

Exploring Motivational Factors in Pre-Service English Teachers' Efforts to Improve Speaking Skills

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A B S T R A C T

This study explores the motivational factors that influence pre-service English teachers' efforts to enhance their speaking skills during the LANTIP teaching practicum at Universitas Negeri Semarang. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered from 30 pre-service English teachers through open-ended questionnaires and further triangulated with semi-structured interviews conducted with selected participants. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that speaking motivation during the practicum is shaped by the interplay of intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Intrinsically, participants were driven by the need to develop a credible professional identity and to build confidence in classroom interactions. Extrinsically, mentor feedback, student reactions, and the school's language environment significantly influenced their motivation to improve speaking performance. Rather than acting as obstacles, practicum-related speaking challenges and emotional experiences served as catalysts for motivational adjustment. Based on these findings, the study recommends that English teacher education programs offer supportive mentoring, provide structured opportunities for authentic English use, and equip pre-service teachers with strategies to manage speaking-related anxiety in order to sustain motivation during the teaching practicum.

Keywords: *Speaking Motivation; Pre-Service English Teachers; Teaching Practicum; Professional Identity; Qualitative Study.*

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INTRODUCTION

English has long functioned as a global lingua franca, facilitating academic, economic, and sociocultural interaction across diverse international contexts (Atasheva, 2024). In Indonesia, English proficiency, particularly in spoken communication, is a fundamental requirement for pre-service English teachers who are expected to model communicative competence and manage interactive classroom discourse effectively (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009; Hadi, 2019). Within teacher education programs, speaking ability becomes even more critical during school-based practicums such as the LANTIP (Literate Agile Nurturing Trailblazing Innovative Problem Solving) program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), where pre-service teachers must conduct lessons, engage learners orally, and communicate instructions in real-time teaching situations (Abdullah & Basthomi, 2020).

The LANTIP practicum provides structured immersion in authentic school environments, enabling pre-service teachers to apply pedagogical knowledge, manage classrooms, and deliver instructional content under the guidance of mentor teachers. In these settings, speaking skill becomes central to teachers' professional performance because they must provide explanations, facilitate discussions, check understanding, and respond spontaneously to students' questions. Such communicative demands place considerable pressure on pre-service teachers, who must balance fluency, accuracy, and clarity while being observed and evaluated by mentors and supervisors (Astutik & Purwati, 2021; Korniyaka,

2018). As their first extended opportunity to teach in real classrooms, the practicum often becomes a decisive stage in shaping confidence, perceived competence, and readiness for future teaching roles (Goh et al., 2009).

Despite completing several semesters of university-level English instruction, many pre-service English teachers continue to face persistent difficulties in spoken communication when entering the practicum phase. Common challenges include limited lexical resources, restricted grammatical control, heightened speaking anxiety, and fear of making mistakes all, of which negatively affect classroom performance. These challenges tend to intensify in school settings where teachers must teach under direct supervision and handle the unpredictable nature of real-time interaction (Agustiana, 2014; Yangın Ekşi & Yılmaz Yakışık, 2016). Pre-service teachers often struggle to produce spontaneous explanations, manage student responses, or maintain English use throughout lessons, particularly when addressing unexpected questions or clarifying misunderstandings (Abdillah & Fithriani, 2023; Tüzel & Akcan, 2009). Additionally, Indonesian learners often have limited opportunities for authentic English communication outside of school, causing the practicum to become one of the few contexts where consistent English use is required (Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021). Consequently, speaking development during practicum is shaped not only by linguistic proficiency but also by emotional resilience, psychological readiness, and adaptive capacity in stressful teaching situations (Nguyen, 2014).

Motivation has long been identified as a central factor influencing the extent to which language learners including pre-service teachers exert effort to improve their speaking ability (Deci & Ryan, 2008; Dörnyei, 2014). Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a comprehensive lens for understanding the motivational forces that drive pre-service teachers to engage in speaking practice. SDT posits that intrinsic and extrinsic motivation emerge from the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2008). When pre-service teachers feel supported in making instructional decisions (autonomy), perceive themselves capable of performing teaching tasks (competence), and experience positive relationships with mentors and students (relatedness), they demonstrate stronger commitment to improving their speaking skills (Kassis et al., 2019).

