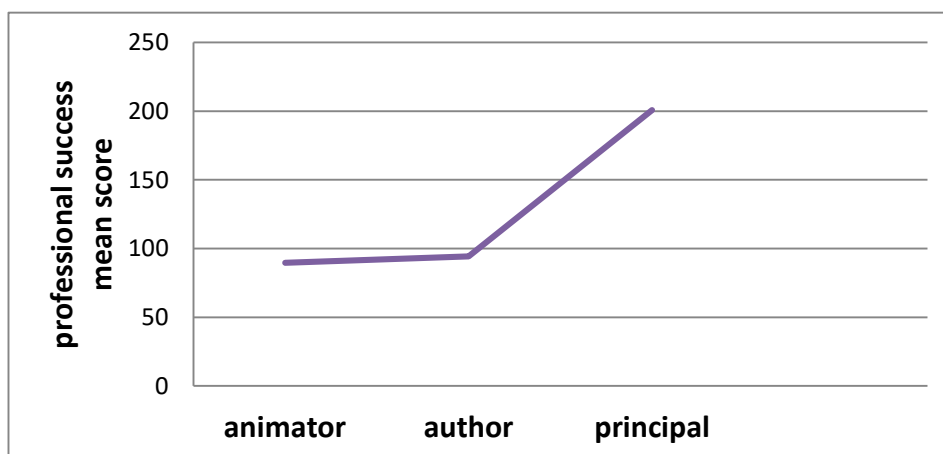


Figure 1. Professional Success Mean Scores of the Professors Taking on the Animator, Author, or Principal Role

Figure 1 pictorially demonstrates the significant difference among the roles.

In subset 1, as illustrated in Table 6, the animator and author roles are situated. The p-value, which is more than 0.05, indicates no statistically significant difference between the professional success mean scores of the professors who adopted the animator or author role. Nevertheless, the existence of the principal role in subset 2 shows that the professional success mean score

of the professors taking on the principal role is significantly higher than the professional success mean scores of those adopting the animator or author role.

Discussion

In terms of the first hypothesis of the study, it was demonstrated that the professors' dominant roles, identified by their students, were found to be author and animator respectively. However, the role of principal, characterized as including expressing original ideas, thoughtful pondering over the current intellectual framework, and challenging the present flow of information, was not highly taken on by the professors. These results have consistency with those found by Pishghadam and Shirmohammadi (2012) and Ghapanchi and Talebi (2012), who confirmed that the MA level in the Iranian university context is replete with replicating, or at most, with paraphrasing the theories made by the others.

The professors' tendency to dominantly play the author and animator roles can stem from various factors. Firstly, Iran's educational system, in both schools and universities, is still under the influence of Behaviorist views of learning (Pourali, 2011). Pishghadam and Mirzaee (2008) also asserted that modernism with its strong adherence to conformity rather than divergence, memorization rather than genuine construction of knowledge, and one-way transmission of knowledge instead of critical reflection are still dominate in Iranian educational system. Freire (1994) called this kind of instruction *banking model of education*, characterized as a narrative teacher injecting information to the passive learners. Critical evaluation of knowledge and genuine spontaneity have no place in such a system. Naturally, when the prospective teachers leave the system, they resume the same teaching approach they have been taught through. Secondly, as Shirmohammadi (2012) rightly claimed, low job satisfaction due to low salary and long period of service can demotivate the professors to move beyond the recap of knowledge toward a transformative pedagogy which necessitates critical and insightful challenge of the trend of knowledge.

The rejection of the second hypothesis of the study implies that the professors taking on the principal role enjoy higher professional success, evaluated by their students, than those playing the animator and author roles. This means that learners perceive their teachers to be highly successful when they transfer their original ideas, refrain from being just the consumers of the concepts of textbooks, and foster critical consciousness. This finding reflects the result gained by Entezari and Ghafournia (2016) who demonstrated that the

teachers who dominantly play the principal role enjoy higher personal achievement.

The reason why the adoption of the principal role can lead to higher success in the teaching profession is hardly surprising. Rarely does such a teacher fit into the current cognitive framework. Rather, s/he attempts to reform the trend of knowledge through adopting a critical outlook toward the information. S/he also creates opportunities so that learners can develop thoughtful, spontaneous, and genuine ideas. Naturally enough, such classrooms are highly favored by the learners who are fed up with repetition and memorization.

The findings of this study may offer insights for those involved in educational administrations, syllabus design, curriculum planning, teacher training, and material development. This study proved that although adoption of a critical approach in the teaching practice rather than repetition can bring about great success in the educational realm, replication and memorization dominate the Iranian educational system in the university context. This is indeed a word of caution for them. They are required to launch teacher training sessions, performance evaluation, and regular performance feedback, all of which aim at promoting critical intellectual skills so that teachers can contribute to the field of knowledge. Teachers can also benefit from the findings of this study. The more they move away from a book-centered teaching approach to a reflective, critical, and insightful teaching practice, the more their students perceive them to be professionally successful. Meanwhile, they should bear this point in mind that the feedback that learners provide to evaluate their teaching approach can be so worthwhile that if it is ignored, valuable insight will be missing.

While the present study was extensive in the range of statistical and logical analysis undertaken, it is important to acknowledge the limitation regarding the sample of the participants. First of all, the selection and the number of the universities in general and the professors and the learners in particular were subject to permission and administrative selection. Secondly, questionnaire replying is always dependent on the participants' availability and good will. In other words, the choice of the participants can be considered as a kind of purposive sampling rather than a random one. Indeed, to meet the ethical requirements, such an issue is inevitable. Moreover, there is the problem of having the students as the only source for providing information regarding the professors' roles and their professional success. Learners' evaluation can be influenced by class content, teacher characteristic, and timing of the evaluation, all of which can lead to bias and subjectivity. The researchers believe that the evaluations could have been more reliable if it were possible to triangulate the data through other sources like information on learners' longitudinal success.

The researchers suggest some hints to be taken into consideration for replication of this study. Further research can be conducted in other universities, on a larger sample, and other fields of study. Moreover, the studies in which teachers' age and gender are taken into account can yield more generalizable results. Finally, subsequent studies can make use of other kinds of data collection procedures like observation.

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Biodata

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