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Intercultural Communication Adaptation of Minangkabau and Betawi Ethnic Students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University

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Abstract

This study describes the experiences, barriers, and communication adaptation strategies of Minangkabau students interacting with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Universitas Negeri Jakarta. It employed a descriptive qualitative design, drawing on online interviews with five informants (two Minangkabau and three Betawi students) and thematic analysis mapped onto Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Differences in accent, speech rate, vocabulary, and joking styles initially prompted surprise, awkwardness, and concern about responding inappropriately, but these barriers were mild and were resolved by asking about unfamiliar words, requesting clarification, and apologizing. Convergence appeared in shifts to more neutral Indonesian, commonly understood vocabulary, and adjusted intonation; divergence appeared in one student's deliberate retention of accent as identity; and nonaccommodation appeared when regional words or accents surfaced unintentionally. Convergence, divergence, and nonaccommodation can therefore coexist, so adaptation does not require abandoning cultural identity. Open communication and challenging stereotypes help foster mutual understanding on campus without erasing cultural identity.

Keywords Communication Accommodation Theory; Communication Adaptation; Intercultural Communication.

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INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is known as a multicultural country rich in ethnic, linguistic, and cultural diversity, fostering intercultural interactions in daily life (Yanti & Fajri, 2023). The higher education environment, including Jakarta State University, serves as a strategic platform for students from various ethnic backgrounds to interact and adapt. Students coming from various regions will face cultural differences, including accents, speaking styles, and

vocabulary, when interacting with friends from other ethnicities. The Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Jakarta State University has students from various ethnicities, including Minangkabau and Betawi, which creates unique communication dynamics. The ability to adapt intercultural communication is very important to support social and academic processes within the campus environment. This adaptation process allows migrant students to develop effective communication strategies amid cultural diversity. (Nugroho & Salman, 2026) .

Differences in cultural dialects have the potential to hinder intercultural communication and can cause misunderstandings. Differences in accent, speaking speed, vocabulary, and joking style are often experienced by Minangkabau and Betawi students at PAI UNJ, with minor misunderstandings often resolved through re-explanation. The study examines the relationship between the poly-ethnic campus environment and students' adaptability and communication abilities. The differences in Minangkabau accents, which sound sharp and fast, often surprise Betawi informants, while Minangkabau informants sometimes feel awkward out of fear of misresponding to their interlocutors. The need for the ability to live side by side in a pluralistic society is crucial to prevent potential conflicts. Migrant students entering new sociocultural environments face differences in language, communication styles, and social norms, so they need to continuously adapt to support effective interpersonal interaction Viani et al. (2026) (Fitri & Yuliana, 2024) (Nugroho & Salman, 2026).

This cultural adaptation process includes various phases, such as honeymoon, cultural shock, adjustment, and final adaptation. Minangkabau students at PAI UNJ often switch to a more neutral Indonesian when speaking with Betawi friends, although one informant still maintains their accent as an identity. Previous studies on intercultural communication adaptation tend to focus on global mobility or the context of interethnic marriage, with some studies highlighting common barriers such as language differences and norms. Research that specifically examines the dynamics of intercultural communication adaptation between Minangkabau and Betawi ethnicities within the academic environment of the PAI Study Program at Jakarta State University is still limited. This gap creates a need to delve deeper into experiences, barriers, and communication adaptation strategies relevant to local contexts. This study will use Communication Accommodation Theory to analyze how Minangkabau and Betawi students adjust their communication styles. (Nugroho & Salman, 2026) (Pratiwi & Laksono, 2025; Putri et al., 2026)

The novelty of this research lies in the construction of a descriptive model that specifically identifies the experiences and communication adaptation strategies of Minangkabau students in interacting with Betawi students within the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University. This research differs from previous studies that mostly discussed the context of adaptation abroad or inter-ethnic marriage. The contribution of this research is both theoretical and practical. First, theoretically, this research enriches understanding of the application of Communication Accommodation Theory in the

context of interethnic interactions in the Indonesian academic environment. Second, practically, the results of this study can serve as input for higher education institutions in developing orientation programs or intercultural communication training for students.