In addition to SDT, Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System highlights the role of future self-concepts in shaping sustained language learning behavior. The Ideal L2 Self one's imagined self as a fluent and competent English speaker acts as a powerful motivational resource that guides learners' effort, persistence, and emotional investment in speaking development (Dörnyei, 2014). For pre-service teachers, this future-oriented vision is closely tied to their emerging teacher identities. They see themselves not only as English users but also as educators responsible for demonstrating linguistic competence to students. As such, identity construction becomes an integral motivational element during practicum, influencing teachers' willingness to speak, take risks, and manage the emotional demands of classroom interaction (Prabjandee, 2019; Teng, 2017). Positive mentoring, supportive school environments, and opportunities for reflection strengthen developing teacher identities, while negative emotional experiences such as anxiety, self-doubt, or fear of evaluation can undermine speaking motivation (Cheng, 2021; Hahl & Mikulec, 2018).

Despite extensive research on motivation in English language learning, limited attention has been given to speaking-specific motivational factors experienced by pre-service English teachers within the context of school-based teaching practicum. Previous studies in the Indonesian EFL context have primarily examined general learning motivation or speaking anxiety in isolation, offering limited insight into how motivation operates within the communicative demands and evaluative pressures of practicum settings (Agustiana, 2014; Tustiawati, 2017). Although practicum-related challenges such as anxiety and identity negotiation have been widely reported, these aspects are rarely examined as part of a dynamic motivational process shaping pre-service teachers' efforts to improve speaking skills (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018; Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021). Therefore, this qualitative study aims to explore the motivational dynamics underlying pre-service English teachers' speaking development during the LANTIP practicum at Universitas Negeri Semarang and is guided by

the following research questions: (1) What intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influence pre-service English teachers' efforts to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP practicum? (2) How do practicum experiences, including speaking challenges, confidence, and emerging teacher identity, shape pre-service English teachers' motivation to improve their speaking skills?

By investigating these questions, this study seeks to provide empirical insights into how motivational processes function in authentic teaching contexts and to inform teacher education programs in designing more effective support for speaking development during practicum.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to explore the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors influencing pre-service English teachers' efforts to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP school-based practicum, as well as to examine how practicum experiences particularly speaking challenges, confidence changes, and emerging teacher identity shaped their motivation. A qualitative descriptive approach was selected because it enables the researcher to capture participants' lived experiences, personal perspectives, and meaning-making processes as they navigate the motivational, emotional, and linguistic demands of real classroom teaching (Cresswell & Poth, 2016; Merriam, B Tisdell, 2016). To obtain both breadth and depth of information, data were collected using an open-ended questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews, allowing participants to express their thoughts freely while enabling the researcher to probe emerging ideas (Patton, 2015).

Thirty pre-service English teachers in the seventh semester of the English Education Program at Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES) participated in the questionnaire phase. All participants had completed or were completing the LANTIP (Literate Agile Nurturing Trailblazing Innovative Problem Solving) practicum, making them well-positioned to reflect on motivational experiences related to speaking demands in actual school settings. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that only individuals with direct practicum experience were included, consistent with the goal of obtaining information-rich cases (Etikan et al., 2016). From the questionnaire respondents, four participants voluntarily participated in the semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted to triangulate and enrich the questionnaire data by providing in-depth insights into participants' motivational experiences during the practicum. Although the number of interview participants was limited, the interviews provided in-depth insights that supported and elaborated the patterns identified in the questionnaire data. This approach is consistent with qualitative descriptive research, which emphasizes depth of understanding and triangulation rather than broad generalization. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of confidentiality and anonymity through the use of pseudonyms.

