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The Influence of Youth Language Styles on Social Media on Academic Literacy: An Educational Linguistics Perspective

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of youth language styles on social media is gaining increasing attention as it reflects significant changes in the linguistic practices of the younger generation, while also raising questions about its impact on academic literacy. This research aimed to investigated the influence of digital language styles, such as slang, code-mixing, abbreviations, and formal language on youths' academic literacy, particularly in reading and writing formal texts. Employing a descriptive qualitative research design, the data were collected from a corpus of youths' social media posts, selected based on their relevance to linguistic variation and frequency of use. The data were analyzed using an educational linguistics approach, focusing on language forms and their implications for academic literacy development. The findings indicate that slang and code-mixing are the most dominant language forms, followed by abbreviations and formal language usage. The findings reveal that the most dominant language forms are slang and code-mixing, followed by abbreviations and formal language. These forms were shown to affect academic literacy, especially in terms of consistency in using standard language and sentence structure in academic writing. Furthermore, the relationship between youth language styles on social media and the development of academic literacy is ambivalent: on one hand, it weakens formal language skills, but on the other, it offers educational opportunities through teaching strategies that emphasize contrastive awareness and translanguaging. Thus, this research highlights the importance of educational linguistics in bridging the gap between youths' informal language styles and the formal literacy demands of academic contexts.

Keywords: *academic literacy; educational linguistics; youth language style; slang; code mixing.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology over the past decade has significantly transformed communication patterns in society, particularly among youth. Social media has become a primary space for young people to express identity, build social networks, and engage in linguistic interaction (Hällgren & Björk, 2023; Sumadevi, 2023). Within this digital environment, language use has shifted toward more informal and flexible forms, including slang, abbreviations, code-mixing, and orthographic creativity (Crystal, 2001; Kandiawan, 2022). These linguistic features function not only as tools of communication but also as markers of group identity and social closeness among young users.

A growing body of research suggests that while digital language practices enhance creativity and communicative efficiency, they may also blur the boundaries between informal and academic registers. Studies by Meyers et al. (2013) and Lea & Street (2006) indicate that

students who are highly active in digital communication often encounter difficulties when required to produce systematic arguments and adhere to academic conventions in formal writing. In the Indonesian context, Muslimawati (2022) similarly found that habitual exposure to informal language contributes to challenges in meeting academic writing standards. Taken together, these findings suggest a recurring pattern: digital communicative competence does not necessarily translate into academic literacy proficiency.

Research focusing on youth language use on social media has largely concentrated on documenting linguistic forms rather than examining their educational implications. Chen (2020), Fardiah (2021), and Saputra et al. (2023), for instance, describe the prevalence of slang, abbreviations, and code-switching in digital interactions, highlighting their role in efficiency and identity construction. Jeresano & Carretero (2022) further note the increasing use of acronyms such as "btw" and "lol," while Savitri & Dewi (2023) emphasize orthographic creativity and multilingual code-mixing in online youth discourse. However, these studies tend to treat academic literacy as a peripheral issue, leaving limited analytical insight into how such language practices influence formal reading and writing skills.

Furthermore, if not addressed strategically, this shift may deepen the literacy gap between digital and academic contexts, especially for students coming from secondary education backgrounds with limited exposure to academic literacy. Therefore, a pedagogical intervention responsive to this digital reality is necessary, such as integrating digital literacy and academic literacy within higher education curricula (Jaya & Sucipto, 2023; Sari, 2022). This approach is not intended to reject the existence of digital language but to equip students with register awareness, the ability to distinguish and adapt language use according to communicative contexts. Consequently, the transition from digital communication spaces to academic environments will no longer be an obstacle but rather an opportunity to develop more holistic and contextual language competencies.

From an educational linguistics perspective, language is understood as both a medium of communication and a central resource for learning and meaning-making (Spolsky & Hult, 2008). Halliday (1993) conceptualizes language in education through three interconnected dimensions: language of learning, language about learning, and language as learning. This framework enables a more nuanced interpretation of youth digital language, positioning it not solely as a deviation from academic norms but as a potential pedagogical resource when mediated appropriately. Anderson (2024) and Khafidhoh (2015) further emphasize that educational linguistics plays a crucial role in shaping academic identities and literacy development within formal educational contexts.

