

Methods for Comparison of Perspectives in Linguistic Formulation: Japanese and German

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Abstract: Interest in the linguistic study of perspectives from which linguistic expressions are formulated has been revived in the past 20 years, due to the recent development of cognitive linguistics. Among the many contributions to the study of such perspectives, Ikegami (2000) clearly showed that Japanese differs from English, through a comparison of a Japanese literary text with its English translation. However, there has been little discussion on the methods employed for comparison in the studies on this topic. The purpose of the present paper is threefold: (1) to describe what methodological problems are recognized in previous contrastive studies on the perspectives, especially in the field of cognitive linguistics; (2) in order to avoid methodological problems, to propose an alternative method for a more objective comparison of the perspectives between two languages; and (3) to demonstrate the validity of the proposed method for contrasting formulation patterns in terms of their perspective by some of the data obtained.

Keywords: Perspectives, linguistic formulation, routine formulas, Japanese, German

1. Introduction

Within the last 20 years, many studies on cognitive linguistics have focused on different perspectives from which linguistic expressions are formulated, pointing out that each language has its preferred style (Ikegami, 2000; Nakamura, 2004; Ozono, 2008; Narita, 2009; Mikame, 2009; Nomura, 2010; Nishijima, 2010; 2012; 2012a). Although these studies have revealed similarities and differences in the perspectives between languages, there has been little discussion on the methods employed for the comparison. The purpose of the present paper is threefold: (1) to describe what methodological problems are recognized in previous contrastive studies on perspectives, especially in the field of cognitive linguistics; (2) in order to avoid methodological problems, to propose an alternative method for a more objective comparison of the perspectives between two languages; and (3) to demonstrate the validity of the proposed method for contrasting formulation patterns in terms of their perspectives by some of the data obtained.

2. Description of the Problem

In a comparison of perspectives¹ from which linguistic expressions are formulated, many studies

¹ “Perspective” here is used in the sense of a viewpoint from which the speaker conceptualizes a scene as a construal and formulates it into a sentence (Langacker, 1990). For perspectives, see Oe (1975), Kuno (1978), Matsuki (1992), Okugawa (2007), and Moriya (2008).

have taken a translation method. For example, Ikegami (2000) demonstrated that Japanese differs from English by a clear example from a Japanese literary text and its English translation. To compare Japanese and German, Ozono (2008), Narita (2009), Mikame (2009), and Nomura (2010) also analyzed and contrasted Japanese and German correspondent expressions, based on Ikegami (2000). These studies showed that Japanese differs from English and German with respect to the perspectives from which sentences are formulated (cf. Morita, 2002, Yamamoto, 2011). In this paper, I limit the discussion to a comparison of Japanese and German in the following.

Narita (2009), for example, compared a sentence of a Japanese literary text, *Norway no mori* ('Norwegian Wood'), by Murakami Haruki, with its German translation and pointed out that the corresponding sentences between both languages were formulated from different perspectives (p. 402):

- (1) "*Koko wa doko*" to *Naoko ga futo kizuuta youni tazuneta.*
 "here TOP where" COMP Naoko NOM suddenly realize.PAST as.if ask.PAST
 ' "Where is here?" asked Naoko, as if she had realized it suddenly.'

As seen in English interlinear gloss (1), *koko* ('here') is used as topic in the original Japanese sentence. The speaker, Naoko, is involved in the scene in which the event occurs because the linguistic expression *koko* denotes the origo² of the speaker, and the speaker is not verbalized with the first person in the utterance. Therefore, the sentence is formulated from the perspective of the speaker inside the scene. However, its German translation is formulated differently from the Japanese original sentence:

- (2) "*Wo sind wir hier?*" *fragte Naoko. Erst jetzt schien sie die Umgebung*
 Where are we here ask.PAST Naoko first now seem.PAST she the circumstance
wahrzunehmen.
 to.discern
 ' "Where are we here?" asked Naoko. She seemed to discern the circumstance now.'

In the German translation (2), the subject of the quote in (2) is *wir* ('we'). Because the inclusive *wir* is used, the scene is depicted from the perspective of the speaker Naoko outside the scene in which she and her interlocutor are involved.