Research question: RQ1: How are Minangkabau ethnic students experiencing adapting communication with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University? RQ2: What are the intercultural communication barriers experienced by Minangkabau ethnic students when interacting with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University? RQ3: What communication adaptation strategies do Minangkabau ethnic students use in interacting with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In multicultural societies, intercultural communication becomes an important process, especially in universities that bring together individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Individuals adjust their communication behavior when interacting with people from other cultures to achieve common goals. This process demands understanding and appreciation of differences in values, norms, and cultural symbols to suppress misunderstandings. The effectiveness of intercultural communication depends on the adaptation strategies used by individuals, while effective communication serves as the foundation for forming harmonious social relationships. Through adaptation, a person can gain acceptance and integrate into a new environment. (Liliweri, 2021a) (Morissan, 2021)

Adapting Intercultural Communication

Individuals undergo dynamic intercultural communication adaptation by adjusting verbal and nonverbal behaviors so that interactions with people from different cultures are more effective. explains that this process is necessary to reduce communication barriers and build mutual understanding. When entering a new sociocultural environment, migrant students often face differences in language, communication styles, and social norms. Effective interpersonal interaction requires continuous adjustment. Ethnic, language, and social environment factors also shape the diversity of communication patterns in educational settings. (Nugroho & Salman, 2026) Turistiati & Andhita (2021) (Solihat, 2018)

Communication patterns and cultural adaptation of foreign students can be seen through adjustments to communication processes in each interaction with new environments and groups. The study describes the communication and cultural adaptation of foreign students in the international class at Unikom Bandung, including adjustments in communication behavior in interactions with new people and environments. This competence includes understanding and respecting differences in values, norms, and cultural symbols. (Purba & Silaban, 2021) Solihat (2018)

Several academic studies have identified barriers and strategies for adapting students' intercultural communication. Papuan students studying at Trunojoyo Madura University

face language, socio-cultural, and cultural barriers but strive to overcome them by studying local culture and building friendships. to examine the adaptation strategies of multicultural communication among students outside Java, including linguistic, social, and cultural adjustments in academic environments influenced by Islamic values and Javanese culture. To overcome language barriers, migrant students often use Kholil (2025) *code-switching* and *code-mixing strategies*, especially in environments dominated by other regional languages (Nafira & Fajarini, 2025).

Communication Accommodation Theory

Howard Giles developed Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) to examine the adjustment of individual communication styles in intercultural interactions. This theory explains that a person tends to change their communication behavior to resemble the interlocutor more closely (convergence) or to be more different from them (divergence). The speaker converges by adopting a communication style that closely resembles the interlocutor's style, whether to show similarities, increase closeness, or gain acceptance. Divergence highlights linguistic differences or communication styles, often to emphasize group identity or social distance. The study describes intercultural communication among Civic Education students from abroad in building social relations in the multicultural environment of the University of Mataram. (West & Turner, 2021) Edi et al. (2026)

This study uses CAT to examine the communication adaptation strategies of Minangkabau students when interacting with Betawi students. The use of a more neutral Indonesian language or adjustments to speaking speed can indicate convergence, while efforts to maintain regional accents can reflect divergence as an affirmation of identity. In multicultural campus environments, students with different cultural backgrounds often use convergence and divergence to build harmonious social relationships. This theory helps researchers recognize how individuals actively manage identity and relationships through communication adjustments in intercultural interactions. (Kholil, 2025)

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the experiences, obstacles, and communication adaptation strategies of Minangkabau ethnic students when interacting with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Jakarta State University. The qualitative approach understands phenomena from the participant's perspective and focuses on meaning, not quantitative measurement, while the descriptive design describes the overall pattern of intercultural communication adaptation. Five informants were (Moleong, 2021) (Creswell, 2021) *purposively selected*, namely two Minangkabau students as the main informants and three Betawi students as supporting informants, with criteria of actively interacting with other ethnicities and having experienced intercultural communication adaptation. This number is considered adequate to achieve data saturation. Data were collected through in-depth online interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation studies.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles and Huberman, which includes data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions. Data validity was maintained through source triangulation by comparing statements from Minangkabau and Betawi informants as well as observation and documentation results, (Sugiyono, 2022) *member checking* of informants, and audit trails to maintain traceability at each stage of the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This descriptive qualitative study reviews the adaptation of intercultural communication between Minangkabau and Betawi ethnic students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program at Jakarta State University (UNJ). Data were obtained through in-depth interviews with five informants, including two Minangkabau students (main informants) and three Betawi students (supporting informants). The research results are presented based on location descriptions, informant profiles, adaptation experiences, obstacles, communication strategies, and mapping in Communication Accommodation Theory.

