

The Effect of Drama Course on Prospective Primary and Preschool Teachers' Communication Skills

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the effect of the drama course on the communication skills of prospective primary and preschool teachers. In the research, a one group pretest-posttest model was used before the pilot-test. The research population of the study was 140 third-grade prospective teachers who studied at Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education Primary and Preschool Education program and took drama lessons. Since the entire population was available for research, sampling was intentionally omitted. "Communication Skills Scale" developed by Korkut, Owen and Bugay (2014) was used as the data collection tool in the research. In the data analysis, Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used in the comparison of the difference between two pairs in dependent groups. In the comparison of binary groups, Mann Whitney U Test was applied. It was concluded that there was a significant difference in favour of the posttest among the pretest and posttest scores obtained from the "Communication Skills Scale" and its sub-dimensions of the prospective Primary and Pre-school teachers who took the drama course in the research and favour of the female prospective teachers among the pretest and total scores. It is also concluded that there is no significant difference between pretest and posttest score differences between Primary and Preschool prospective teachers.

Keywords: Drama, communication skills, preschool education, primary education, prospective teacher.

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Introduction

Rapid changes and developments in science, technology and industry have also influenced the education system. These changes and developments automatically changed the human profile that the education system tries to train. The necessity of raising individuals who study, research, question, solve problems, and effectively communicate instead of educating individuals who take the information directly transmitted by the teacher and memorize it, has become a reality. Teacher-centered traditional teaching methods are now being replaced by student-centered methods. Drama is one of the student-centered methods that substantially contribute to the skills required by modern human profile.

The concept of drama is derived from the Greek word (dran); and it means "to do, to make, to act". The concept of dran, transmitted to the Turkish language from Greek, has changed over time and become the word drama. Today, the word drama is used with a meaning of "playing, impersonating" (Karadağ & Çalışkan, 2005). San (1996) defines drama as "using theatre and drama techniques such as improvisation and role playing with group work to interpret and animate experiences, events, ideas, training modules, an abstract concept, and behaviors via re-organizing cognitive patterns of the participants in playful processes through which emotions, observations, experiences, and lives are revised". Drama is "the activities involving one or more people's internal and external movements and their life standards by interacting with each other, nature or other objects" (Adıgüzel, 2013). According to another definition, the drama is the reanimation and role-play of real dramatic moments in life by experts in group work, using playful processes and theatre techniques (Okvuran, 2003). Drama is a form of teaching with the animation techniques in which information, concepts and designs are embodied in real-life events and situations (Kara, 2014). Drama is a method that allows the individual to learn by doing and experiencing, emphasizes the creativity of the individual, puts them at the center of the learning process and helps them being a productive individual (Kaf, 2000). Drama is a game-based and a process-oriented method in which participants are guided by a leader (Heathcote & Wagner, 1990). Drama starts with an imaginary situation and occurs with a group planning the play and characters and spontaneous action and dialogue (Freeman, Sullivan & Fulton, 2003).

The role of drama in education is to provide a versatile learning environment that helps develop the dramatic dream world that enriches individuals' artistic sensibilities and self-perceptions (Güven, 2003). Giving this opportunity to children, who want to participate more into the dialogues and discussions thanks to their enhanced language skills, is important in helping them expressing themselves (Önder, 2006) Drama provides the opportunity to practice communicating with other people. It offers experiences to learn how to communicate. It is possible to internalize many communication elements by waiting for one's turn for communication, listening behaviour, reciprocity principle to open communication, by experiencing and trying. Educational drama gives children the

chance to actively use the language which is the tool of verbal communication for its development. It has been suggested that verbal and non-verbal communication of children, with their own peers and older people, on different situations, may have positive contributions to their language development and mental development (Önder, 2016). Drama supports the development of language and effective communication skills by providing opportunities for the child to improve their vocabulary and try out different features of the language. It helps the child to express his/her feelings and thoughts in different ways (Köksal Akyol, 2011). Drama contributes to the development of expressive language skills of primary school students, allows them to learn by doing and practising, and improves their imagination. It also provides important opportunities to children in terms of recognizing or questioning a character, explicating when necessary, describing the situations imagined inside and outside the role, asking questions within the role, understanding what facial and body movements mean by monitoring people's emotions, gestures and facial expressions, using and interpreting verbal/nonverbal communication (Kuşdemir, 2017).

