

Code-Switching and Code-Mixing Phenomena in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group

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Abstract. *Code-switching and code-mixing are widespread linguistic practices that naturally occur in bilingual and multilingual communities. Within sociolinguistics, these phenomena are not only observed in direct face-to-face communication but also increasingly in online interactions, particularly on informal digital platforms such as WhatsApp. This study focuses on the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group, which consists of job seekers, scholarship applicants, and individuals preparing for the IELTS examination. The main objective of this research is to analyze and explore the kinds and contexts of code-switching and code-mixing employed by group members in their daily online interactions. The researchers adopted a qualitative descriptive design by applying a digital ethnography approach. Data were collected from group conversations that took place between 2023 and 2025. The discourse analysis method was then used to examine instances of code-switching and code-mixing, with a specific focus on identifying their forms and categorizing their functions. The analysis revealed that all three types of code-switching—*intra-sentential*, *inter-sentential*, and *tag-switching*—appeared with relatively equal dominance, alongside frequent occurrences of code-mixing. These practices were not random but rather motivated by pragmatic, cognitive, and social purposes. Pragmatically, code alternation facilitated clarity, emphasis, and effective communication. Cognitively, it reflected speakers' ease in accessing multiple linguistic repertoires. Socially, it allowed members to demonstrate solidarity, express identity, and construct group belonging. The findings highlight that code-switching and code-mixing in digital communities function as important linguistic strategies that enable multilingual speakers to navigate complex communicative needs while negotiating identity in an online environment. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of language practices in digital ethnography and provides valuable insights for further research on multilingual communication in virtual spaces, especially in contexts where English functions as a global lingua franca.*

Keywords: *Code Mixing; Code Switching; IELTS Republic; Sociolinguistics; WhatsApp Group*

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology is directly proportional to the emergence of various types of software or applications today. Rabbani and Najicha (2023) explain that the advancement of information and communication technology (ICT) have changed the way people interact, communicate, and live in their daily lives. In this era, many social media are also growing with various features. The simplicity in doing long-distance interaction from social media provides convenience to many people and circle.

One of the social media that has many users in Indonesia is WhatsApp. According to Wahyuddin et al. (2024), WhatsApp Messenger is the most widely used social media platform for communication. It is an internet-based application with features that facilitate conversations between users. Almost all groups use this application for various needs such as daily interaction with family and friends, for school or campus needs, and for work purposes.

Hershkovits et. al (2019) conveyed the idea that communication via WhatsApp provides unique way in creating learning atmosphere that may not be evident in other social media, the advance feature in this chatting app can give a massive impact toward the teaching and learning process outside the class. Not only for education goals, WhatsApp is also used for work needs. Fernández et al. (2019) stated that WhatsApp not only for leisure but also for work, it supports people duty and activity.

WhatsApp has become a necessity for interaction, therefore there are many unique phenomena that are often found when having conversations via WhatsApp. The use of code switching and code mixing in a WhatsApp group can be named as an anomaly in chat conversation. Generally, this language shifting tend to appear more frequently in groups where two languages are predominantly used, such as in Bahasa Indonesia and English. Setiawati and Farahsani (2021) mentioned that to communicate with other people, we need language as a means of communication cause the relationship between language and society cannot be separated. Setiawati and Farahsani's statements are in line with Jendra (2010) who described that Sociolinguistics as a part of linguistics that focuses on language as a social and cultural phenomenon

One of the groups that researchers follow is the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group. All members in this group are Indonesian. They are scholarship hunters for studying overseas and also job seekers for working abroad. Naturally, English is the language of choice for every conversation in the group. However, it is also common for some members to use Bahasa Indonesia when do interaction.

CodeSwitching and Code-Mixing have been studied in various context, however there is limited study on these phenomena in WhatsApp Group, especially in English Community that include job and scholarship hunters. Most of revious studies have focused on formal educational context such as from Saputra (2023) who conducted research about the use code-switching and code-mixing in EFL classroom, Herawati and Fitriani (2021) applied code switching as the teaching strategy in classroom for low English proficiency learners, or in recent study by Temesgen and Hailu (2022) who explored the purposes and motivations behind teachers' use of code-switching in English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Therefore, the researchers eager to analyze the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in another setting, specifically in IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group.

