



## UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF AUTHENTIC LISTENING MATERIALS AND THE STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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### Abstract

This study aims to investigate undergraduate students' perception of authentic listening materials, the challenges they encounter, and the listening strategies they use to enhance listening comprehension. A descriptive qualitative method with a phenomenological approach was used, involving 20 fifth-semester students from the English Education Department at Wiralodra University. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaire data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while interview data were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students have positive perceptions of authentic listening materials, as they help improve listening comprehension, increase motivation, and provide exposure to real-life language use. However, students also face several challenges, including fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, long listening texts, and accent variation. To address these challenges, students employ various listening strategies such as predicting content, focusing on key information, note-taking, and applying metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

**Keywords:** Authentic listening material, listening strategies, students' perception

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## INTRODUCTION

Listening is generally recognized as a crucial ability in language acquisition and as the primary tool through which students receive linguistic input and construct meaning from spoken conversations. Rost (2011) states that listening represents the first and essential form of language exposure, serving as the foundation for all developing language skills, including speaking, reading, and writing. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, especially at the undergraduate level, listening skills are crucial for students to understand academic lectures, contribute to discussions, and interact with English-language materials. Students with inadequate listening skills may encounter significant challenges in academic and professional communication (Gultom et al., 2023; Suri et al., 2022).

In the Indonesian EFL context, listening has been integrated into the national curriculum from primary to higher education levels, reflecting its importance in globalization and academic advancement (Zein et al., 2020). Despite this recognition, listening remains one of the most challenging skills for Indonesian EFL students. Research consistently identifies a range of difficulties that impede listening comprehension, including fast speech rates, unfamiliar vocabulary, accent variation, and cognitive overload resulting from real-time language processing (Alamri, 2025; Hidayah & Gunawan, 2025; Nuralisa et al., 2025). These challenges highlight the importance of instructional strategies that engage students in authentic, natural language use rather than focusing solely on simplified, textbook-based materials.

One approach that has gained increasing attention is the use of authentic listening materials, defined as audio or audio-visual resources originally created for real-life communication rather than for pedagogical purposes (Kilickaya, 2004; Nunan, 2015). Examples include podcasts, news broadcasts, interviews, and recorded conversations, which provide exposure to natural speech patterns, connected speech, cultural nuances, and diverse accents. These characteristics make authentic materials highly relevant for preparing students to engage with real-

world English communication. Even while they are known to be helpful, authentic listening materials can sometimes be a challenge for students, especially those who are not proficient in English. Kochkorova (2025) identifies fast speech rates, complex vocabulary, and accent variation as the key challenges in comprehending authentic listening input. When students encounter too many unfamiliar words or struggle to segment rapid speech into meaningful units, they risk cognitive overload and partial comprehension (Field, 2008; Jyoti, 2020). Moreover, emotional aspects such as listening anxiety and low confidence may further complicate engagement with authentic material (Husnawati et al., 2024). These challenges show that authentic materials can be effective in the classroom when students use the right strategies to address their complexity.

In dealing with the complexity of authentic listening input, listening strategies play a crucial role in supporting comprehension. Brown (2000) classifies listening strategies into three categories: cognitive strategies, which involve processing input through inference, prediction, and keyword identification; metacognitive strategies, which enable learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their comprehension; and socio-affective strategies, which address emotional and motivational aspects of listening. The effective use of these strategies helps learners manage difficulties such as fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and limited processing time, which are commonly encountered in authentic listening situations.

Previous studies have demonstrated the benefits and challenges of authentic listening materials in EFL learning. Jaelani (2020) found that authentic materials can enhance students' motivation, confidence, and cultural awareness while exposing them to naturally occurring language. Castillo and Vargas (2023) reported that integrating digital platforms with authentic resources helps students perceive these materials as beneficial for improving listening comprehension. Similarly, Prabowo et al. (2024) showed that students value the authenticity and real-world relevance of such materials, while still benefiting from the structured support of textbook-based resources. However, research has also identified several challenges, including fast speech rates, complex vocabulary, and accent variation, which may lead to cognitive overload and partial comprehension (Field, 2008; Jyoti, 2020; Kochkorova, 2025). In addition, affective factors such as listening anxiety and low confidence may reduce students' engagement with authentic materials (Husnawati et al., 2024). Studies further indicate that learners who effectively apply a combination of cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies tend to achieve better listening performance (Episiasi et al., 2023; Faiz, 2023; Fathi et al., 2020; Larandang et al., 2023).