Communication is a concept that takes place in both the scope, goals, methods, and dimensions of the drama and as a tool in reaching its goals which are very important for the participants in the drama process. In other words, drama studies are based on the rules of communication. The individual should communicate with oneself, one's partner and the group for various purposes. Communication is also an important skill that should be endowed with the participants in the drama process (Adıgüzel, 2013). There is a significant correlation between drama and communication skills. In drama activities, the individual actively participates in the process and efficiently uses the sensory organs. Individuals comfortably transmit ideas, feelings and thoughts to the other party through playful processes in drama. At the same time, individuals develop non-verbal communication skills such as body language, gestures, and facial expressions in drama practices. Therefore, it is stated that drama is an effective method for developing the communication skills (Bell, 2008).

The literature analysis shows that several studies stating that drama has an important effect on children's communication skills. Colston (1985) determined that drama education provides positive changes on verbal and social communication skills of individuals with different ages who suffer structural development disorder, and Netten (1995) stated that story-telling, role playing and drama activities are effective in correcting the mistakes elementary school students make in the communication and speaking skills (cited in Özdemir, 2003). As a result of drama studies with children who suffer social perception deficiency, Guli (2004) asserted that education has an impact on children's social skills. Mages (2008) concluded that drama studies positively affect children's language development. In her study, Kempe (2003) revealed that drama has an important place in supporting speech and listening skills.

In the studies on drama and prospective teachers' communication skills, several analyses are performed for its impact on speaking skills (Gabitova, Shayakhmetova & Beisembayeva, 2018; Hiřmanođlu & olak, 2019; Pishkar, Moinsadeh & Dabaghi, 2017), self-directed skills (Kosucu & Hursen, 2017; Saad Zaghoul, 2018) and its contribution to their personal development (Güner & Uygun, 2016; Tanrıseven & Ayka, 2013). There are also studies regarding the effects on communication skills of prospective teacher candidates' studying in different departments (Afacan & Turan, 2012; Arslan, Erbay & Saygin, 2010; Athiemoolam, 2013; Dereli, 2018). In the study conducted by Afacan and Turan (2012), it was concluded that education of communication skills integrated with the creative drama method given to prospective science teachers positively affects students' communication skills. Arslan, Erbay and Saygın (2010) found that the communication skills training provided by the drama method increased the communication skills of the child development and education department students. According to Karacil Kılıaslan and Yayla's research (2018), the creative drama method is more effective and permanent in improving the communication skills of prospective teachers than the traditional method. In other studies, that show drama has a positive effect on communication skills (Aydın Őengül & Topuođlu Ünal, 2018; Dere, 2019; Gökearsan ifti & Altınova, 2017), it is seen that the differences between departments are not compared.

It is thought that communication skills, which is one of the competence areas that teachers are obliged to acquire (MEB, 2017), should be addressed starting from teacher training. The availability of drama lessons in teacher training contributes to the development of communication skills of prospective teachers (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Üstündađ, 2007). Drama is known for activating the psychomotor, affective and cognitive processes of individuals and it can be used to improve the communication skills. Effective communication skills are one of the requirements of the 21st century. In order to raise generations having this skill, it is necessary to train teachers with these skills and take necessary steps at the very beginning of the education. This research was conducted on the basis built upon all these ideas to determine the effect of drama course on prospective primary and preschool teachers communication skills and to compare this change. In line with this purpose, the following questions were tried to be answered:

1. Do the communication skills, pretest and posttest scores of the Primary School and Pre-School teachers who took the drama lesson differ significantly?

2. Do the communication skills of prospective Primary and Pre-School Education teachers who take drama course show a significant difference between their pretest and posttest scores by gender?

3. Is there a significant difference between the communication skills, pretest and posttest score differences of the prospective Primary and Pre-School Education teachers who took the drama course?