This research aimed to address the following questions:

RQ1: What types of code switching and code mixing are used by members of the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group?

RQ2: What are the purposes of using code switching and code mixing in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group?

2. METHOD

This research employed a qualitative descriptive study. According to Sutopo (2002), the purpose of the descriptive research is to reveal various qualitative information with careful descriptions and nuances to describe individually or in groups, events, symptoms, and phenomena. This qualitative phase also utilized digital ethnography, an approach developed by Hine (2000) to understand social behavior in digital settings. The approach enabled observation and engagement with IELTS group members in a naturalistic and authentic context. One of the researchers has been an active member of the group since 2016, which allowed for better access, understanding, and interpretation of the group interactions and discussions.

The data source of this research was the chats of the members who applied code-switching and code-mixing in IELTS Republic WhatsApp group. The group consists of individuals from a variety of backgrounds. Some of the members are job seekers aiming to work abroad and scholarship hunters pursuing opportunities to study overseas. Others are Working Holiday Visa holders in Australia, as well as international students in Australia and the UK.

Tabel 1. *Characteristics of the IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group Participants*

Participant Category	Description
Job Seekers	Members aiming to work overseas
Scholarship Hunters	Members pursuing scholarships to study abroad
Working Holiday Visa Holders	Members currently in Australia on a Working Holiday Visa
International Students	Members studying in Australia and the UK
Mixed Backgrounds	Members with varied goals, from English learners to professionals abroad

This research used documentation method by taking screenshots of relevant chats in the WhatsApp group for collecting the data. Researchers provided the data as they naturally with no manipulation on them. Data were taken from some conversations among the members in the group. This research was conducted to investigate the phenomena of code-switching and code-mixing in group chat conversations. The data from IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group was taken from July 2023 to June 2025.

To systematically collect the data, the researchers first obtained permission from the participants in the group. The researcher then filtered relevant chats that contained instances of code-switching and code-mixing. The criteria for inclusion included active conversations involving language shifts, bilingual expressions, or language mixing.

This process was further enriched by applying a digital ethnography approach by Hine (2000) which allowed the researchers to observe the participants' language use in a naturalistic digital environment. Through this approach, the study was able to capture real time interactions, contextual cues, and recurring patterns of language behavior embedded in the group's digital communication.

This research employed the three-step data analysis framework proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), namely: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. However, the core analytical method was discourse analysis which used to interpret the linguistic features and functions of code-switching and code-mixing in the WhatsApp group interactions.

A. Data Collection & Reduction

The researchers collected naturally occurring conversations from the IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group from July 2023 to June 2025. Conversations containing code-switching and code-mixing were selected and extracted. These chats then reduced by filtering only the instances of code-switching and code-mixing in the group.

Data Display

The selected conversations were organized thematically and categorized based on the types of code-switching (inter-sentential, intra-sentential, tag-switching) and code-mixing.

B. Data Analysis

The selected texts were then analyzed using a discourse analysis, focusing on how language choices reflected social and interactional meanings in the group. According to Paltridge (2021) discourse analysis is the study of language in use, beyond the sentence level, particularly in naturally occurring texts and conversations. This study employed discourse analysis as the primary method to interpret how participants used language in social interaction within the WhatsApp group.

The researchers examined how people used both code-switching and code-mixing in the WhatsApp group. This study found that members of IELTS group switched or mixed languages depending on the topic or the person they were talking to. This was often done to highlight important points, explain things more clearly, show their identity, or build social connections. The study also looked at how conversation features like turn-taking, message flow, and interaction styles influenced the way language was used in digital communication.

C. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the analysis of the phenomenon of code-switching and code-mixing in IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group which focuses on intra-essential code switching, inter-essential code switching, tag switching, and code mixing. Those kinds of code switching and code mixing were screenshot and analyzed by extracting the messages.