Although previous research has explored students' perceptions of authentic listening materials and the challenges they face, most studies examine these aspects separately. Furthermore, much existing research is conducted at the secondary school level, generating a gap in the literature for university EFL students. Limited research focuses on students' perceptions, the challenges they face, and the listening strategies they use when engaged with authentic listening materials. This tripartite approach is essential for understanding listening comprehension as an integrated process with affective, cognitive, and strategic dimensions, especially in higher education contexts where students must interact with complex, real-world English input (Asmae & Sana, 2024; Khaydarova & Kholmurodov, 2024).

This issue is particularly relevant at Universitas Wiralodra, where authentic listening materials have been implemented in the Listening for Daily Context course through podcasts, news broadcasts, talk shows, public speeches, and textbook-based resources. Preliminary observations indicate that some students still experience difficulties related to speech rate, unfamiliar vocabulary, and accent variation. This suggests that the use of authentic materials alone does not automatically ensure effective comprehension. Therefore, it is important to explore how students perceive these materials, what challenges they encounter, and what strategies they use to manage authentic listening input.

Therefore, this study aims to investigate undergraduate students' perceptions of authentic listening materials, the challenges they face in comprehending such materials, and the listening strategies they employ to improve their listening comprehension. The participants consist of 20 undergraduate students from the English Education program at Universitas Wiralodra in the 2025/2026 academic year. By addressing these three interconnected dimensions simultaneously, this research seeks to provide a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of how authentic listening materials can be effectively implemented in EFL classrooms at the tertiary level. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretical insights into the role of authentic materials in listening pedagogy and practical implications for the design of more effective listening instruction for undergraduate EFL students.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

### ***Research Design***

This study employed a descriptive design to investigate undergraduate students' perception of authentic listening materials, the challenges they encounter, and the listening strategies they use to enhance their listening comprehension. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allowed the researcher to explore participants' experiences and interpret the meaning they constructed from their learning processes (Creswell, 2018). In addition,

this study incorporated limited quantitative data derived from a questionnaire to support and strengthen the qualitative findings, resulting in a more comprehensive analysis.

### ***Participants***

The participants of this study were 20 fifth-semester students from the English Education Department at Wiralodra University. They were selected using purposive sampling based on their experience with listening courses and exposure to authentic listening materials. The participants consisted of 4 male and 16 female students. These students were considered suitable participants because they had sufficient background knowledge in English, particularly in listening, and were able to reflect critically on their learning experiences. All participants completed the questionnaire, while five students were further selected for in-depth interviews to obtain richer qualitative data.

### ***Instrument and Data Collection***

Data were collected through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire consisted of 18 closed-ended items on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), covering three aspects: perceptions of authentic listening materials, challenges encountered, and listening strategies employed. Items were adapted from Al-Musallam (2009) and Sabet and Mahsefat (2012) for the perception and challenge aspects, and from Jou (2010, as cited in Dang et al., 2021) for listening strategies. Content validity was established through expert review by two validators in English language education, who assessed each item for relevance and clarity prior to administration. The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to all 20 participants.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five purposively selected participants. Five participants were considered sufficient for qualitative depth, as purposive sampling prioritizes richness of information over numerical representation (Creswell, 2018). Participants were selected based on their questionnaire responses to ensure diversity of perspectives. Interviews were conducted face-to-face on campus, lasted approximately 20–30 minutes each, and were carried out in Bahasa Indonesia to allow participants to articulate their experiences without second-language constraints. Sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### ***Data Analysis***

The data analysis combined descriptive statistical and qualitative techniques. Questionnaire data were analyzed by calculating frequencies and percentages for each item. The results were interpreted using the criteria adapted from Riduwan (2015, as cited in Melani & Sutirna, 2019), classifying scores into five categories: very weak (0–20%), weak (21–40%), fair (41–60%), strong (61–80%), and very strong (81–100%). Scores of 61–100% were classified as positive perception, 41–60% as neutral, and 0–40% as negative perception, following Likert-scale interpretation principles outlined by Boone and Boone (2012).

