IMPLEMENTING INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE NINTH GRADERS' WRITING SKILLS

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Abstract

This research aims at helping the ninth graders of a private learning course in Sidoarjo to improve their low writing performance. The students did not use the correct grammar and found it difficult to detect their errors existing in their composition of descriptive text. Indirect corrective feedback, as one strategy in teaching writing, was chosen as the way out. The result shows that the strategy improved the students' writing skill. Meanwhile, the students had high positive response toward the strategy and also high involvement in the teaching and learning process. The success of the strategy was determined by some practical steps of implementing indirect corrective feedback strategy that were done in three meetings in a cycle. The implementation of the strategy is needed as an alternative strategy in teaching writing that can improve the students' writing skills. Therefore, it is suggested that the English teacher implement indirect corrective feedback as an alternative strategy in teaching writing. Meanwhile, future researchers are expected to do other research in different learning contexts or text types and make any innovation that can improve the result and give positive contribution to the development and practice in English language teaching.

Keywords: writing skill, feedback, indirect corrective feedback, self-editing, composition

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membantu siswa kelas 9 di sebuah lembaga kursus privat di Sidoarjo untuk meningkatkan kemampuan menulis bahasa Inggris mereka yang tergolong rendah. Para siswa tidak menggunakan tata bahasa yang benar dan mereka kesulitan dalam mendeteksi kesalahan yang ada pada tulisan teks deskriptif mereka. Umpan balik korektif tidak langsung sebagai salah satu strategi dalam mengajar menulis dipilih sebagai solusi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa strategi tersebut berhasil meningkatkan kemampuan menulis para siswa. Sementara itu, para siswa juga memiliki respon yang positif terhadap strategi yang digunakan dan keterlibatan yang tinggi pada proses belajar mengajar. Keberhasilan starategi tersebut ditentukan oleh beberapa langakah praktis dalam implementasi umpan balik korektif tidak langsung. Yang dilakukan dalam satu siklus. Implementasi strategi tersebut dibutuhkan sebagai alternatif startegi dalam mengajar menulis yang memicu peningkatan kemampuan pada siswa. Oleh karena itu, disarankan pada guru bahasa Inggris untuk menerapkan umpan balik korektif tidak langsung sebagai strategi alternatif. Sementara itu, peneliti selanjutnya diharapkan juga dapat melakukan penelitian terkait di konteks yang berbeda dengan berbagai inovasi yang dapat meningkatkan hasil dan memberi kontribusi positif terhadap perkembangan dan praktik pengajaran bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: kemampuan menulis, umpan balik korektif tidak langsung, tulisan

I. INTRODUCTION

Mastering English deals with having all the four basic skills all at once. Writing is one language skill in English need to be mastered by students in order to master English. Writing can really help students to combine knowledge of the language that has been acquired (Harmer, 2012). It is considered as the most influential skill which means that limited skills of listening, reading, and speaking affects a limited knowledge of students' writing (Saville-Troike, 2006:164). Hence, it is important for teachers to teach writing to the students.

There are two ways to see a particular writing activity, either through writing as a process or writing as a product. In short, both concerns can be called as writing approaches. Concerning to writing as a process, Harmer (2012) expounds that the process of writing consists of some phases involving planning, drafting, editing, and final version, the sequence of which is not fixed. However, each phase in the process, including editing or revising, contributes to how students can successfully learn and do writing. The most substantial thing from the editing or revising phase is how the changes are made to improve the writing. Therefore, feedback is needed here so that they are able to edit and revise their writing.

Junior High School students, especially ninth graders, tend to have problems in writing as it has been found in some studies. If the four skills of English are compared, the most obscure one is writing (Cahyono & Widiati, 2011:69). It is because writing is a performance activity in which the other language skills and components can be reflected through it. Furthermore, writing asks students to use English words that arranged into sentences and paragraphs by following certain grammatical rules. It takes longer process and carefulness compared to the direct communication, which makes it difficult to master.