Two instruments were used to collect data. The open-ended questionnaire elicited broad information regarding participants' intrinsic motivations, extrinsic influences such as mentor guidance, school environment, peer support, and assessment demands, as well as speaking-related challenges encountered during the practicum. The items were constructed based on principles of qualitative instrument design (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009) and were reviewed to ensure clarity and alignment with the research objectives. The semi-structured interview guide was designed to explore participants' motivational trajectories in greater depth, including changes in motivation across the practicum, emotional experiences, perceived competence, mentor feedback, and identity development. While guided by predetermined questions, the interviews also incorporated probing techniques to allow for deeper elaboration and reflection. All interviews were conducted via Zoom Meeting, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data collection took place during the four weeks immediately following participants' completion of the practicum, ensuring that their experiences and reflections were still vivid. The questionnaire was distributed online and kept open for three days. Interview sessions were then arranged with volunteers, each lasting approximately twenty-five to forty minutes. All data were stored securely in password-protected digital folders accessible only to the

researcher. Ethical considerations voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymization were strictly observed throughout the research process.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, following Braun & Clarke (2006) systematic six-step procedure: familiarizing with the data through repeated reading, generating initial codes, grouping similar codes into categories, constructing preliminary themes, reviewing and refining themes, and producing the final thematic interpretations. An inductive approach was used to allow themes to emerge from participants' perspectives; however, interpretation in the discussion stage was informed by Self-Determination Theory and the L2 Motivational Self System to explain the motivational meanings of the themes. Trustworthiness was strengthened through methodological triangulation by comparing insights from questionnaires and interviews, peer debriefing with the supervising lecturer to reduce potential researcher bias, and member checking with selected participants to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These procedures collectively ensured that the analysis captured the complexity of pre-service teachers' motivational dynamics during the LANTIP practicum.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study concerning pre-service English teachers' motivation to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP teaching practicum. The findings are drawn from open-ended questionnaire responses completed by 30 pre-service English teachers and are triangulated with data from semi-structured interviews with selected participants. The findings are organized according to the research questions to ensure clarity and coherence.

Findings Related to Research Question 1

Motivational factors influencing pre-service English teachers' efforts to improve speaking skills during the LANTIP practicum

Intrinsic Motivation Rooted in Professional Identity and Confidence Regulation

The findings indicate that intrinsic motivation played a central role in encouraging pre-service English teachers to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP practicum. Questionnaire responses revealed that many participants associated speaking ability with their emerging professional identity as future English teachers. Speaking English was frequently described as a marker of professionalism, credibility, and readiness to assume the teacher role in front of students. Participants emphasized that being able to speak English clearly and confidently was essential for gaining students' trust and fulfilling their responsibility as English teachers.

This identity-oriented motivation was evident in interview data. One participant stated:

"Speaking English makes me feel more like a real English teacher, not just a student who is practicing teaching. If I can explain well in English, I feel more confident standing in front of the class." (P1)

Similarly, another participant highlighted the relationship between speaking ability and professional responsibility:

"As an English teacher, I think speaking is very important because students will see how we speak. If I am not confident, it will affect how they trust me." (P3)

In addition to professional identity, intrinsic motivation was closely linked to participants' efforts to regulate confidence and manage emotional challenges. Questionnaire responses showed that many participants experienced nervousness, hesitation, and fear of making mistakes, particularly at the beginning of the practicum. These emotional experiences encouraged participants to improve their speaking skills as a way to reduce anxiety and feel more secure while teaching. Interview data supported this pattern, as participants described gradual increases in confidence through repeated classroom interaction. One participant explained:

"At first I was very nervous and afraid of making mistakes, but after teaching several times, I tried to improve my speaking so I could feel calmer and more confident." (P4)

Enjoyment also emerged as an intrinsic motivator, particularly when speaking English resulted in successful teaching interactions. Questionnaire responses indicated that participants felt more motivated when lessons ran smoothly, students understood explanations, and classroom interaction became more active. Participants reported enjoying speaking English not simply because of language use itself, but because of the sense of achievement associated with effective communication and teaching success.