Note that, of course, such a clear difference in the formulation patterns of the two languages regarding the perspectives from which sentences are formulated can be showed easily if adequate corresponding sentences are compared. Depending on the translations, there are some cases where such different perspectives can be observed clearly, and other cases where such different perspectives are difficult to be observed, which can be confirmed in the following differently translated Japanese sentences from a German original sentence.

² "Origo" here is used in the sense of a reference point on which deictic relationships of a sentence are based, usually the current speaker.

- (3) *Als Gregor Samsa eines Morgens aus unruhigen Träumen erwachte,
As Gregor Samsa a morning.GEN from anxious dreams awake.PAST,
fand er sich in seinem Bett zu einem ungeheuren Ungeziefer verwandelt.
find.PAST he himself in his bed into a huge vermin transformed.
(Kafka, 2002, p.115)*

‘As Gregor Samsa awoke from anxious dreams one morning, he found himself transformed into a huge vermin in his bed.’

(3) is the first sentence of *Die Verwandlung* [The Transformation] written by Franz Kafka, a German language novelist. The following two Japanese translations, (4a) and (4b), can be compared.

- (4a) *Asa munagurushii yume kara me o samasu to Gregor Samsa wa
morning anxious dream from eyes OBJ awake when Gregor Samsa TOP
beddo no naka de tohoumonai ippiki no dokumushi ni sugata o
bed POSS inside in huge one POSS venom.insect DAT figure ACC
kaete shimatte ita.
transform PERF (and) be PAST*

(Translation: Kawamura, 1980, p. 47)

‘When Gregor Samsa awoke from anxious dreams in the morning, (he) had been transformed into a huge venom insect in his bed.’

- (4b) *Aruasa Gregor Samsa ga fuanna yume kara me o samashita
One.morning Gregor Samsa NOM anxious dream from eyes ACC awake.PAST
tokoro beddo no naka de jibun ga tohoumonai mushi ni kawatteiru
when bed POSS inside in self NOM huge insect DAT transform.PP
no ni kizuuta.
COMP recognize PAST*

(Translation: Ikeuchi, 2001, p. 94)

‘Gregor Samsa awoke from anxious dreams one morning. Then (he) realized that self had been transformed into a huge insect in the bed.’

(4a) and (4b) differ in the perspectives from which the second sentence is formulated. In (4a), the Gregor’s transformation is depicted from outside the scene where the event occurred, whereas in (4b), it is described from the perspective inside the scene because the word *jibun* (‘self’) is used. The expression *jibun* is used only from the perspective inside the scene where the subject of the utterance is involved as the origo. Therefore, the Japanese sentence in (4b) is constructed from such a perspective, though its English translation seems to be ungrammatical.

In the past, contrastive studies on perspectives compared semantically corresponding sentences in two languages. With the help of translations, the corresponding sentences of two languages, such as Japanese and German, can be contrasted because they describe the same event. However, translations are often influenced by a translator’s individual dispositions or the structural peculiarities of the source language, as seen in differences in the two types of

translation into Japanese, as in (4a) and (4b). Therefore, it can be pointed out that the use of translation for a comparison of linguistic expression patterns used in different languages has methodological problems with respect to comparability and objectivity.

If two languages, nevertheless, are to be compared with the help of translation, then a third language could be used as a source language, i.e., as *tertium comparationis*, to compare two languages more objectively. For example, the Japanese translations of English, Italian, and Czech passages can be compared with the equivalent German translations, which would be more plausible than previous translation-based comparison, as in (5).

(5) Alice was beginning to get very tired of sitting by her sister on the bank, and of having nothing to do: once or twice she had peeped into the book her sister was reading, but it had no pictures or conversations in it (...)
(Carroll, 1970, p. 25)

(5) is the first line of Alice in Wonderland of Lewis Carroll. (6a) and (6b) below are a Japanese and German translation, respectively.

(6a) *Alice wa dote no uede hon o yondeiru oneisama no soba de*
Alice TOP bank POSS on book ACC read.PRP sister POSS side on
Jitto shiteiru no ga taikutsu ni natte ki mash ita.
still do PRP COPM NOM boredom DAT become AND come POL PAST
nannimo suru koto ga nai node, ichi, nido, oneisama ga yondeiru
anything do COMP NOM absent because once twice sister NOM read PRP
hon o nozoite mimashita ga, sono hon ni wa sashie mo nakereba
book ACC peep AND see POL PAST but the book in TOP picture either
kaiwa mo arimasen.
conversation or be.POL.NEG

(Translation: Ishikawa, 1980, p. 27)

‘Alice got bored sitting still near her sister reading on the bank. Having nothing to do, (she) peeped into the book her sister was reading, but in the book there are neither pictures nor conversations.’