Overview of the Research Location

PAI UNJ is a multicultural educational environment where students from various ethnicities, including Minangkabau and Betawi, interact. This interaction is marked by differences in accent, speaking speed, vocabulary, and joking style experienced by both groups from the beginning of the meeting. Betawi informants were surprised by the "soft" and fast Minangkabau accent, while Minangkabau informants were initially awkward because they feared misunderstandings. Nevertheless, these differences rarely develop into serious conflicts; minor misunderstandings are usually resolved through explanations or direct questions. Minangkabau students tend to use neutral Indonesian, although one informant still maintains their regional accent as their identity. Informant Y stated, "that's too soft for Betawi people." This statement shows how initial perceptions about differences in speaking styles can influence interactions in academic environments.

Informant Profile

This research involved five PAI UNJ students, with identities disguised. Two main informants were from the Minangkabau ethnic group, and three supporting informants were from the Betawi ethnic group. The details are as follows:

Table 1. Informant Profile

Code	Initials	Ethnicity	Role	Description
MK1	F	Minangkabau	Main informants	Originally from West Sumatra, he studied at PAI UNJ for more than two years
MK2	N	Minangkabau	Main	Originally from

			informants	West Sumatra, studied at PAI UNJ for two and a half years
BT1	S	Betawi	Supporting informants	Interacting with Minangkabau students in classrooms and organizations
BT2	Y	Betawi	Supporting informants	Interacting with Minangkabau students in class and presentation activities
BT3	A	Betawi	Supporting informants	Interacting with Minangkabau students in daily social interactions

Informant S interacted with Minangkabau students in class and organizations, stating, "First, stop stereotyping." This view emphasizes the importance of eliminating prejudice for better communication.

The Experiences of Minangkabau Ethnic Students in Adapting to Communication

The experience of Minangkabau students adapting communication with Betawi students at PAI UNJ shows diverse dynamics. Informant F highlighted the difference in greetings like *'I'* and *'you* ' in Jakarta, which is unusual in Padang. Informant N felt their initial interactions were normal but acknowledged noticeable differences, while Betawi friends were considered "fun to chat." Minangkabau students initially felt stiffness and fear of communication due to differences in accent and concerns about speaking the wrong language (Hakim, 2021). Informant F revealed, "At first, they seemed stiff or maybe afraid to speak because their accents were different or afraid of the wrong language."

This shows initial barriers such as fear and stiffness when speaking to a new environment. Informant N also experienced initial awkwardness, but now feels more comfortable after two and a half years. Betawi informants, like S, were surprised to hear the "soft" and fast Minangkabau accent. Y also felt that *the greetings I* and *you* didn 't quite suit Minangkabau friends, whom he considered too 'soft'. This shows the initial phase of adjustment to recognize different communication styles.

Barriers to Intercultural Communication

The intercultural communication barriers experienced by Minangkabau students when interacting with Betawi are generally mild. Differences in accent, speaking speed, and vocabulary are the main obstacles. Informant N once misunderstood words he did not

understand and asked directly. He also once thought the Betawi friend's words were angry, but that was actually his friend's 'nyablak' way of speaking. Informant Y (Betawi) admitted to joking too harshly and apologized the next day.