Method

Research Design

This study is experimental research as it is conducted for determining the effect of drama course on the communication skills of prospective primary and preschool teachers, and a one group pretest posttest model was used in the research. In this model, the pre-application information of a single group in the research is measured (pretest), then the application is carried out and the group is subjected to re-measurement (posttest) at the end of the application. If the obtained data show a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest results, this difference is considered to be due to the application (Baştürk, 2012).

Population and Sampling

The research population of the study was 140 third grader prospective teachers; 70 were from the Pre-School Education department and 70 were from the Primary Education department, took drama lessons and volunteered to participate in the research. Since the entire population was available for research, sampling was intentionally omitted. Considering the demographic characteristics of prospective primary teachers who participated in the study, it is seen that 75.7% of them are female and 24.3% of them are male. Considering the demographic characteristics of prospective preschool teachers, it is seen that 91.4% of them are female and 8.6% of them are male.

Data Collection Tools

Personal Information Form with the demographic characteristics of prospective teachers was used as a data collection tool in the research, and "Communication Skills Scale" was used to collect the required information for answering the research questions. The Personal Information Form was prepared by the researchers, and a question regarding the gender of prospective teachers was included. "Communication Skills Scale" was developed by Korkut Owen and Bugay (2014). "Communication Skills Scale" consists of 25 items and 4 sub-dimensions. Sub-dimensions of the scale are Communication Principles and Basic Skills (CPBS) (10 items), Self-Expression (SE) (4 items), Effective Listening and Non-Verbal Communication (ELNVC) (6 items) and Willingness to Communicate (WTC) (5 items). "Communication Skills Scale" was prepared as a five-point Likert-type grading scale. The reliability coefficient of the scale developed by Korkut Owen and Bugay (2014) was determined as .88. For this study, the reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .89.

Data Collection

The research was carried out over a 12 weeks during Drama in Primary Education and Drama in Preschool Education lessons of Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education Primary and Pre-School Education program. A total of 48 hours of drama lessons were taught to prospective teachers

by the researchers for 12 weeks, 4 hours a week (2 hours of theoretical 2 hours of practice). The course was carried out per the content of the drama course of Primary and Preschool Education undergraduate program determined by YÖK. In the first weeks of the drama course, prospective teachers were given theoretical information about drama. Practice sessions started in the following weeks. The researcher provided various drama practices for two or three weeks in order to set an example for prospective teachers. Then, prospective teachers performed micro-teaching by using the drama method. The practices in the drama course were carried out in four stages as warm-up, acting, relaxation and evaluation. Activities that will allow prospective teachers to mingle, get to know each other and communicate effectively are included during the warm-up, acting, relaxation and evaluation stages. Thus, prospective teachers were provided with the opportunity to cooperate and improve their communication skills. During the drama practices, the roles of prospective teachers changed and they were able to form different groups with different friends. In this way, it was ensured that prospective teachers were able to communicate with different individuals.

The researcher met with prospective teachers during the first class hour of the Drama course; made explanations about the content and course syllabus. Before starting the lesson, the researcher informed prospective teachers about the purpose of the research and the scale to be used. The prospective teachers were asked whether they volunteered to participate in the research and a scale was distributed to students who stated that they were volunteers. 140 third grader prospective teachers who study at Afyon Kocatepe University Faculty of Education Primary and Preschool Education program and take drama course had "Communication Skills Scale" pretest at the beginning of the semester. A total of 48 hours of drama lessons were taught to prospective teachers for 12 weeks, 4 hours a week. At the end of the semester, the "Communication Skills Scale" was reapplied as a posttest. It has been determined whether there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest communication skills scores of the Primary School and Pre-School teachers who took the drama course.

Data Analysis

SPSS package program is used for the analysis of the data obtained as a result of the research. Descriptive statistics such as frequency and percentage were used to evaluate the demographic characteristics of prospective teachers in the analysis of the data. Kolmogorov Smirnov Test has been performed to determine whether the data obtained from the "Communication Skills Scale" display a normal distribution. As a result of the Kolmogorov Smirnov Test, it was determined that the data did not show a normal distribution. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used in the comparison of the difference between two pairs in dependent groups due to the non-normal distribution of data. In the comparison of binary groups, Mann Whitney U Test was applied. The level of significance in the

analysis of data has been accepted as .05. “Cohen d” effect size was calculated for the significant p values.