In (6a), note that the present tense is used in the underlined sentence to describe what Alice sees experientially, though the previous sentence is constructed in the past tense. The narrator moved into the perspective of the main character Alice and expressed what she saw. A similar shift in perspectives can also be observed in sentences in Erlebte Rede (free indirect speech, cf. Suzuki, 2005). (6b) below is a German counterpart of (6a).

(6b) *Alice war es allmählich leid, neben ihrer Schwester am Bachufer*
Alice.DAT be.PAST it gradually pain besides her sister on stream.bank
stillzusitzen und nichts zu tun; denn sie hatte wohl ein- oder zweimal
to.sit.still and nothing to do; for she had perhaps once or twice
einen Blick in das Buch geworfen, in dem ihre Schwester las,

a glance at the book throw.PP, in which her sister read.PAST,
aber nirgends waren darin Bilder oder Unterhaltungen abgedruckt-
 but nowhere be.PAST in.there pictures or conversations print.PP
 (Translation: Enzensberger, 1973, p. 11)

‘To Alice, it was painful gradually to sit beside her sister sitting still on the stream bank and to do nothing; for she had perhaps thrown a glance at the book her sister was reading but pictures or conversations were printed nowhere in there.’

The corresponding sentences have fine differences in tense and experiential descriptions, which, however, show that the Japanese sentence in (6a) has a perspective inside the scene where Alice is involved, as demonstrated by the use of present tense, unlike in (6b). The contrasting result can be considered as more plausible because possible influences of the source language onto the formulation pattern of each translation of the two languages can be excluded. In order to exclude possible influences from each language, from Japanese to German and vice versa, in comparison by analyzing originals and their translations, a third language can be used as tertium comparationis. The result can be confirmed by further translations from other languages as follows. (7) and (8) are Japanese and German translations from Czech and Italian texts, respectively. (7a) and (7b) are Japanese and German translations of sentences from the last passage of Milan Kundera’s novel *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* (Czech: *Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí*).

(7a) *Tomas wa kagi o mawashi syanderia o tsuketa. Futatsu no beddo ga*
 Tomas TOP key ACC turn chandelier ACC turn.on.PAST Two GEN bed NOM
kuttsukete narabete aru no ga mie sono ippou no soba ni wa
 together side.by.side be COMP NOM see and one.of.the.two GEN side DAT
 TOP
ranpu o oita naito teeburu ga atta.
 Lamp ACC set.upon night table NOM be.PAST
 (*sonzai no taerarenai karusa*. Transl. by Chino Eiichi, Tokyo: Shueisha, 1988, p. 395)
 ‘Tomas turned his key and turned on a chandelier. Two beds which were set together side by side came into sight. On the side of one of the beds was a night table on which a lamp was set.’

The underlined sentence in (7a) describes what comes into sight. However, in the Japanese translation, whose sight the narrator is referring to is not verbalized clearly. The narrator describes the scene experientially from the point of view of the main characters, from a perspective inside the scene.

(7b) *Tomas drehte den Schlüssel im Schloß und zündete den Lüster an.*
 Tomas turn.PAST the key in lock and ignite.PAST the chandelier on.
Sie sah zwei aneinandergeschobene Betten, neben dem einen
 She see.PAST two side.by.side.put beds, besides the one
 den Nachttisch mit einer Lampe.

the night table.ACC with a lamp.

(*Die unerträgliche Leichtigkeit des Seins*. Transl. by Susanna Roth, Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991, p. 301)

‘Tomas turned the key in a lock and turned on the chandelier. She saw two beds which were put side by side, the night table with a lamp, beside one of the beds.’

The German translation (7b), in contrast, describes who saw the scene when the chandelier was turned on; thus, it is formulated from a perspective outside the situation.