Furthermore, intrinsic motivation was reflected in participants' personal goals for speaking improvement. Questionnaire data showed that participants aimed to improve pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary use, and clarity of explanation. These goals were often framed in pedagogical terms, emphasizing students' comprehension rather than linguistic perfection. Interview responses illustrated how participants consciously monitored their speaking pace, simplified vocabulary, and adjusted pronunciation during lessons. These findings suggest that intrinsic motivation during practicum was driven by internal goals related to professionalism, confidence, and effective teaching performance.

Extrinsic Motivation Shaped by Mentors, Students, and School Context

In addition to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic factors significantly influenced participants' motivation to improve their speaking skills during LANTIP. Questionnaire responses revealed that mentor teachers played an important role as external motivators through feedback, role modeling, and expectations. Many participants reported being motivated by how their mentors spoke English in class and by the feedback they received after teaching sessions. Mentor feedback helped participants become more aware of their speaking strengths and weaknesses and encouraged them to improve their performance in subsequent lessons.

Interview data further illustrated this influence. One participant described how mentor feedback affected her motivation:

"When my mentor corrected my pronunciation and the way I explained things, it made me realize what I needed to improve. It motivated me to practice more before teaching again." (P3)

Students also emerged as a significant source of extrinsic motivation. Questionnaire responses indicated that participants were motivated to improve their speaking skills so that students could understand lessons clearly and perceive them as competent English teachers. Participants described students' reactions as immediate indicators of speaking effectiveness. Positive responses from students increased confidence and motivation, while confusion or lack of engagement encouraged participants to improve clarity and preparation. As one participant noted:

"When students understand and respond well, I feel more confident. But when they look confused, it pushes me to improve my speaking and explanation." (P4)

The school language environment further shaped participants' extrinsic motivation. Questionnaire and interview data showed variation in how English was used across schools. Some schools encouraged English use in the classroom, while others relied heavily on Indonesian or local languages due to students' limited proficiency. Participants reported adapting their speaking strategies according to classroom conditions, balancing English use with students' comprehension needs. Peer influence also contributed to extrinsic motivation. Questionnaire responses indicated that observing peers who spoke English confidently encouraged participants to improve their own speaking skills, while interview data revealed that peers sometimes served as practice partners and sources of encouragement outside the classroom.

Findings Related to Research Question 2

Practicum experiences shaping pre-service English teachers' motivation to improve speaking skills

Speaking Difficulties as Catalysts for Motivational Adjustment

The findings revealed that participants encountered various speaking difficulties during the LANTIP practicum. Questionnaire responses indicated common challenges such as responding to unexpected questions, retrieving appropriate vocabulary for explanations, maintaining fluency under pressure, and managing pronunciation when feeling nervous.

These difficulties were particularly prominent during the early stages of teaching and often triggered feelings of embarrassment or frustration.

However, interview data showed that these challenges did not simply discourage participants. Instead, speaking difficulties often functioned as catalysts for reflection and motivational adjustment. Participants reported becoming more aware of their limitations and responding by preparing lessons more carefully, rehearsing explanations at home, and practicing speaking independently. One participant explained:

"Sometimes when students asked questions suddenly, I felt blank and embarrassed. After that, I tried to prepare more and practice my explanation at home." (P3)

These findings suggest that speaking difficulties during practicum prompted participants to adopt more deliberate learning strategies rather than withdrawing from English use.

Confidence Development as a Dynamic Trajectory

Participants' confidence in speaking English was found to develop dynamically throughout the practicum. Questionnaire responses revealed fluctuations in confidence, with many participants reporting high levels of anxiety at the beginning of LANTIP. Over time, repeated classroom interaction and increased familiarity with teaching routines contributed to gradual improvements in confidence.

Interview data supported this pattern. Participants described how repeated exposure to classroom speaking situations helped them become more comfortable and less afraid of making mistakes. One participant reported experiencing confidence fluctuations before eventually feeling more stable toward the end of the practicum (P4). At the same time, a small number of participants reported relatively stable confidence levels from the beginning, indicating individual variation in emotional responses to teaching demands. These findings indicate that confidence development was not linear or uniform but shaped by ongoing teaching experiences, classroom conditions, and personal coping strategies.