Results

The findings related to the pretest and posttest scores regarding the communication skills of prospective Primary and Pre-school teachers who take the Drama course are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results According to Prospective Primary School Teachers' Communication Skills Scale Sub-Dimensions and Total Pretest Posttest Scores

İBÖ	Measurement	Ort±Ss	The biggest-The smallest	Wilcoxon		
				z	p	d
İİTB	Pre-test	35,17±3,05	40-26	6,970	<0,001	2,916
	Post-test	41,89±4,36	50-32			
KİE	Pre-test	13,61±1,75	16-8	6,861	<0,001	2,866
	Post-test	16,64±2,27	20-11			
EDSOİ	Pre-test	20,84±1,92	24-15	6,967	<0,001	3,008
	Post-test	25,29±2,76	30-20			
İKİ	Pre-test	16,73±2,01	20-12	6,625	<0,001	2,593
	Post-test	20,29±2,57	25-14			
Total	Pre-test	86,36±6,40	98-68	7,170	<0,001	4,746
	Post-test	104,10±10,05	121-81			

When the findings in Table 1 are analyzed, it is observed that the posttest point averages prospective Primary School teachers received from “Communication Skills Scale” in total ($z=7,170$, $p<.05$) and sub-dimensions CPBS ($z=6,970$, $p.05$), SE ($z=6,861$, $p.05$), ELNVC ($z=6,967$, $p.05$), WTC ($z = 6,625$, $p.05$) are significantly higher than the pre-test point averages. At the same time, when the effect sizes of the comparisons with the p value below the significance level are evaluated, it is observed the effect size is large.

The findings related to the pretest and posttest scores regarding the communication skills of prospective Pre-school teachers who take the Drama course are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Results According to Prospective Preschool Teachers' Communication Skills Scale Sub-Dimensions and Total Pretest Posttest Score

İBÖ	Measurement	Ort±Ss	The biggest-The smallest	Wilcoxon		
				Z	p	d
İİTB	Pre-test	34,76-3,15	25,00-39,00	7,179	<0,001	3,342
	Post-test	41,74-3,96	28,00-50,00			
KİE	Pre-test	14,43-1,39	11,00-16,00	6,862	<0,001	2,867
	Post-test	17,13-1,93	12,00-20,00			
EDSOİ	Pre-test	20,87-2,24	16,00-24,00	7,037	<0,001	3,11
	Post-test	25,49-2,61	19,00-30,00			
İKİ	Pre-test	16,80-1,90	13,00-20,00	6,948	<0,001	2,981
	Post-test	20,21-2,58	14,00-25,00			
Total	Pre-test	86,86-6,08	72,00-97,00	7,273	<0,001	3,512
	Post-test	104,57-8,75	77,00-123,00			

When the findings in Table 2 are analyzed, it is observed that the posttest point averages prospective Preschool School teachers received from “Communication Skills Scale” in total ($z=7,170$, $p<.05$) and sub-dimensions CPBS ($z=7,179$, $p<.05$), SE ($z=6,862$, $p<.05$), ELNVC ($z=7,037$, $p<.05$), WTC ($z = 6,948$, $p<.05$) are significantly higher than the pre-test point averages. At the same time, when the effect sizes of the comparisons with the p value below the significance level are evaluated, it is observed the effect size is large.

The findings related to the pretest and posttest scores based on gender regarding the communication skills of prospective Primary and Pre-school teachers who take the Drama course are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Mann Whitney U Test Results Regarding the Comparison of Pretest Posttest Scores of Prospective Primary and Pre-School Teachers from CSS by Gender