(8a) and (8b) are also Japanese and German translations of the beginning lines of *The name of the rose* (Italian: *Il nome della rosa*) of Umberto Eco, an Italian author. Analysis of the translations confirms that there are differences in perspectives between Japanese and German.

(8a) *Soshite shinri wa men to mukatte arawarete kuru maeni kiregireni (...)*
and truth TOP face toward and appear come before fragmentally (...)
kono yo no kago no uchi ni arawarete kite shimau.
this world GEN error GEN inside appear come end.

(*bara no namae* vol. 1. translated by Hideaki Kawashima, Tokyo: Tokyo-Sougensha, 1998, p. 22)

‘And before the truth comes to appear face to face, (it) ends to come to appear fragmentally in error of this world.’

In (8a), the event is described by a narrator. In the description, no personal pronoun is used, and the expressions *kuru* and *kite* appear. In this sense, it is not expressly verbalized whom the event occurred in front of. However, the expressions *kuru* and *kite* in the Japanese sentence are used. They mean ‘come’ and describe experimentally the event as if it occurred in front of the narrator. Therefore, the perspective from which the Japanese translation is formulated must be located inside the situation where the event occurs. In contrast, the German translation is differently formulated from the Japanese one as follows.

(8b) ... *bevor sie [die Wahrheit] sich uns von Angesicht zu Angesicht offenbart,*
before it [the truth] RefPro us from face to face appear
und nur für kurze Augenblicke (...) tritt sie hervor im Irrtum der Welt, ...
and only for short moments (...) appear it in error the world GEN

(*Der Name der Rose*. Transl. by Burkhard Kroeber. München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1987, p. 17)

‘Before it [the truth] appears to us face to face, and only for short moments, it appears in error of the world.’

In (8b), the personal pronoun *uns* ‘us’ is used. This pronoun denotes who experiences the event. Its use reveals that the persons denoted by it are described objectively from a perspective outside the situation where the event occurs, and this is the perspective from which the sentence is formulated.

By presenting and analyzing these examples, I have tried to show the validity of the

translation method with a third language. However, it is claimed that any translation method including use of a third language as *tertium comparationis* is not also appropriate for an objective comparison, because all translations are influenced by the individual translator. Therefore, an alternative method for the comparison should be proposed in order to compare two languages more objectively.

3. Proposal of Alternative Method

To compare corresponding expressions between two languages more objectively, one must use functionally equivalent, conventionalized expressions that are spoken in corresponding situations in the respective societies where the languages are spoken, such as expressions commonly found on signs in public spaces or spoken in routine formulas in the family and socialization process.

3.1. Expressions on Public Signs

The expressions below commonly appear on public signs in Japanese and German. Suppose that you are on an omnibus. If it will stop at the next station, the following messages may appear at the front of the bus:

Japanese: *Tsugi tomari masu*
 next stop POLITE
 '(I/we) stop (at the) next (station).'

German: *Wagen hält*
 bus stops

As in the sentence at the beginning of *The Snow Country* discussed in Ikegami (2000), the Japanese expression does not have a surface-level subject. It simply conveys that *I* and *we* or *the bus* we are on is going to stop at the next station. The scene is described from the perspective inside the situation (i.e., from within the bus, which we are in); the bus itself is not mentioned explicitly. The German expression, on the contrary, has a third-person subject, *Wagen*. The bus (*Wagen*) is observed from the perspective outside the situation because it is mentioned in the third person. A comparison of these corresponding sign expressions shows their different perspectives in a more objective fashion (cf. Nishijima, 2012).

Another example of the difference in perspectives from which sign expressions are formulated is given as follows. On a platform at a rail station in Japan, the following sign expression is displayed to remind passengers to watch for the coming trains:

Hakusen no uchi gawa de omachi kudasai
 white.line GEN within at wait POLITE IMPER
 'Please wait within the white line.'

The word for word English translation might be difficult for English speakers to understand

due to the use of the preposition “within.” However, for Japanese speakers, this formulation is understandable because the sentence is formulated from within the situation where the direction is made. Experientially from the viewpoint of the passengers standing on the platform, the viewpoint is located on their side; therefore “within” makes sense rather than “behind”, which represents an objective perspective outside the situation. In the German counterpart, however, a preposition that corresponds to “behind” is used as follows.

Hinter der weißen Linie bleiben
 behind the white line stay
 ‘Stay behind the white line.’