Informant A mentioned that misunderstandings sometimes occur and are resolved by re-explanation. Informant F does not have difficulty understanding, but as a newcomer he is still stiff and sometimes needs to ask about the meaning of local words. Y also noted that the Minangkabau vocabulary that gets carried away sometimes makes conversations not 'connect'. S highlights the speed of speech as the most surprising thing. Stereotypes also have the potential to become obstacles, with informant S requesting that the Minangkabau stereotype of 'stingy' and Betawi 'rough-mouthed' be removed to prevent misunderstandings (Handayani, 2022). Informant S stated, "First, stop stereotypes." This shows that stereotypes are seen as potential barriers to intercultural communication that must be overcome for better interaction.

Communication Adaptation Strategies

Minangkabau students used various adaptation strategies, especially the use of more neutral Indonesian and the choice of vocabulary they understood. Informant F explained adjusting intonation and avoiding interrupting conversations, worried that "people here might think we were angry or that we didn't like it." This explains the reason for adjusting intonation, which leads to convergence in speaking style. N also used Indonesian daily, chose common words, explained Minangkabau terms, and asked for new terms. Adaptation was also carried out by Betawi students.

Y saw a Minangkabau friend switch to Indonesian during the presentation, and he himself used Indonesian without the Betawi dialect. S told a Minangkabau friend who occasionally spoke a Betawi accent when joking or getting upset after learning the local language. A said both parties re-explained each other in Indonesian to achieve understanding. Some Minangkabau informants, like N, consciously maintained their accent as their identity, stating "you don't have to eliminate your own accent just because you live in Jakarta," showing divergence as an affirmation of identity.

Mapping Findings in Communication Accommodation Theory

Convergence is evident from the efforts of Minangkabau and Betawi students to bring their communication styles closer, such as switching to neutral Indonesian, choosing general vocabulary, explaining terms, and adjusting intonation (F, N, Y, S). Divergence was identified in informant N who consciously maintained the Minangkabau accent as an identity, especially in a relaxed atmosphere. N stated, "You don't have to eliminate your own accent just because you live in Jakarta." This affirms the defense of accent as an affirmation of cultural identity. Non-accommodation also arises when Minangkabau accent and vocabulary are carried unintentionally, as in F. The process of improving communication through direct questioning, re-explanation, and apology also supports adaptation.

Methodological Notes and Limitations

This study used online interviews with five informants (two Minangkabau, three Betawi), out of an initial target of ten. This number is considered an initial overview, not a generalization, but sufficient to achieve data saturation based on *the concept of information power*. Additional informants are still possible if the data is not yet in-depth. Interviews are recorded and transcribed automatically, then the spelling is edited without changing meaning. Informants' identities are disguised with initials as promised confidentiality.

Data analysis used an interactive model from several previous studies (data reduction, presentation, drawing conclusions). Data validity was maintained through source triangulation, comparing Minangkabau and Betawi informants' statements with observation and documentation. An example of triangulation is a shared view regarding intonation, where N assessed that the Betawi friend's speech sounded angry, while Y considered the Minangkabau friend's speaking style too subtle for the Betawi style. Informant N stated, "Now I don't easily misunderstand or immediately judge people just from what they speak." This shows a change in attitude after cross-cultural interaction, which is one of the important outcomes of the communication adaptation process.

Discussion

These findings are analyzed through the lens of Communication Accommodation Theory and compared with previous studies to enrich understanding of the dynamics of intercultural communication in the Indonesian academic environment.

The Experiences of Minangkabau Ethnic Students in Adapting to Communication

The experiences of Minangkabau ethnic students adapting to communicate with Betawi students at PAI UNJ show diverse dynamics, ranging from awkwardness to developing comfort. Initial interviews revealed differences in accent, speaking speed, vocabulary, and joking style experienced by the two student groups. Minangkabau informants F and N initially felt differently, with N admitting to feeling awkward because he was worried about misresponding to the interlocutor, while Betawi informants S and Y were surprised to hear the Minangkabau accent sounding sharp and fast. F stated that his comfort in interacting did not decrease because he already had experience in Jakarta, while N felt an increase in comfort after two and a half years of interaction.