Supporting and Hindering Contextual Factors

The findings also identified contextual factors that supported or hindered participants' speaking improvement during the practicum. Questionnaire responses consistently indicated that real classroom teaching was the most influential supporting factor. Participants emphasized that teaching real students provided authentic speaking practice that could not be replicated through simulated activities. Other supporting factors included mentor feedback, peer support, lesson preparation, and self-directed practice.

Conversely, participants reported several hindering factors. Questionnaire responses highlighted limited time, fatigue, students' low English proficiency, and anxiety during observation as obstacles to consistent English use. Interview data further illustrated how these constraints sometimes forced participants to reduce English use or switch to Indonesian to maintain classroom comprehension. Despite these challenges, participants generally reported sustained motivation to improve their speaking skills. The combination of intrinsic commitment and external encouragement helped participants continue developing their speaking ability throughout the practicum.

Discussion

This study explored the motivational factors influencing pre-service English teachers' efforts to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP teaching practicum and examined how practicum experiences shaped their motivation. The findings reveal that motivation during practicum is a dynamic construct arising from the interaction between professional identity development, emotional regulation, and contextual teaching demands. Rather than being driven solely by linguistic interest, participants' motivation was closely tied to their emerging identities as English teachers and their engagement in authentic classroom practices.

Professional Identity as a Central Source of Intrinsic Motivation

The findings demonstrate that intrinsic motivation to improve speaking skills was strongly rooted in participants' developing professional identity. Speaking English was perceived not merely as a language skill, but as a symbol of legitimacy, professionalism, and

readiness to assume the teacher role. This aligns with teacher identity theory, which posits that professional identity is constructed through participation and performance in authentic teaching contexts (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). During practicum, pre-service teachers begin to position themselves as legitimate members of the teaching community, and speaking English becomes a key means of enacting that identity.

This identity-driven motivation can also be explained through Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System. Participants' efforts to improve speaking reflected their *ideal L2 teacher self*—a future-oriented self-image in which they envisioned themselves as competent, confident English teachers capable of managing classroom interaction effectively. The discrepancy between their current speaking ability and this ideal professional self appeared to sustain motivation throughout the practicum, encouraging continuous effort despite emotional challenges.

Confidence Regulation and Competence Development in Practicum Contexts

Confidence emerged as a critical motivational mechanism during the practicum. Participants' accounts suggest that confidence was not a stable trait, but a dynamic state shaped by repeated classroom interaction, student responses, and teaching experience. Initial anxiety and fear of making mistakes were common, particularly during early teaching sessions, but gradually decreased as participants gained familiarity with classroom routines and speaking demands.

From the perspective of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), this process reflects the fulfillment of the psychological need for competence (Deci & Ryan, 2008). As participants experienced success in explaining materials, responding to students, and sustaining English use, their sense of competence increased, which in turn strengthened intrinsic motivation. This finding supports previous research indicating that authentic teaching experiences play a crucial role in developing pre-service teachers' confidence and willingness to communicate in English (Goh et al., 2009; Nguyen, 2014).

The Role of Extrinsic Factors and Motivational Internalization

Extrinsic factors particularly mentor feedback, student responses, and school context—were found to significantly influence participants' motivation. Mentor teachers functioned as important external regulators through feedback, modeling, and evaluative expectations. However, participants' responses suggest that mentor influence was not perceived as controlling, but rather as supportive guidance that facilitated reflection and improvement.

This process can be understood through SDT's concept of internalization, whereby externally regulated behaviors become personally meaningful and self-endorsed (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Supportive mentor feedback enabled participants to interpret external expectations as aligned with their own professional goals, thereby transforming extrinsic motivation into more autonomous forms. Similarly, students played a relational motivational role. Positive student responses reinforced confidence and motivation, while confusion or disengagement prompted greater preparation and reflection, highlighting the social nature of motivation in classroom contexts.