The German sign expression is formulated objectively from the perspective outside the passengers’ situation.

3.2. Routine Formulas for Communicative Behavior

In addition to expressions on public signs, various types of routine formulas are used in everyday life. For example, in socialization processes, it is common for parents to say expressions such as “Say please” and “Did you say thank you?” These can be called routine formulas for controlling communicative behavior because they are used to tell children to behave appropriately in particular situations. In different languages, there are functionally equivalent routine formulas for controlling communicative behavior, for example, *Arigatoo wa?* (‘[Did you say] thank you?’) in Japanese and *Hast du danke schön gesagt?* (‘Did you say thank you?’) in German. In addition, consider a parent walking with his or her child and the child bumping into a post; a Japanese or German parent will cry out *Abunai!* (‘Dangerous!’) or *Vorsicht!* (‘Caution!’), respectively (Nishijima, 2010). Because these expressions are often used in corresponding situations in Japan and Germany to remind children to avoid danger, they can be regarded as functionally equivalent. As mentioned above, these routine formulas inform children of what behavior is appropriate in particular situations. It can then be expected that comparing the routine formulas in two languages reveals what aspects of communication receive attention in each language, in addition to the difference in perspectives from which sentences are formulated (cf. Nishijima, 2012a).

4. Demonstration

4.1. Hypothesis

Routine formulas for controlling communicative behavior tend to be constructed from a typical perspective from which linguistic expressions of each language are formulated and to convey what is culturally relevant for communication. If perspectives can be conventionally acquired through repeated hearing and saying of routine formulas as part of the socialization process, the formulas must be typically constructed in accordance with the perspective that each language prefers. In order to test this hypothesis, a questionnaire survey was

administered in Japan and Germany.

Operational hypothesis:

Japanese routine formulas tend to be constructed as follows: Opposition between the speaker and hearer is not preferable; an integrated perspective is required; therefore, the perspective tends to be located experientially within the situation.

German routine formulas tend to be constructed as follows: Opposition between speaker and hearer is generally required; the speaker gives a direction to the interlocutor; competitive fashion is preferred; and the perspective tends to be located objectively outside the situation.

4.2. Method

4.2.1 Participants

In order to examine the hypothesis, a survey was carried out in primary schools in midsize German cities, including Heidelberg, Regensburg, and Düsseldorf, in January 2011.³ A total of 56 valid responses were collected. A corresponding survey was carried out in primary schools in Kanazawa, Japan in February 2011, and 77 valid responses were received. All the participants were recruited from among the guardians of eight- to nine-year-old children attending the selected schools. The questionnaire was distributed to the guardians, and they were asked to complete it and mail it back to the researcher.

Respondents were requested to write any appropriate linguistic expressions in response to the following question: “What would you say to your child, if he/she did the following in each of these eight situations?”

This paper describes two of the given situations, as given in (9) and (10) below:

(9) Your child is making noise in a waiting room at a clinic. The other patients there look at you and your child.

(10) Your child is pulling off leaves from trees or plants in public spaces, e.g., in the school yard, park, etc.

This paper discusses only some of the results. It will be revealed what contents are often referred to in corresponding routine formulas. Routine formulas instruct the child to stop making noise in the room or pulling off leaves from the plants or trees. For this purpose, I focus on what reasons parents report that they would refer to.

³ In particular, I would like to express my gratitude to Ms. Regina Hilleke-Buhl, Diplom Bibliothekarin, for her kind cooperation in looking for participants for the questionnaire survey in primary schools in Heidelberg, Germany.

4.3. Results and Discussion

4.3.1. Making Noise in a Waiting Room

In this situation, routine formulas are almost exclusively (more than 90%) spoken to the children, as reported by parents in both Japan and Germany, e.g., *Shizukani shinasai* and *Sei bitte reise!* ('Be quiet'). However, there is a slight difference in the preferred types of expression. 92.5% of the Japanese participants reported that they would give their child an instruction, and 82.2% of them would use imperative forms and the like, e.g., *Shizukani shinasai*, 9.7% of them inviting forms like *shizukani shiyoi* ('Let's be quiet'), and 3.2% of them interrogative forms like *koko wa byouin yayo. Dou sureba iino?* ('This is a hospital. What should you do?'). In contrast, 92.2% of the German-speaking participants reported they would utter a direction to their child. 91.5% of them would use an imperative form such as *Sei bitte leise* ('Be quiet, please') and 8.5% of them, the rest, interrogative sentences with modal auxiliaries, such as *Kannst du bitte leiser sein?* ('Can you please be quiet?'). Therefore, German parents prefer imperative forms more than Japanese parents do, and they almost all use the polite expression *bitte* ('please') as a softener.