A research conducted by Yuliani, et al. (2015:16) shows that the students have poor mastery of some grammar elements including the use of article, auxiliary verb, noun, and preposition. It portrays that grammar is an English component which is urgently needed to be given big attention. The almost similar finding found by Putri (2014) which shows that the error of omission became the most frequent type of error occurring in students' writing composition of descriptive text. Omission, as a type of error proposed by Dulay (1982), is highly correlated to grammar. Therefore, grammar does play a great role in terms of students learning of writing.

The result of study done by Yuliani, et al. (2015) and Putri (2014) are in line with the sub-aspects of the problems that the researcher found in the classroom. The students mostly used incorrect grammar in their writing and they, moreover, were not aware of the errors they made in their composition. There are some reasons which caused students' problem in writing. Firstly, the teacher rarely gives feedback for students' writing and just puts the score only. The second reason is that the teacher only gave direct corrective feedback on their writing composition that made them not aware of the errors they made in the text they had written, neglect the errors, and learn nothing from them. The third reason is that the students lacked chance for revision in order to learn from the errors. The last reason is that the students simply lacked knowledge of writing.

Feedback as a powerful pedagogical tool for learning process has been involved in some research as an element in the process of teaching writing and, at the same time, to solve the problems rolled out earlier. However, the process of its

implementation does contribute to how far the improvement will be. In this study, the researcher tried to solve the problems by proposing teacher indirect corrective feedback as an alternative strategy in teaching writing to solve the problems revealed. It is a strategy in teaching writing by giving corrective feedback in an indirect form to students' writing composition in the process of a whole writing activity, in which it leads to the requirement of revision done by the students. The strategy was chosen because it is able to raise the students' awareness toward the errors they made in their writing. In addition, it forces the students to learn because they have to revise their work, and it involves self-editing as part of the whole strategy implementation.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Feedback

There is a large volume of published studies describing the role of corrective feedback in the teaching of writing. In terms of its concept, feedback, according to Hattie & Temperley (2007:81), is information administered by a particular role-player dealing with the comprehension and performance of a particular person. In short, they stated that "feedback is a consequence of performance" (Hattie & Temperley, 2007:81). Feedback, addition, is considered as an important and powerful pedagogical tool in the process of teaching and learning, including in its improvement.

According to its mode, there are two kinds of feedback: oral feedback and written feedback. The one more appropriate to be used in teaching writing is the written feedback, or sometimes it is called delayed feedback since it needs particular time between the performance and the feedback result – which is written and it takes time.

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback concerns on the correction of linguistic errors (Ellis, 2009:97). Sometimes it is written as CF in short. In the teaching of writing, the corrective feedback is given in written form mostly. Therefore, the abbreviation changes from only CF to WCF.

Evans, et al. (2010:3) states that almost everything which is learned deals with and needs feedback. Then, it leads to a belief that providing written corrective feedback (WCF) dealing with teaching principle can give contribution to the learning improvement.

Indirect Corrective Feedback

The significance given by feedback implementation does not mean it comes without contradiction. Traditionally, it has been argued whether direct or indirect corrective feedback is more appropriate and effective. However, some studies show that indirect corrective feedback surpasses direct corrective feedback in terms of its efficacy and effects toward the students learning process and improvements.

A study by Hosseini (2014:672) shows that the use of indirect feedback in writing is better than direct feedback since indirect feedback always supports the students to be accounted in the process of revision or editing that makes them deal with the solution and learn something from it. On the other hand, the use of direct corrective feedback does not give much learning to the students they are already given the correct form and they are not forced to revise, which means that they did not learn much.

The result is in line with the result of investigation done by Eslami (2014) in which she compares the efficacy of two different types of written corrective feedback, direct and indirect

WCF through an experimental study involving two groups of students. The result of the investigation shows that the indirect written corrective feedback lasts more effective than the red pen feedback (direct written corrective feedback). One thing which needs to remember is that the feedback given all comes from the teacher. That is why sometimes it is called as teacher feedback or teacher WCF.

However, no one of the studies of indirect corrective feedback mentioned involves self-editing as a part the implementation. In this study otherwise, the indirect corrective feedback from the teacher was followed up by self-editing. Ferris (2002:328) states that teachers who teach writing should foster the students' ability to edit their composition, including detecting the errors in their own composition and correcting them. Therefore, involving self-editing as part of indirect corrective feedback strategy is expected to help students not to always depend on the teacher in their writing.