İBÖ	Measurement	Gender	Ort±Ss	The biggest- The smallest	Mann-Whitney U		
					U	p	d
İİTB	Pre-test	Female	35,26-2,90	25,00-40,00	960,5	0,029	,372
		Male	33,48-3,67	26,00-39,00			
	Post-test	Female	41,94-4,04	28,00-50,00	1169,0	0,319	
		Male	41,17-4,71	32,00-50,00			
KİE	Pre-test	Female	14,13-1,56	8,00-16,00	1066,0	0,109	
		Male	13,48-1,88	10,00-16,00			
	Post-test	Female	16,90-2,14	11,00-20,00	1282,0	0,718	
		Male	16,83-2,01	12,00-20,00			
EDSOİ	Pre-test	Female	20,97-2,04	15,00-24,00	1094,5	0,153	
		Male	20,30-2,24	16,00-24,00			
	Post-test	Female	25,52-2,76	19,00-30,00	1062,0	0,109	
		Male	24,70-2,14	21,00-29,00			
İKİ	Pre-test	Female	16,87-1,96	13,00-20,00	1075,0	0,121	
		Male	16,22-1,83	12,00-19,00			
	Post-test	Female	20,39-2,49	15,00-25,00	1094,0	0,154	
		Male	19,52-2,84	14,00-25,00			
Total	Pre-test	Female	87,22-5,83	68,00-98,00	944,0	0,024	,389
		Male	83,48-7,31	71,00-95,00			
	Post-test	Female	104,75-9,43	77,00-123,00	1074,5	0,127	
		Male	102,22-9,11	88,00-121,00			

Considering the findings in Table 3, there is a statistically significant difference in favor of prospective female teachers taking the drama course for “Communication Skills Scale” pretest CPBS ($U=960,5$, $p <.05$) and in total ($U = 944.0$, $p <.05$). It is seen that there is no statistically significant difference in the scores obtained from the pretest in the other sub-dimensions and the posttest measurements. When the sub-dimensions that- do not differ significantly are examined, it is observed that the female prospective teachers are the majority. At the same time, when the effect sizes of the comparisons with the p value below the significance level are evaluated, it is observed the effect sizes are between medium and small.

The findings related to the pretest and posttest score differences regarding the communication skills of prospective Primary and Pre-school teachers who take the Drama course are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Mann Whitney U Test Results Regarding the Comparison of Pretest Posttest Scores of Prospective Primary and Pre-School Teachers from CSS by Gender

İBÖ	ort±ss	The biggest-The smallest	u	p
İİTB	6,99±3,48	0,00-15,00	2393,0	0,812
	6,71±4,41	-3,00-18,00		
KİE	2,70±1,64	-2,00-6,00	2251,0	0,399
	3,03±2,01	-1,00-8,00		
EDSOİ	4,61±2,68	-1,00-11,00	2338,5	0,640
	4,44±2,93	-2,00-13,00		
İKİ	3,41±2,40	-1,00-10,00	2395,0	0,817
	3,56±2,92	-3,00-11,00		
Total	17,71±8,03	2,00-38,00	2423,0	0,910
	17,74±10,24	-8,00-50,00		

When Table 4 is analyzed, and the pretest and posttest score differences of prospective pre-school and primary education teachers from the Communication Skills Scale are compared, there was no statistically significant difference observed between the groups ($p > 0.05$).

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

As a result of this study conducted to determine the effect of the drama lesson on the communication skills of the prospective teachers, it is concluded that there is a significant difference between the pretest posttest scores that the primary and preschool prospective teachers obtained from the “Communication Skills Scale” and their sub-dimensions in favor of the posttest. This result showed that drama lessons have a positive effect on the communication skills of prospective teachers. The prospective teachers have always formed a group with different friends and performed the practice. The fact that prospective teachers were in constant contact with themselves, their partners, and group mates in this process for various purposes may have had a positive effect on their communication skills. Yassa (1997) concluded that drama education endowed students with skills such as self-confidence, vindication, controlling their emotions, empathy, and seeing the different thoughts in the group. McNaughton (2004) stated that the drama method is effective on individuals' communication skills and friendship affairs. Jackson and Bynum (1997) found that drama education contributes positively to the social interactions of children with emotional and behavioural disorders. Aykaç and Çetinkaya (2013) highlighted that creative drama activities applied to an experimental group were more effective in improving the speaking skills of prospective teachers than the activities implemented through direct instruction method in the control group. Oğuz Namdar and Çamadan (2016) concluded that the creative drama practices they performed with prospective teachers had a positive significant effect on their social skills. Thanks to Sevim and Turan's (2017) research, it was understood that drama activities were more effective in developing the listening and speaking skills of

6th grade students. In their research, Gökçearsan-Çiftçi and Altınova (2017) determined that creative drama influences social service students' communication skills. Aydın Şengül and Topçuoğlu-Ünal (2018) concluded that the creative drama method improved the communication skills of prospective teachers. Dere (2019), in the study with a semi-experimental design conducted to determine the effect of drama education program applied to prospective teachers on the communication skills of prospective mathematics and primary school teachers, reached the conclusion that the communication skills scores of the prospective primary school teachers in the experimental group were higher than those of the prospective mathematics teachers in the control group. Findings obtained from these studies are in accordance with the results of this study.