Interview data were analyzed using Miles and Huberman (1994) interactive approach, which included data reduction, display, and conclusion drawing. The researcher transcribed and coded the data to find significant themes, categorize replies, and evaluate patterns across participants. Before the interviews, all five participants (coded as P1–P5 to ensure anonymity and confidentiality) provided written informed consent. They were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time, and that all interview data would be used solely for research purposes. To comply with research ethics requirements, participants' identities were anonymized, and all interview excerpts presented in this study are identified using participant codes (P1–P5) rather than real names. Triangulation was accomplished by comparing questionnaire and interview results for consistency. Member checking was carried out by sending important interpretations to participants via WhatsApp messaging following the interviews, letting them confirm or correct the researcher's comprehension of their comments. Peer review was carried out through regular discussions with the research supervisors, who reviewed the coding method, thematic categorization, and overall interpretations to guarantee analytical precision.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Findings**

#### ***Students' Perception of Authentic Listening Materials***

The first indicator of the research question addressed undergraduate students' perceptions of authentic listening materials. Questionnaire items 1-6 were administered to 20 students in the English Education Department, using a five-point Likert scale, namely Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). The overall average score for this aspect was 81%, indicating that the majority of students hold highly positive attitudes toward the use of authentic listening materials in their listening classes.

**Table 1. The Result of the Questionnaire on Students' Perceptions toward Authentic Listening Materials**

No.	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Score	%	Category
1	Authentic listening materials help me improve my listening comprehension.	6	11	3	-	-	83	83%	Very Strong
2	The authentic materials I listened in class are more interesting than non-authentic materials.	5	11	2	2	-	79	79%	Strong
3	Authentic listening materials enable me to comprehend other materials outside the class.	4	11	5	-	-	79	79%	Strong
4	Authentic listening materials introduce me to how language is used in the real world.	7	10	3	-	-	84	84%	Very Strong
5	Authentic listening materials increase my knowledge of vocabulary items which I need in real situations.	5	11	4	-	-	81	81%	Very Strong
6	Authentic listening materials are difficult for me to comprehend.	5	10	2	3	-	77	77%	Strong
Average								81%	Very Strong

As shown in Table 1, item 4 received the highest percentage (84%, Very Strong), indicating that students strongly agree that authentic materials expose them to how language is used in real-world contexts. This was followed closely by item 1 (83%, Very Strong), which affirms that authentic materials directly support listening comprehension improvement. Items 3 and 5 both scored 79% (Very Strong), demonstrating that students recognize the cross-contextual applicability of skills developed through authentic input and appreciate the vocabulary enrichment such materials provide. Item 2 scored 79% (Strong), suggesting that while most students find authentic materials more engaging than non-authentic counterparts, a small number remain neutral or disagree, likely reflecting variation in individual learning preferences. Item 6, concerning comprehension difficulty, scored 77% (Strong), confirming that students acknowledge the inherent challenge of authentic materials while still viewing them positively overall.

Interview data corroborated these quantitative results. Students reported that the multimodal nature of authentic materials, combining audio and visual input, facilitates understanding of natural speech. As P1 explained, “*Authentic listening materials are more interesting and clearer because they include both audio and visual parts that help us to understand how native speakers convey messages*” (P1, interview, November 20, 2025; translated by researcher). This participant indicated that facial expressions, gestures, and other visual cues helped them interpret spoken messages more effectively and understand how native speakers communicate in real-life situations.