Hattie and Timperley (2007:104) states that feedback is one of the most powerful influences of learning, but it is infrequently implemented. Through this study, it is expected that the students learn something from their errors from the feedback so that they will improve the next writing and will not make the same errors.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study heads for improving the ninth graders' writing skill through the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy. The students' problems in writing are going to be solved through the implementation of this strategy that leads to the improvement of their writing skill.

This study uses Classroom Action Research design since it deals with a solution of a certain instructional problem. Classroom Action Research does not belong to quantitative or qualitative research in absolute way, because here both numerical and verbal data are taken (Latief, 2014). Likewise this study, it deals how a group of teachers organizes their teaching practice and learns from their own experience by implementing their idea to improve the teaching and learning practice and see the effect.

A preliminary study was conducted to identify the problem which needed to seek for a strategy to solve it. This became the starter before the researcher proposed the indirect corrective feedback strategy. However, CAR is not merely about solving an instructional problem but also going deeper into how to improve that problematic aspect or field based on the observable effects (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988:21). The procedure involves several steps in a cycle covering planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. When a cycle is done, the result will determine whether or not the researcher needs to conduct the second cycle in order to achieve the target and solve the problem. If it is successful already, then there is no need to conduct the second cycle.

Subject and setting of the Study

The study is conducted in a learning course in Sidoarjo, especially in English class. English is one of the compulsory subjects taught to every class. There, the schedule of English is one meeting in a week. Each meeting consists of 1x75 minutes for the time allotment.

The subjects are the ninth-grade students in C class. There are twelve students from C class involved, consisting of 5 male students and 7 female students. The class is chosen due

to some reasons. Firstly, the students in that class had problems in writing related the difficulty in detecting errors in their work and writing with a good English language structure and grammar. The students and the researcher believe that there is a way that can be done in solving the problem and help the students. By implementing this indirect corrective feedback strategy into the classroom, it is hoped that the problems are solved and the students will improve their writing skill.

Research Procedure

Planning

Indirect corrective feedback is the strategy becoming the central point of the study which was going to be implemented in improving the ninth graders writing skills. It is a strategy to teach writing, which involves the giving of teacher's feedback followed up by self-editing. The feedback given comes from the teacher in an indirect form. In other words, the feedback given is represented in certain symbols or marks.

There are five basic steps of this strategy. In the first step, the students wrote their first composition as instructed by the teacher. They were to write a descriptive text about public figures. The second step is the phase when the students got back their first composition containing indirect corrective feedback from the teacher. In the third step, the students, then, revise their writing composition based on the feedback given – which are written in the form of marks put in the part of the students' composition containing error. They were to correct the errors and by themselves. In the fourth step, the students wrote the second composition which is still related to descriptive text based on the teacher's instruction. The condition is like the first step, but this one is for the second composition. In the next step, the students did not get teacher feedback anymore. Instead, they did self-editing to their own composition helped by a self-editing guideline so that they were able to detect their own errors and correct them. The composition was the final composition, the score of which rated and considered to see their writing improvement.

To determine whether the strategy has successfully solved the problem, some criteria of success were se. The criteria were 1) The research was considered successful if, at least, 75% of the students in the class got scores 75 or above in their final writing at the end of the cycle; 2) The research was considered successful if the students got high positive responses toward the implementation of the strategy; 3) The research was considered successful if the students' involvement in the teaching and learning process was high.

Acting

The study was conducted in three meetings implementing the steps that had been planned previously. In the first meeting, teacher gave review about descriptive text since they have been taught about it already. Some questions and answers were crossed after an example of descriptive text given and discussed. In the rest 30 minutes, the students were asked to write a composition in descriptive text about a particular public figure that they like most. The compositions were submitted at the end of the meeting.

The second meeting occurred a week after the first meeting. In this meeting, the students got back their first composition. Before that, the teacher checked first whether the students understand the meaning of the marks on their composition (indirect corrective feedback) and, after that, gave instruction to them to revise their composition by correcting the errors. By looking at the book and dictionary or by asking their friends, the students tried to correct the errors by themselves. At the

rest 30 minutes of the meeting, the students were given instruction to write the second composition about their favorite tourism object which is still related to descriptive text.