The school language environment further shaped opportunities for English use and motivation. Participants' need to balance English use with students' comprehension reflects the contextual sensitivity of motivation and underscores that reduced English use does not necessarily indicate low motivation, but rather pedagogical adaptation. This finding supports previous studies emphasizing the influence of institutional and classroom contexts on language use and teacher motivation (Wahyuningsih & Maisyanah, 2021).

Speaking Difficulties as Developmental Triggers

Importantly, speaking difficulties encountered during practicum did not function solely as obstacles. Instead, they often acted as developmental triggers that prompted motivational adjustment. Participants reported responding to difficulties such as unexpected questions or vocabulary limitations by increasing preparation, rehearsing explanations, and practicing independently. This suggests that emotional discomfort, when accompanied by reflection and support, can foster resilience and adaptive motivation.

This finding challenges deficit-oriented views of anxiety in practicum settings and aligns with research suggesting that challenges can promote professional growth when framed as learning opportunities rather than failures (Hahl & Mikulec, 2018). Practicum experiences thus serve as a formative space where motivation is continuously negotiated through experience, reflection, and identity construction.

Implications for English Teacher Education

The findings of this study have several implications for English teacher education programs. First, speaking development during practicum should be understood as an identity-driven and emotionally embedded process rather than as a purely linguistic outcome. Teacher education programs should therefore provide structured opportunities for authentic English use that allow pre-service teachers to enact their professional identities in supportive environments.

Second, mentor teachers play a crucial role in shaping motivation through feedback and modeling. Training mentor teachers to provide constructive, autonomy-supportive feedback may enhance pre-service teachers' motivation and confidence. Finally, explicit support in managing speaking-related anxiety and confidence fluctuations may help pre-service teachers navigate the emotional demands of practicum more effectively.

Despite the insights offered by this study, the findings should be interpreted within certain boundaries. The study was conducted in a single institutional context and relied on participants' self-reported experiences, which may limit the scope of interpretation. Variations in practicum duration and teaching contexts across participants may also have influenced their experiences. Future research may explore similar motivational dynamics across multiple institutions or through longitudinal designs to gain a broader understanding of pre-service teachers' speaking motivation.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the motivational factors influencing pre-service English teachers' efforts to improve their speaking skills during the LANTIP teaching practicum and examined how practicum experiences shaped their motivation. The findings indicate that motivation to improve speaking skills emerged from a complex interaction between intrinsic aspirations and extrinsic teaching contexts encountered in authentic classroom settings. Speaking development during practicum was not driven solely by linguistic goals, but was closely connected to participants' emerging professional identities, confidence regulation, and engagement with real teaching responsibilities. Intrinsic motivation was primarily rooted in participants' desire to enact a credible professional identity as English teachers and to develop confidence in managing classroom interaction. Speaking English functioned as a means of positioning themselves as legitimate teachers rather than merely language learners. At the same time, extrinsic factors such as mentor feedback, student responses, and school language environments played a significant role in shaping motivation. These external influences did not operate in isolation, but were often internalized by participants and aligned with their personal teaching goals. The study also revealed that practicum experiences, including speaking difficulties and emotional challenges, functioned as formative elements in motivational development. Rather than discouraging participants, challenges such as responding to unexpected questions and managing anxiety frequently prompted reflection, preparation, and adaptive learning strategies. Confidence development during practicum was found to be dynamic and context-dependent, highlighting the importance of sustained exposure to authentic teaching situations. These findings suggest that English teacher education programs should view speaking development during practicum as an identity-driven and emotionally embedded process. Providing supportive mentoring, opportunities for meaningful English use, and guidance in managing speaking-related anxiety may help sustain pre-service teachers' motivation and facilitate their professional growth. While this study focused on a specific institutional context, it offers insights into the motivational dynamics of pre-service English teachers that may inform practicum design and support

systems in similar EFL teacher education settings. Future research may extend this inquiry by examining motivational development across longer practicum periods or involving diverse institutional contexts to enrich understanding of speaking motivation in teacher education.

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