D. Code Switching

a.) Intra-essential Code Switching

Based on the previous explanation, intra-essential code switching is a type of code switching that happens within one sentence or structure, where both languages are needed to express the full meaning. These are some examples of intra-essential code switching from IELTS Republic members in WhatsApp group:

- Extract 1

Chat 11 March 2025, 4:20 PM

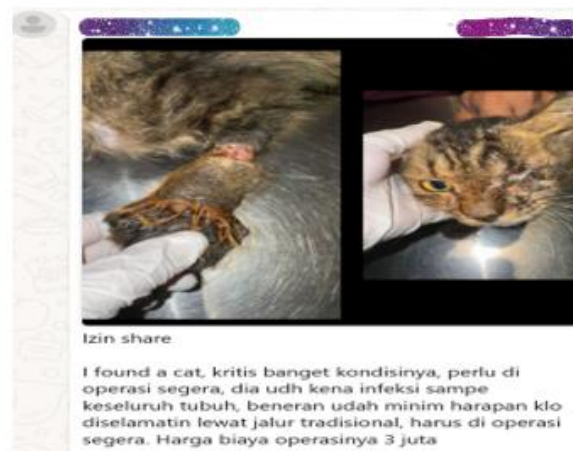


P1 inserted intra-essential code switching when replied P2 chat. In the beginning P1 ask P2 by using Indonesian language “P2 sudah di Monash juga kah?”. Then, P2 replied it by saying “yeah kak hehe”. After that P1 responded P2 by inserting intra-essential code switching “wih baruka dengar anw congrats P2...”. P1 applied Indonesia language first “wih baruka dengar”, then switched it to English by saying “anw congrats P2”.

The example above shows intra-sentential code-switching, where P1 mixes Indonesian and English in one sentence. This kind of switching happens within a sentence and usually means the speaker is good at both languages. P1 first used Indonesian “wih baruka dengar” and then switched to English “anw congrats P2”, showing a smooth change in language for a friendly or expressive purpose.

- Extract 2

Chat 17 December 2024, 7:56 AM



P3 shared information about an injured cat that needed surgery funds. At the first, she said *“izin share I found a cat....”* Then, she changed her language to Indonesian by adding *“kritis banget kondisinya, perlu dioperasi segera, dia udh kena infeksi sampe keseluruh tubuh, beneran udah minim harapan klo diselamatin lewat jalur tradisional, harus dioperasi segera. Harga biaya operasinya 3 juta”*. It was clear that P3 applied intra-essential code switching in her message since she used Indonesian and English in one sentence or structure.

- Extract 3

Chat 7 June 2023, 1:14 AM



In extract 3 above, P4 also inserted intra-essential code switching in his chat. He replied P5 chat by saying *“Lpdp tahap 2 is around the corner”*. This sentence consisted of two languages, Indonesian language *“Lpdp tahap 2....”* and English *“is around the corner”*.

The English phrases used “*anw congrats,*” and “*is around the corner*” may reflect a more relaxed, modern, or informal tone often found in online conversations. It is in a line with conversational code-switching theory, where language choices can carry social meaning.

E. *Inter-essential Code Switching*

Inter-essential code switching is a type of code switching that happens between two parts of speech or sentences, where both parts are important for the meaning. Each language used has an essential role in delivering the full message. The conversations in IELTS Republic WhatsApp group below shows some examples of inter-essential code switching:

- Extract 1

Chat 8 September 2024, 12:14 PM



Based on the chat, P5 and P6 applied English in the conversation to respond P7's message. Then, P8 continued the interaction by inserting inter-essential code switching. She used Indonesian language at first “*dah balik kah dr LN...?*”. Next, in the following sentence, she texted in English “*Welcome back Mr. President....*”.

P8 used inter-sentential code switching, which means switching languages between two separate sentences. She started in Indonesian with “*dah balik kah dr LN...?*”, then switched to English with “*Welcome back Mr. President...*”. This kind of switching happens between sentences and is common among bilingual speakers who are comfortable using both languages.