In the last meeting, the students did not get feedback like what they got for their second composition. The students were asked to do self-editing to their own composition. They were helped by self-editing guideline from the teacher. The students' compositions after self-editing were the ones used to see whether the result achieve the criteria of success or not.

Observing

There are some instruments used in this study to collect the data. The data on the students' achievement of English writing were collected using writing task which were developed based on basic competence and material that was taught at the time of data collection. The final result of the writing task would be analyzed then to get the numerical data which presented the students' achievement in writing. The data on students' attitudes towards the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy were collected using questionnaire. For the researcher, the teaching and learning process during the strategy implementation was observed using observation checklists and field note fulfilled by the observer. The data from the observation checklist supported the data of the students' writing score and the data from questionnaire. So, in observing the strategy implementation, five kinds of research instruments were used for this study. They were scoring rubric, writing tasks, questionnaire, observation checklist, and field note.

Reflecting

The writing compositions were scored using the writing scoring rubric set. There were four writing aspects used for the assessment: content,

organization, language features, and mechanics. Each aspect was scored 1 up to 4 which represented the level of performance and the descriptors. Language features aspect had bigger portion than others since the initial problem of students' writing were in it.

The questionnaires were analyzed by counting the students' answer for each point or item based on Arikunto (2014:285). The result of each item in the questionnaire was also described using percentage and numbers. Meanwhile, point number 5 and 6 were analyzed by describing the most-given answer narratively.

The observation checklist was analyzed quantitatively based on the points resulted after the three meetings ended. Meanwhile, the field notes from the observer were analyzed descriptively in a narrative way.

IV. FINDINGS

Students' Performance in Writing

The result of the study shows that 75% of the students got score above 75 in the first writing. The impact of the indirect corrective feedback was very good. The percentage of students who did not pass score 75 decreased from the preliminary study. There were 3 out of 12 students who did not pass the passing score set.

From the second comoposition written in the second or final writing, it is shown that more than 80% of the students in the class got scores 75 and above. From 12 students, 10 students had passed the passing score set. It means the target or the first criteria of success had been achieved. There were only 2 students who got score below 75.
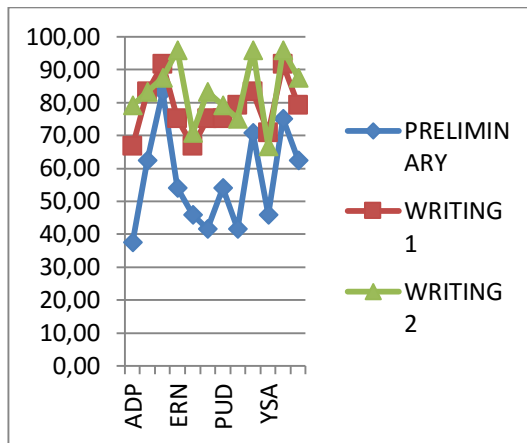
Figure 4.1 The comparison between the result of students' scores in preliminary study, writing 1, and writing 2

After the researcher checked the scores from the preliminary study and the final scores obtained after the implementation of the strategy, it can be seen that the students had improved their writing significantly. Moreover, each student had improvement in their writing performance after the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy.

Students' Responses toward the Implementation of Indirect Corrective Feedback Strategy

After all the questionnaires were analyzed, the total score obtained was 3.1 with "High" category, which meant that the students' had high positive response toward the implementation of the strategy.

The students like the indirect corrective feedback strategy implemented in their class, including the teacher's feedback and the opportunity to do self-editing. Furthermore, after the implemention of the strategy, almost every student felt that their writing skills improved but with different portion. Most students felt the improvement on the use of tenses in English and the structure of descriptive text. In addition, the students also felt the improvement

on the other aspects which were provided in the multi-choice options in the questionnaire such as the use of preposition, conjunction, vocabulary used, punctuation, English spelling, capitalization, and ideas of writing.

The students learned about tenses in English and the grammar rules used in the writing which were previously identified as the main problem of their writing. Furthermore, the students also learned how to detect errors in their own composition through the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy that made them feel that there was an improvement on their writing skill as well as their writing products.