Another participant highlighted the motivational dimension of authentic listening materials. P3 stated, “*I feel a certain sense of satisfaction when I can understand authentic listening materials, and it makes me want to learn how to listen more*” (P3, interview, November 20, 2025; translated by researcher). This response suggests that successful comprehension of authentic input fosters a sense of achievement, which in turn increases learners’ confidence and motivation to further develop their listening skills.

### **Challenges in Using Authentic Listening Materials**

The second indicator of the research question examined the challenges students face when engaging with authentic listening materials. Items 1–6 of the questionnaire focused on linguistic, cognitive, and affective difficulties. The overall average for this aspect was 73%, categorized as Strong, indicating that students experience considerable and consistent challenges across multiple dimensions.

**Table 2. The Results of the Questionnaire on Challenges in Using Authentic Listening Materials**

No.	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Score	%	Category
1	Authentic listening materials are too fast for me to understand.	4	10	4	2	-	76	76%	Strong
2	I have difficulty understanding different accents in authentic listening.	3	12	4	1	-	77	77%	Strong
3	Authentic listening materials contain too many unfamiliar words.	-	9	9	-	2	65	65%	Strong
4	It is hard for me to focus when listening to authentic materials for a long time.	4	8	4	4	-	72	72%	Strong
5	Authentic listening materials make me feel nervous when I cannot understand.	1	10	6	3	-	69	69%	Strong

6	I need teachers' guidance to help me comprehend authentic listening materials.	4	13	3	-	-	81	81%	Very Strong
Average								73%	Strong

As shown in Table 2, item 6 received the highest percentage (81%, Very Strong), indicating that students strongly rely on teacher guidance when dealing with authentic listening materials. This suggests that many students still need instructional support to fully understand complex listening input. This was followed by item 2 (77%, Strong), which shows that difficulty in understanding different accents is a major challenge. This finding highlights how variations in pronunciation and intonation can interfere with students' comprehension. Similarly, item 1 (76%, Strong) indicates that speech rate is also problematic, as authentic materials are often delivered quickly and include natural reductions that are difficult for students to follow. Item 4 scored 72% (Strong), suggesting that maintaining concentration during long listening activities is another challenge for students. In addition, item 5 (69%, Strong) reveals that many students experience anxiety when they fail to understand the listening input, indicating that emotional factors also play a role in listening comprehension. Item 3 received the lowest percentage (65%, Strong), indicating that unfamiliar vocabulary remains a challenge but is perceived as less significant than accent, speed, and concentration issues.

These quantitative findings are supported by interview data, in which students reported losing focus or feeling challenged when they encountered fast speech or unfamiliar accents, especially when contextual or visual support was limited. For instance, P4 explained that *"If the audio speed is too fast, I find it difficult to understand the content, which makes the material less engaging"* (P4, interview, November 20, 2025; translated by researcher). Similarly, P2 reported that at the beginning of learning with authentic materials, *"Many words were missed because the speakers used native-speaker accents"* (P2, interview, November 20, 2025; translated by researcher). In addition, P5 stated that he/she sometimes felt overwhelmed when *"Focusing too much on a previous part of the conversation and consequently missing the following part"* (P5, interview, November 20, 2025; translated by researcher). These responses indicate that speech rate, accent variation, and attentional demands remain significant challenges for learners despite the overall benefits of authentic listening materials.

### ***Listening Strategies Employed by Students***

The third indicator of the research question investigated the listening strategies students actively employ when engaging with authentic materials. Items 1–6 targeted the use of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective strategies. The overall average was 81% (Very Strong), indicating that students are strategic and self-regulated listeners who do not passively receive input.