- Extract 2

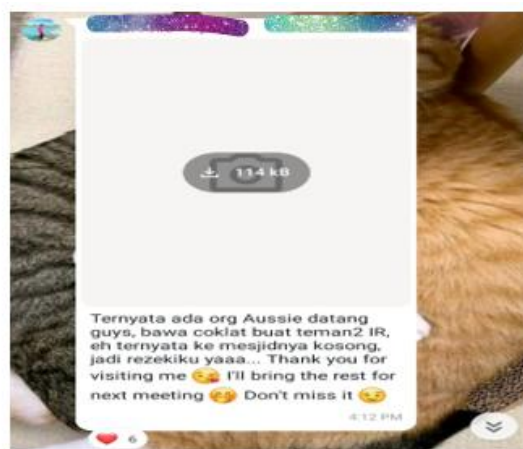
Chat 7 July 2023, 11:20 AM



Chat from P6s was indicated as inter-essential code switching because she used Indonesian language for the first sentence then switched it to English. From writing Indonesian style generally “*Insha Allah nanti datang acara aqiqahannya*” to fully in English “*If someone is here wanna go after Jumat, let me know, thanks*”.

- Extract 3

Chat 23 March 2024, 4:12 PM



Inter-essential code switching is changing from one language to another between sentences. It can be more than one sentence, as long as the switch happens between full sentences or utterances. It was in line with the chat above. In the opening of the message, P6 applied Indonesian language “*Ternyata ada org Aussie datang guys, bawa coklat buat teman2 IR, eh ternyata ke mesjidnya kosong, jadi rezekiku yaaa...*”

F. Tag Switching

Tag switching is a type of code switching in which the speaker inserts a tag or a short expression from one language into a sentence that is primarily in another language. These tags

are usually *kah, lah, kan*, and so on. Here are some examples of tag switching from IELTS Republic WhatsApp group:

- Extract 1

Chat 21 May 2024, 7:24 AM

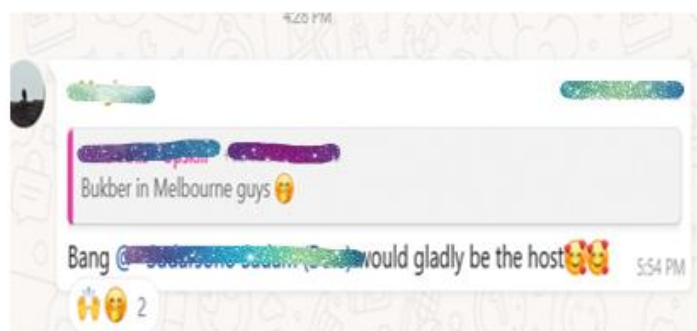


P6 applied tag switching by inserting tag *ya* in the message above. The sentence was “*it’s reading ya.. you can bring laptop to practice typing*”. The word *ya* in the sentence was categorized as tag switching.

P6 used tag switching which involved inserting a short phrase or tag from one language into a sentence in another language. P6 said, “*it’s reading ya.. you can bring laptop to practice typing*”. The word “*ya*” is an Indonesian discourse marker added to an English sentence. Using tag switching is one of the easiest forms of code-switching and often does not interrupt the grammar of the main sentence.

- Extract 2

Chat 11 March 2025, 5:54 PM



Tag switching was also founded in P1’s chat. He used tag switching *bang* when replied P6 text in the group. When P6 said “*Bukber in Melbourne guys*”, P1 responded it by saying “*Bang P9 would gladly be the host...*”.

- Extract 3

Chat 26 October 2024, 6:28 PM



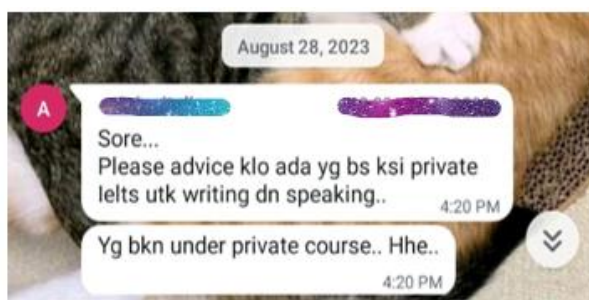
Another tag switching was applied by P6 again in group chat. This time, she used particle *kah* in her text “*any other kah? Please let me know*”. In this sentence *kah* was particle in Indonesia which combined in English words *any other*.