Most students agreed to continue the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy for the next writing activities. The most-given reason was that they would be able to know and detect the errors in their composition. Through that way, the students were able to fix the errors soon after they found them. Another reason is that by having the strategy so often, they thought that they would not make the same errors that existed in their writing so often. The other reason was that the strategy continuance would lead them to be autonomous and more confident in doing good writing because they already knew which one was correct and which one was incorrect. Some students directly had a notion that the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy was needed to be continued because it would improve their writing skill.

Students' Involvement in the Classroom

The total point was 125 out of 136 which meant that 91.91% of the total number of students were actively involved in the learning activities during the study. From the points earned, it was found that the students' involvement in

the classroom was high. The 125 points belongs to the "High" category which indicates that the students were engaged and actively participated in most of the activities in the process, starting from the pre-activities up to the post-activities.

The field note filled showed the improvement of students' writing skills and attitudes. From the field note, it was found out that the students had learned about descriptive text very well. In addition, it is also revealed that the students' interests toward descriptive text writing activity increased. Furthermore, it was found out that the students were active in the teaching and learning process. Moreover, the students paid attention very well and they learned each writing activity enthusiastically.

Reflection of the Study

The study was ended after running one cycle because, based on the data found, all the criteria of success had been achieved. Eighty three percent of the students' score in the final writing was more than 75 which means that the students can write a composition of descriptive text in English well with some fulfillment of writing aspects. In addition, the result of the questionnaire indicated that the students had high positive responses toward the implementation of the indirect corrective feedback strategy. Moreover, the students' involvement in the teaching and learning process in the classroom was high based on the data obtained from observation checklist and field note. Hence, the study was stopped and the researcher did not conduct any other cycle.

V. DISCUSSION

Discussion on the Improvement of Students' Writing Skills

From the findings of the research, it can be revealed that the indirect corrective feedback strategy could solve the writing problems found in the particular class of the learning course in Sidoarjo. It is in line with a statement from an article written by Evans, et al. (2010:65) which revealed that the giving of feedback on students' composition is a teaching practice which is effective to solve writing problems and, moreover, it is needed by the students.

The indirect corrective feedback strategy gave the students a new experience in learning English, particularly in writing. It supports Harmer's (2007:151) statement who affirms that written feedback gives an important role in assessing students' composition as well as in helping and teaching them writing. The indirect corrective feedback strategy was successful in overcoming their writing problems. Through the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy they could detect their own errors they made in their composition. Furthermore, by implementing the strategy, the students could be more careful and accurate in writing. They were more aware of the errors they made when they were writing. That was because the indirect corrective feedback strategy gave them a chance to have teacher's corrective feedback which was very important. Learning the marks of errors that the teacher gave in the feedback made the students able to get the location of the errors. They believed that the part given feedback by the teacher was wrong because they believed on the teacher's capability to determine that it was an error and they need to do something with it – to find the correction. That made the students aware of the errors and tried not to make

the same errors for the next writing activity. It is in line with Bitchener, et al. (2005:201) that the giving of feedback extends meaningful impact on the students' language accuracy every time they write a new writing project.

As the following up step, a chance was given to the students to correct their composition by themselves (self-editing). It becomes a part indirect corrective feedback strategy that was really helpful even though some students got better writing scores in the first writing compared to their score in the second writing. Lee (2012:116) states that teachers need to search for strategies done after giving the corrective feedback that can be united to the main strategy so that it is able to optimize the process and the good impact of the strategy for students. From this study, it can be seen that self-editing may be considered as a good alternative post-feedback strategy that can be united into the indirect corrective feedback strategy as a whole process.

The strategy in the first writing gave the students an impact on their writing score improvement. Through the giving of self-editing, they tried not to always depend on the teacher and build their own confidence in writing although a self-editing guideline was still needed. Through this way, the students had gradually improved their writing skill.

The students achieved better in their writing compared to what they did before the strategy was implemented. They not only learned how to write a descriptive text in the correct way but also learned the grammar aspects including tenses, conjunction, and preposition, which previously became their main problem in writing. Through indirect corrective feedback strategy, the students practice writing and make errors. After that, they would correct it and learn something from it. That was how the indirect corrective feedback strategy successfully worked.