This experience can be understood through the stages of adaptation proposed by cross-cultural adaptation theory, which include the honeymoon phase, cultural shock, adjustment, and final adaptation. Although not all informants explicitly mentioned severe cultural shock, the initial awkwardness and shock expressed by informants indicate a response to the new sociocultural environment. Migrant students indeed face differences in language, communication styles, and social norms when entering new environments, so ongoing adjustment is needed to facilitate effective interpersonal interaction. (Nugroho & Salman, 2026) (Suhaimi & Saputra, 2021)

A similar phenomenon is also seen in studies on students' adaptation to poly-ethnic environments. The ethnically diverse campus environment creates complex social dynamics and influences the adaptation process as well as students' communication skills. Students

from various regions in Indonesia face significant challenges in adjusting to the new sociocultural environment. The experience of interacting with cultural diversity, as seen at PAI UNJ, teaches the importance of understanding and appreciation of differences in values and norms to suppress misunderstandings. (Viani et al., 2026) (Effendi et al., 2025) (Turistiati & Andhita, 2021)

Communication adaptation of out-of-town students occurs through the development of communication strategies to face the multicultural academic environment. The feeling of not easily misunderstanding or directly judging people based solely on how they speak, as expressed by informant N, indicates a good level of adaptation. This reflects an improvement in intercultural communication competence, namely understanding and respecting cultural differences. Intercultural communication is important so that common goals are achieved and harmonious social relationships can be established. (Purba & Silaban, 2021) (Dalimunthe, 2022) (Liliweri, 2021b; Morissan, 2021)

Contextually, the adaptation experiences of Minangkabau students at PAI UNJ underline that although initial differences can cause shock or awkwardness, the ongoing process of interaction allows individuals to overcome discomfort. Interactions occurring in higher education environments become strategic platforms for students from various backgrounds to adapt. These initial experiences ultimately form the foundation for students to develop more effective communication strategies amid cultural diversity, a crucial process to support their social and academic lives. (Edi et al., 2026)

Intercultural Communication Barriers Experienced by Minangkabau Ethnic Students

The intercultural communication barriers experienced by Minangkabau ethnic students when interacting with Betawi students at PAI UNJ are generally mild and do not develop into serious conflicts. Data shows that three out of five informants (N, Y, A) have experienced mild misunderstandings, while two informants (F, S) have never experienced them. Misunderstandings are often caused by ununderstood words, straightforward utterances that were initially mistaken for anger, or differences in joking styles.

Differences in accent and speaking speed were indeed one of the obstacles experienced by the five informants. Informants S and Y, from the Betawi ethnicity, were surprised by the Minangkabau accent sounding sharp and fast, while N from Minangkabau misinterpreted the Betawi friend' s *style of speaking in a blunt* expression as anger. Such linguistic barriers often become the main challenge in adapting intercultural communication. These misunderstandings can be resolved by asking directly or re-explaining, indicating proactive efforts from both parties. (Nafira & Fajarini, 2025; Pratiwi & Laksono, 2025)

Previous research also shows that differences in cultural dialects have the potential to hinder intercultural communication, and can even trigger conflicts if not addressed. In the context of PAI UNJ, these barriers do not worsen due to the accommodation of social culture and students' willingness to understand each other. F's discomfort as a newcomer who needs to ask about the meaning of local words, as well as N's confusion about everyday Betawi

terms, indicate that vocabulary differences are also part of the initial obstacles. (Fitri & Yuliana, 2024; Yanti & Fajri, 2023)

Potential obstacles also arise from stereotypes, as expressed by informant S who requested that stereotypes of Minangkabau people being stingy and Betawi people being seen as harsh in their mouths be removed. Stereotypes become one of the challenges in intercultural communication that can trigger prejudice. N responded that the perception that Minangkabau people are stingy depends on individuals, and that some Betawi people are subtle or (Handayani, 2022) *nyablak*, emphasizing the importance of mutual understanding as the key to good communication.

Handling intercultural communication barriers at PAI UNJ shows that willingness to ask, reexplain, and apologize when misunderstandings occur is an effective communication practice. An attitude of mutual understanding and respect for differences is an important foundation to prevent potential conflicts and support coexistence in a pluralistic society (Fitri & Yuliana, 2024). The emerging obstacles are more initial adaptation challenges that were successfully overcome through proactive interaction.