G. Code Mixing

In bilingual or multilingual communities, code mixing is normal and seen as a way to communicate better, especially when it is easier or clearer to say something in another language. Code mixing is also often used in group conversations in IELTS Republic WhatsApp group like the examples below:

- Extract 1

Chat 28 August 2023, 4:20 PM



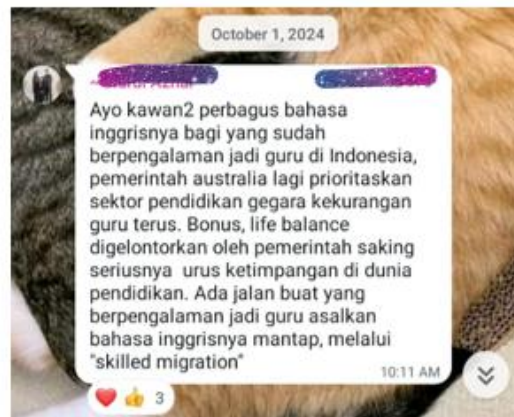
Code mixing happens when someone mixes two or more languages in one sentence or conversation. People usually do this because it feels easier, more natural, or because there is no exact word in just one language. This statement aligned with the message above. P10 combined Indonesian language and English in her sentences. From word *sore* then continued to English *please advise*, after that, changed it again to Indonesian language *klo ada yg bs ksi*, next she used English words again *writing*,

speaking. Code mixing was also found in her next chat *yg bkn under private course..Hhe...*

Code mixing occurs when speakers use words or phrases from different languages in the same utterance. This is a common multilingual practice involving the mixing of lexical items and grammatical structures like P10's chat above.

- Extract 2

Chat 1 October 2024, 10:11 AM



P11 in his message shared information mostly in Indonesia language but mix English words like *life balance* and *skilled migration* to deliver the intended meaning more clearly. Besides, other reasons for using code mixing in that text was to sound more modern or cool, as well as a lack of vocabulary in one language.

Code mixing means adding words or phrases from another language into the main language being used. In P11's case, using English words helped make the meaning clearer and also made the message sound more modern or educated.

- Extract 3

Chat 20 February 2024, 9:05 AM



The word *timingnya* that used by P12 in the text above was categorized as code mixing. The form of *timingnya* mixed the structures of two languages. The word was a characteristic feature of code mixing

3. DISCUSSION

This section discusses the key findings of the study. It focuses on the types of code-switching and code-mixing found in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group. The analysis also explores the reasons behind these language choices and their functions in the participants' communication.

A. Types of Code switching and Code Mixing are Used by Members of the IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group

The findings of this study clearly show that the participants in the WhatsApp group often used code switching and code mixing in their conversations. The language practices were especially common in casual and informal settings. Based on the data collection and reduction, most participants actively applied three types of code switching (intra-essential inter-essential, and tag switching) and code mixing in the WhatsApp group.

Intra-essential code switching was commonly used in the group. For example, in P1's message "*wih baruka dengar anw congrats P2*", English words were smoothly added into an Indonesian sentence. Gumperz (1982) called it as conversational code switching where language is switched to create a friendly tone and build connection. This finding is also consistent with the studies by Hien (2022) and Irawan (2022) which found that code-switching is helpful in creating a comfortable atmosphere during interactions.

In several interactions, the members also delivered inter-essential code switching by using two different languages in two separate sentences. One of the members wrote in Indonesian, "*dah balik kah dr LN...?*", then continued in English, "*Welcome back Mr. President...*". This kind of switching is common among bilinguals who feel comfortable using both languages. Sholihatul Hamidah Daulay et al. (2024) in their research reported that inter-sentential code-switching was frequently used by Instagram and TikTok commenters to express their ideas by combining two languages. In online platforms like Instagram and TikTok, this strategy serves as an efficient tool for enhancing communication, attracting attention, and engaging diverse audiences through language alternation.

Participants sometimes inserted short words like “*ya, kah, bang*” into an English sentence which is called tag-switching. Others changed languages between full sentences or even within the same sentence, known as inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching. These small elements maintain local flavor and solidarity within the group. This is in line with recent study by Winanta, Susanto, and Sodiq (2024) who confirmed that tag switching is normal in casual online chats since it supports interpersonal bonding and facilitates smooth transitions during communication.