However, more interesting differences can be found in reasons mentioned in utterances between the two languages as follows:

German: 58.8% of the participants give reasons.

disturbing other people	60.0%
you are not alone	33.3%
others	6.7%

Japanese: 67.2% of the participants give reasons.

disturbing others	35.6%
sick people in hospital	17.8%
hospital	15.6%
sick people	13.3%
disturbing sick people in hospital	8.9%
disturbing sick people	4.4%
others	4.4%

German-speaking parents would mention one of two reasons for their child to stop making noise: disturbing others, e.g., *Du störst die anderen Leute* ('You disturb the others') and you are not alone, e.g., *Du bist hier nicht alleine* ('You are not alone here'). Japanese-speaking parents, in contrast, would list several reasons that consist of two or more information items used. "Disturbing the others" is the most commonly cited reason. The environment of the "hospital" (48.9%), child's action of "disturbing" (44.4%), and "sick people" (42.2%) are also mentioned. The comparison of the reasons given by German and Japanese parents reveals that Japanese parents tend to focus on where the child is, what he/she is doing, and what people are doing around the child, while German parents inform their child of what he/she is doing or what

everyone else is doing except him/her. Japanese parents prefer giving concrete information to their children in each situation and let them know what situation they are in especially and have empathy with the others in the situation. Germans tend to tell general information or rules to their children and to let them know that they are responsible for not disturbing others' peace of mind.

4.3.2. Pulling Leaves

In this situation, routine formulas are used to direct children to stop pulling off leaves from trees or plants, e.g., *yamenasai* and *Hör damit auf!* ('Stop it'). No remarkable differences were found between Japanese and German. However, differences were found in the specific reasons mentioned by Japanese versus German speakers. These reasons are summarized as follows.

Japanese: <i>kawaisou</i> (pity) 33.3%,	
living thing	21.2%,
public	12.1%
German: living thing	31.4%,
public	13.7%,
pain	11.8%,

Japanese parents mentioned mainly pity for the plants (33.3%). For example, the routine formula *Kawaisoo desho* ('You feel pity, huh') is intended to convey that their children should have pity for the plants by encouraging their children to imagine what is happening to the living plants. This finding suggests that Japanese parents tend to let their children understand their inappropriate behavior experientially by promoting sympathy for living things from within the situation.

German parents said mainly that the plants were living things (31.4%). For example, *Die Pflanze braucht die Blätter zum Überleben* ('The plant needs the leaves for survival') is intended to inform their children that their behavior toward the plant could cause it to die. This suggests that German parents tend to point out that their children's actions are bad for the living things and they have a responsibility towards the plant from a perspective outside the situation.

5. Concluding Remarks

In the current study, firstly, based on the several literary data, it was pointed out that the previous studies on the comparison of perspectives between two languages have methodological problems with respect to comparability and objectivity because of influences of a translator's dispositions or the structural peculiarities of the source language. Then, a new method for the comparison of perspectives between Japanese and German has been proposed, and parts of the data obtained by the method have been analyzed for the demonstration. However, this discussion has revealed that two types of perspectives emerge when comparing corresponding routine formulas for communicative behavior in Japanese and German.

The first perspective, from within the situation, is seen in Japanese. The speaker views a

scene through the eyes of the speaker involved in the scene. The speaker uses psychological expressions that convey closeness to the hearer (child) and furthermore to the others (sick people and plant).

The second type of perspective, which appears in German, is external to the situation. The parents and their children are in opposition, and the parents use expressions that convey distance, by informing the hearer of the fact.

Thus, it was demonstrated that comparing functionally routine formulas for controlling communicative behavior can reveal what is relevant to the cultural communication of each language, or in other words, what is considered normal in particular societies, as communicative normality. A further direction of this study will be to provide more evidence for the finding.

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