Communication Adaptation Strategies of Minangkabau Ethnic Students

The communication adaptation strategies used by Minangkabau ethnic students in interacting with Betawi students at PAI UNJ include convergence and, in certain cases, divergence, which align with Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT). Convergence is clearly seen from the efforts of both Minangkabau informants to switch to a more neutral Indonesian language and choose vocabulary understood by Betawi friends. This strategy is a form of adjusting communication behavior to better resemble the interlocutor, show a desire to be accepted, and increase closeness. (West & Turner, 2021) (Hpar et al., 2024)

Speaking style adjustments were not only made by Minangkabau students. Informant F consciously adjusted his intonation because he was worried that his conversation partner in Jakarta might think he was angry or disliked, while N chose common words and explained less familiar Minangkabau terms. Informant Y, from the Betawi ethnic group, also observed his friend switching to Indonesian during the presentation, and he himself adapted by using Indonesian without the Betawi dialect. Non-Javanese students adapted linguistically, socially, and culturally in an academic environment characterized by Islamic values and Javanese culture. (Kholil, 2025)

Divergence was also observed, especially in informant N who consciously maintained the Minangkabau accent as part of their identity, even though they lived in Jakarta. N assessed that the accent should not be removed, reflecting an effort to highlight linguistic differences or communication styles as affirmation of group identity. Informant F, although his accent was carried unintentionally, also expressed a desire to follow the local accent, indicating a tug of war between the desire for convergence and the inherent identity. (West & Turner, 2021)

Proactive communication adaptation strategies also involve efforts to improve communication. Informant N asked directly when he did not understand a word, and A said

both parties reexplained each other in Indonesian. Y once apologized the next day after realizing that his joke was too harsh for his friend. Multilingualism has a positive but not significant individual effect on the intercultural adaptation of Indonesian students participating in internship programs in Taiwan. Adaptation skills through (Sudianto & Antika, 2026) *code-switching* and *code-mixing strategies* are also widely used by migrant students to overcome linguistic barriers, especially in environments dominated by other regional languages. (Nafira & Fajarini, 2025)

Non-Javanese students in multicultural academic environments also use linguistic, social, and cultural adaptation strategies, with stages ranging from initial observation to adjustment of communication styles. This confirms that the use of more neutral language, adjusting intonation, and willingness to explain terms are effective strategies in the context of PAI UNJ. The ability of Minangkabau students to actively manage their identity and relationships through communication adjustment is the key to their successful adaptation within the multicultural campus environment. (Kholil, 2025). The communication adaptation strategies applied by Minangkabau ethnic students at PAI UNJ include a combination of convergence and divergence. These efforts enable students to build harmonious social relationships while maintaining their cultural identity, in line with the principles of *Communication Accommodation Theory* within a multi-ethnic campus environment.

CONCLUSION

The experience of Minangkabau ethnic students adapting communication with Betawi students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at Jakarta State University evolved from awkwardness at the initial meeting to comfort in communication. Differences in accent, speaking speed, vocabulary, and joking style initially caused surprise, but continuous interaction enabled students to adapt. Communication barriers that arose were generally mild and did not develop into serious conflicts. Differences in accent, speaking speed, and regional vocabulary trigger misunderstandings, which can be overcome through effective communication practices such as asking directly, re-explaining, and apologizing. The adaptation strategies used include convergence and divergence. Minangkabau students tend to switch to more neutral Indonesian and choose vocabulary that is easy to understand, while one informant consciously maintains their regional accent as an affirmation of identity. These findings align with Howard Giles' *Communication Accommodation Theory* (CAT), which states that the shift to neutral Indonesian is convergence to build closeness and mutual understanding, while divergence defense is divergence to maintain group identity.

Communication adaptation in this study does not always mean total assimilation but often involves balancing the need to integrate and the desire to maintain self-identity. These findings highlight the importance of awareness that differences in communication styles are cultural variations that require adjustment, not shortcomings. This awareness can mitigate potential conflicts and strengthen social cohesion in a multicultural campus environment.

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