**Table 3. The Results of the Questionnaire on Listening Strategies**

No.	Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Score	%	Category
1	Before listening, I prepare my mind to concentrate.	5	10	5	-	-	80	80%	Strong
2	I clearly identify the purpose of the language activities before listening.	4	10	6	-	-	78	78%	Strong
3	I listen for main ideas first and then details.	6	10	4	-	-	82	82%	Very Strong
4	I can guess the meanings of words based on context.	6	10	4	-	-	82	82%	Very Strong
5	I try to relax whenever I feel afraid of using English.	6	9	5	-	-	81	81%	Very Strong
6	After listening, I evaluate how much I could understand.	4	12	4	-	-	80	80%	Strong
Average								81%	Very Strong

As shown in Table 3, the highest-scoring strategies were listening for main ideas and guessing meaning from context (items 3 and 4: 82%, Very Strong). This indicates that students tend to focus on general understanding first rather than trying to understand every word, which helps them process authentic listening materials more effectively. This was followed by item 5 (81%, Very Strong), which shows that students actively try to relax when they feel anxious. This suggests that students are aware of the importance of managing their emotions during listening activities. Items 1 and 6 both scored 80% (Strong), indicating that students often prepare themselves before listening and evaluate their understanding afterward. These findings show that students use strategies to plan and reflect on their listening process. Item 2 received the lowest percentage (78%, Strong), suggesting that

identifying the purpose of a listening task is slightly less emphasized compared to other strategies, although it is still commonly practiced.

The interview data provided deeper insight into how students enact these strategies in practice. In terms of metacognitive strategies, most participants reported preparing themselves physically before listening by choosing front seats to minimize distraction and preparing paper and pen to note key words and sentences. Rather than setting explicit learning goals, their preparation was primarily attentional. As one participant stated, “*I usually have no specific preparation because I do not know the topic in advance. I only prepare paper to write down important words or sentences*”. Post-listening reflection was also reported, with participants re-listening to sections they had missed and asking lecturers to replay audio for clarification.

Regarding cognitive strategies, participants consistently described focusing on key words and overall meaning rather than processing every word. Several participants reported writing down words and phrases as they listened and then constructing a summary to identify the main idea of the material. One participant described using context clues to infer unfamiliar vocabulary, noting, “*When I find new vocabulary, I usually note down the word I do not understand and then try to guess its meaning from the words before and after it*”. Another participant described identifying frequently repeated words as a signal of the main idea of the listening material.

With respect to socio-affective strategies, participants acknowledged that anxiety and loss of concentration were common experiences during authentic listening. The primary strategy employed was to remain calm and refrain from fixating on a single missed word or phrase, as doing so caused them to fall further behind. As one participant explained, “*My way of managing stress is by not getting stuck on one word or sentence I do not understand, because it can cause me to fall behind*”. Several participants also mentioned ignoring environmental distractions such as peers talking during playback as a way to maintain focus. Taken together, the interview findings confirm that students' strategy use is conscious and adaptive, reflecting active self-regulation in response to the cognitive and emotional demands of authentic listening.

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to investigate undergraduate EFL students' perceptions of authentic listening materials, the challenges they encounter, and the listening strategies they employ. The findings consistently demonstrate that students perceive authentic materials as highly beneficial for language development, face real but manageable challenges, and actively draw on a range of strategies to support comprehension. Taken together, these results contribute to the growing body of evidence supporting the integration of authentic input in EFL listening instruction, while also highlighting the pedagogical conditions necessary for such integration to be effective.

The very strong positive perceptions reported by students (an average of 81%) are consistent with theoretical perspectives on authentic input in language learning. Mandarsari (2023) argues that authentic materials offer students exposure to genuine communicative language use beyond the classroom, fostering both linguistic competence and communicative awareness. Similarly, Husnawati et al. (2024) contend that authentic input strengthens student motivation by increasing the perceived relevance of instructional tasks to real-world communication. The present study corroborates these positions: students described authentic materials as more engaging and meaningful than non-authentic alternatives, attributing this to the materials' representation of natural speech, multimodal features, and real-world communicative contexts. The finding that students experience a sense of achievement upon comprehending authentic input aligns with self-efficacy theory, which holds that successful task completion reinforces confidence and intrinsic motivation (Gilakjani et al., 2016).