Code-mixing, on the other hand, appeared when English words were used in mostly Indonesian sentences. In the IELTS WhatsApp group, code mixing frequently applied especially when talking about academic or work topics. Words like “*life balance*”, “*skilled migration*,” “*timingnya*” and “*writing, speaking*” show how English is often used for terms related to education, career, or global issues. Saputra (2023) in his article wrote that Indonesian-English bilinguals often use English words in professional chats to sound more capable, trustworthy, and connected to international standards. The use of English in such contexts symbolizes its association with social prestige, international credibility, and career progression in digital communication.

B . The Purposes of Using Code Switching and Code Mixing in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp Group

The use of code-switching and code-mixing in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group served several pragmatics, cognitive, and social purposes. The members switched and mixed languages depending on the topic, interlocutor, intention, or emotional tone of their message. These purposes align with sociolinguistic theories by Chaer and Agustina (2010) who emphasized that code-switching is shaped by the speaker, context, and interactional goals.

The use of casual English phrases like “*anw congrats*” or “*is around the corner*” also shows how young bilinguals use global expressions to sound modern and informal. This supports recent findings from Li & Qu (2024) who stated that bilinguals in online spaces mix languages to express emotion, style, or personality. The use of both English and Indonesian in the same message or sentence was not random, it served a purpose. Participants switched languages to express ideas more clearly, to show closeness with others, and to reflect their bilingual identity.

Then, the use of inter-essential code switching in the IELTS Republic WhatsApp group such as “*dah balik kah dr LN...?*”, followed by “*Welcome back Mr. President...*” illustrates how the participants feel comfortable using both languages. This type of switching also helps shift the tone of the speaker from neutral to playful or signals a change of topic naturally in conversation. It is related to the findings of Yuningsih et al. (2021) who stated that inter-essential switching was used to change the tone or smoothly move to a new topic in WhatsApp chats between students and lecturers.

Different types of code switching were found in the data. For example, the members of the group sometimes inserted short words like “*ya*”, “*kah*”, or “*bang*” into an English sentence which is called tag-switching. Others changed languages between full sentences or even within the same sentence, known as inter-sentential and intra-sentential switching. Participants also engaged in humor, playfulness, and social bonding using language alternation. This included the insertion of local tags like *lah*, *ya*, *kah* into English phrases, which helped maintain informality and friendliness. A recent study by Winanta, Susanto, and Sodik (2024) asserted that tag switching is normal in casual online chats. It helps speakers sound friendly, relaxed, and keep a local feel. In this study, tag switching worked in the same way, helping group members connect with each other.

Code mixing was also frequently applied in the WhatsApp group by the participants, especially when talking about academic or work topics. One major purpose was clarity certain ideas, especially academic or professional terms such as *writing*, *skilled migration*, *writing*, and, *speaking* were more easily conveyed in English. According to Suandi (2014), code mixing provides various social functions including for humor, prestige, and interpersonal alignment. In this WhatsApp group, language mixing was not only a tool for efficient communication but also a means of maintaining social relationships, expressing modern identities, and adapting to the flexible nature of online interaction.

The language use in the IELTS WhatsApp Group shows how members used different languages to express their multilingual identity and communicate flexibly. In the group, personal messages like greetings, jokes, and casual chats appeared alongside more serious discussions such as IELTS questions or job information. The mixing and switching of languages reflect how online conversations often blend social and professional purposes. The findings also give new understanding about how people use different languages in informal online settings, outside of school. This is important in global groups

like scholarship or job-seeking communities, where members from different backgrounds use language to share, connect, and support each other.

4. CONCLUSION

Code switching and code mixing are phenomena that actually occur not only in real life contexts but also in virtual environments. Conversations in IELTS Republic WhatsApp group provide some examples of code switching and code mixing in online context. IELTS Republic has a rule that members should use English when communicating in WhatsApp group. However, certain circumstances lead the members in a group still apply both Indonesian (or local language) and English at the same time.

Overall, this study suggests that code switching and code mixing are powerful tools for communication in digital spaces, especially among multilingual users. For future research, it is suggested to study code switching and code mixing in other online communities with different age groups, cultures, or language backgrounds.

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