Discussion on the Students' Responses toward the Strategy

Most students felt that the feedback given made them more aware of their errors that they made in writing and they became more careful in writing so that the errors can be minimized every time they do writing. They felt that it led to the improvement of their writing quality. It made the students quite interested in the indirect corrective feedback. The most important one is that the students' interest towards writing increased through this strategy. They students had learned writing well during the study. It was because they positively felt the impact of the strategy to their writing skill. The students did consider and realize the importance of having good writing skill. The students' positive responses are not apart from the chance of revision, which becomes an important element in this study.

The indirect corrective feedback strategy gave the students a thought that learning from bad things can also be done to raise a positive point. There is nothing wrong with making errors in a process of learning. Wu et al. (2014:1260-1261) states "students' errors are great sources for improving teaching and learning". They made errors and they learned from them. They knew, fixed and minimized their errors and finally the students improved their writing.

Almost all students had a notion that indirect corrective feedback strategy needs to be continued. It means that the students realized the helpfulness and the goodness of the implementation of the strategy to their English writing so that the strategy is needed to be continued.

Discussion on the Students' Involvement in the Classroom

The "High" category resulted from the observation checklist shows that the students were actively involved

in the teaching and learning process during the implementation of the indirect corrective feedback strategy. Although writing is deemed to be a boring learning activity due to the fact that it is a productive skill, through this strategy, they had an active teaching-learning process. The students did what the teacher had planned so that the process ran very well.

Discussion on the End of the Study

The three criteria of success set at the beginning of the study had been achieved. At the end of the study, 83% of the students could reach the target or the passing grade set. The students had made a valuable improvement. In addition, the students had high positive responses to the implementation of indirect corrective feedback strategy and high involvement in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. Therefore, the study was ended after running one single cycle. The result revealed that the strategy had successfully solved the writing problem found in the class. From this point, it can be concluded that indirect corrective feedback, with self-editing in it, is considered as an alternative strategy which is effective to be implemented in teaching writing.

VI. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Firstly, it can be concluded that indirect corrective feedback strategy has successfully solved the main problems, the difficulty in detecting error on students' own works and the inability to use correct language structure or grammar. Secondly, at the same time, the strategy also helped students to improve their writing skill. The students' writing performance improved compared to the time before the strategy was implemented. Third, the students had high positive responses to the implementation of the strategy. They felt that the indirect corrective feedback strategy improved their writing. The students had a notion that the strategy needs to be continued because it helped them a lot. Moreover, the students' involvement in the teaching and learning process is high. They actively participated in every activity in the process of implementing the strategy.

The strength of this strategy was that it not only forced the students to find the correction based on the feedback but also gave them a chance to do self-editing for their composition. Furthermore, the strategy not only led them to learn writing better than before and minimized their errors but also encourages the students' autonomy.

Although the strategy had valuable strength, it also had some weaknesses. Firstly, there are still five students who had not passed the criteria at the end of the strategy implementation. Secondly, some students got a better score after the first writing than the second writing even though their second or final writing score were 75 and above. Third, the study focused more on the students' language structure or grammar mastery as the basic problem they had. The other aspects of writing were also taken into account, but not as much as the grammar. Fourth, the study was done in only three meetings. The result would be better if the strategy was implemented in a longer time with more various activities related to feedback in one cycle.

English teachers are suggested to implement indirect corrective feedback as an alternative strategy to teach writing to improve the students' writing skills. Secondly, they need to guide students in the process of strategy implementation to make sure that it goes as planned. Thirdly, the score which is being given to the students, should be the score after the revision.

Meanwhile, future researchers are suggested that they conduct a similar research to be implemented in another level of students with other kinds of text or with higher number of students. Second, it is hoped that future researchers can innovate something in the process of the strategy implementation that will enhance the efficacy of the strategy. Third, due to the fact that the type of feedback used is the indirect one, future researchers may make the coded marks or symbols more varied. In addition, the researcher hopes that future researchers are able to improve the current finding about corrective feedback that will surely give contribution to the development of science and practice, especially in English language teaching field.

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