The communication skills of prospective teachers who took the drama lesson in the research were statistically different in favor of females in the sub-dimension and pretest of CPBS. When the average scores obtained from the scale are analyzed, it is observed that female prospective teachers had higher scores than the sub-dimensions and total of the communication skills scale. This result showed that drama lessons have a more positive effect on the communication skills of female prospective teachers. Communication skills of women and men may differ (Yüksel, 2009). In some studies, conducted on communication skills, it has been concluded that communication skills differ in favor of women (Gülbahar & Sıvacı, 2018; Kayabaşı & Akcengiz, 2014; Milli & Yağcı, 2017). Communication skills are among the skills that can be improved just like other skills. It is argued that communication skills can be used more effectively with various interventions applied to individuals (Korkut, 2005). The fact that the higher the scores obtained from the posttest according to gender, is due to the drama lessons prospective teachers have attended. It was determined that women have higher communication skills through Kılıçgil, Bilir, Özdiñç, Erođlu and Erođlu's (2009) study with university students, Çetinkaya (2011), Özerbaş, Bulut and Usta (2007) study with prospective teachers. In this context, the findings obtained from the research coincide with the results of this research. It was found that creative drama practices did not show a significant difference in terms of gender on the social skills of prospective teachers in the research conducted by Ođuz Namdar and Çamadan (2016). Akyol, Şenol and Yüksel (2018) also reached the conclusion that drama lessons taken by prospective pre-school teachers do not demonstrate a significant difference in the communication skills in terms of gender. These results do not match the findings of the research.

In the scope of this research, it was concluded that there was no significant difference between the pretest and posttest score differences of prospective pre-school and primary school teachers. It is thought that students in both departments taking the drama lesson with the same content may have diminished the potential difference. In addition, the students of the basic education department prepared the drama activities they designed as course assignments within the scope of the drama lessons in line with the outcomes/indicators in the primary and pre-school education programs in our

country. The fact that they include the processes associated with communication skills in the drama activities they prepared and the opportunity to practice them in the course applications may also have played a role in shaping this result. Dereli (2018), also found that communication and social problem solving skills of basic education and education department students who attended the education program was higher than students who did not attend the education program, in the study through which the author investigated effect of drama and drama-based interpersonal relations education program on the communication skills and social problem-solving skills of university students. Fırat Durdukoca (2015) stated that the drama lesson they took was effective in developing the communication skills of prospective pre-school teachers. Akyol, Kahriman Pamuk and Elmas (2018) asserted that after the drama education they provided to prospective pre-school teachers, students improved their collaboration, communication skills and increased their knowledge about drama. It is observable that the results obtained from all these studies support the findings of the current study. The use of drama, which is a process that enables individuals to establish emotional and cognitive connections with their environment and supports effective communication skills, will provide more effective results if used in every level of teaching (Eckersley, 2016).

In line with the findings obtained through this research, the following suggestions can be made:

New studies using the qualitative or mixed method can be designed to determine the effect of drama on communication skills.

New studies can be conducted in which different variables such as age, grade level, grade point average, etc. of prospective teachers are taken into consideration.

Events and activities such as courses, seminars, conferences, etc. can be organized to improve the communication skills of prospective teachers during the pre-service training.

In the Primary School Teaching undergraduate program renewed by YÖK in 2018, the 2-hour application part of the Drama course was removed, and the lesson hours were reduced to 2 theoretical hours. The course duration of the Drama lessons, which has an important effect on individuals' acquiring and developing the communication skills, can be increased to a total of 4 hours again, as 2 hours of theoretical and 2 hours of practice, like in the old program, and new regulations can be applied.

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