Despite these positive perceptions, students' strong (73% average) reports of challenges are equally significant and deserve careful interpretation. The most frequently cited challenge, reliance on teacher guidance (81%, Very Strong), diverges from some constructivist accounts that emphasize student autonomy as the natural outcome of authentic input exposure. Rather, the present findings support Deregözü (2021) and Husnawati et al. (2024), who argue that effective use of authentic materials depends critically on instructional scaffolding, including pre-listening preparation, strategic guidance, and post-listening clarification. Without such scaffolding, the complexity of authentic speech, its reduced forms, varied prosody, and dense information load can overwhelm students rather than empower them. The challenge of accent variation (77%, Strong) further confirms findings by Gilakjani et al. (2016) and Kochkorova (2025), who identify non-standard accents as a primary source of comprehension breakdown in EFL contexts, particularly for students with limited exposure to diverse English varieties outside the classroom.

The emotional challenges reported in this study, anxiety and loss of focus (items 10 and 11), align with research on listening anxiety as a distinct affective barrier in EFL classrooms. Episiasi et al. (2023) and Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) have documented how anxiety disrupts working memory, reduces attentional resources, and impairs auditory processing. The present study adds to this evidence base by demonstrating that anxiety manifests not only as a general state of unease but as an acute, in-the-moment response to comprehension failure. Students described panic upon losing the thread of an audio passage, which then compounded the original difficulty. This finding suggests that affective interventions, rather than being ancillary to language instruction, may be foundational to the successful use of authentic materials.

The finding that students employ a rich repertoire of cognitive, metacognitive, and affective strategies (81%, Very Strong) is one of the more encouraging outcomes of this study and somewhat qualifies the severity of the challenges described above. Students' consistent use of top-down processing strategies, particularly listening for main ideas and using contextual clues to infer word meaning, reflects the kind of strategic competence that Fathi et al. (2020) and Larandang et al. (2023) associate with proficient listening comprehension. Importantly, the present students appear to have internalized these strategies despite experiencing significant difficulty, suggesting that authentic material exposure, even when challenging, may have promoted strategic self-regulation over time. The use of affective strategies, such as deliberate relaxation when anxious, is also notable: it suggests that students are not merely passive sufferers of listening anxiety but active managers of their emotional states, a dimension of student autonomy rarely captured in studies focused exclusively on cognitive strategies (Moussaoui & Belhaj, 2025; Taherkhani et al., 2022).

A cross-cutting implication of these findings is that the benefits of authentic listening materials are not automatically realized through exposure alone. The data indicate a clear tension between students' appreciation for authentic input and their continued dependence on teacher-mediated support. This suggests that the pedagogical framework surrounding authentic materials, including how tasks are scaffolded, how strategies are explicitly taught, and how affective dimensions are addressed, may be as consequential as the materials themselves. Educators working in similar EFL contexts should therefore consider designing instruction that gradually reduces scaffolding over time, fostering student independence while maintaining adequate support during initial encounters with authentic input. Integrating explicit strategy instruction, particularly for managing fast speech rate and accent variation, could further bridge the gap between students' positive perceptions and their on-task comprehension performance.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found that undergraduate students generally have positive perceptions of authentic listening materials. Students believe that these materials help improve listening comprehension, expose them to real-life language use, and increase motivation. However, positive perception does not mean the materials are easy to understand, as students also recognize their complexity. The findings also reveal several challenges, including difficulty understanding accents, fast speech, maintaining concentration, and listening anxiety. Students still depend on teacher guidance, indicating that they are not fully independent in processing authentic input. This suggests that authenticity increases both the relevance and difficulty of listening tasks, requiring appropriate instructional support.

Despite these challenges, students actively use listening strategies such as focusing on main ideas, guessing meaning from context, preparing before listening, and evaluating comprehension. They also attempt to manage anxiety, showing that listening is an active and strategic process. Therefore, successful comprehension depends not only on the materials but also on students' ability to regulate their learning.

Based on these findings, lecturers should provide structured guidance and explicit strategy instruction when using authentic materials. Students are encouraged to practice regularly using authentic resources. This study is limited by its small sample and reliance on self-reported data; future research should involve larger samples and examine actual listening performance.

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