Despite increasing scholarly attention to digital literacy, a clear research gap remains. Previous studies have either focused on describing youth language styles or examined academic literacy independently, without integrating both phenomena within a unified analytical framework. Few studies explicitly investigate the relationship between youth language styles on social media and academic literacy development through the lens of educational linguistics. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the influence of digital language styles, such as slang, code-mixing, abbreviations, and formal language on youths' academic literacy, particularly in reading and writing formal texts, while also exploring pedagogical strategies that can bridge informal digital language and formal academic literacy demands.

METHOD

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach within the framework of educational linguistics. A qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the research is to understand the phenomenon of youth language styles on social media and their impact on academic literacy. According to Creswell & Creswell (2018), qualitative research enables

researchers to explore meanings and patterns that emerge from linguistic data and relate them to educational contexts.

The participants of this research consisted of 13 young people aged 17–24, selected using purposive sampling. This sampling technique was employed to ensure that participants met specific criteria relevant to the research objectives, namely: (1) active use of social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter/X, TikTok, and WhatsApp, and (2) current enrollment as university students. The selected age range follows the youth classification proposed by Baglari et al. (2020), which characterizes this stage as a transitional period into higher education or early professional life. Although the research setting is virtual due to the digital nature of the data, the participants were drawn from several higher education institutions in Indonesia.

The primary data were obtained from respondents (youth) who granted permission for the use of their data, while secondary data were drawn from academic literature related to literacy and educational linguistics. The digital linguistic data consisted of conversations, statuses, comments, or posts by youth on social media that exhibit distinctive language styles.

Data collection techniques in this research included: (1) digital observation, by monitoring youth language use on social media with a focus on language style forms; (2) documentation, by collecting respondents' academic texts; and (3) semi-structured interviews, aimed at exploring respondents' perspectives on their language practices on social media and their experiences in writing academic texts. The collected data were then analyzed using the following steps (Miles et al., 2014):

1. Data Reduction. Selecting relevant data (e.g., abbreviations used on social media and instances of misuse in academic texts).
2. Data Display. Organizing the data into tables or descriptive formats to illustrate patterns of language style usage and its relation to difficulties in academic writing.
3. Conclusion Drawing. Interpreting the findings in light of educational linguistics theories, particularly the role of language in shaping academic literacy.

Data validity was ensured through triangulation techniques (Denzin, 2006), including: source triangulation, by comparing data from social media, academic texts, and interview results; methodological triangulation, by employing observation, documentation, and interviews simultaneously; and theoretical triangulation, by comparing the findings with literature in linguistics, literacy, and education. Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive depiction of the relationship between youth language styles on social media and their academic literacy, while also contributing to the development of linguistically-informed educational strategies.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Forms of Youth Language Styles

Based on data collected from youth social media posts, a diverse range of language styles was identified. Initial analysis indicates that language use in digital spaces tends to be dynamic, with certain patterns emerging as dominant. The most prominent categories of language style include the use of slang, code-mixing (combining Indonesian with foreign languages, particularly English), abbreviations or acronyms, and the use of formal language in specific contexts.

In general, the language styles used by youth on social media tend to reflect their social identities rather than adhere to formal linguistic norms. This phenomenon illustrates a shift in language practices among the younger generation, where self-expression is prioritized over adherence to academic conventions. To clarify the tendencies in the distribution of language styles, the following table is presented.

Table 1. Percentage of Youth Language Styles on Social Media

Categories of Language Style	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Slang	56	34.36
Code-Mixing	42	25.77
Abbreviation	37	22.70
Formal Language	28	17.18
TOTAL	**163**	**100**

Based on the data presented in the table and chart, it can be observed that the most dominant language forms used by youth on social media are slang and code-mixing. These two forms appear with higher frequency compared to abbreviations or formal language.

a. Slang

Slang emerges as the most dominant form of language used by youth on social media. Data show that approximately 34.36% of total language use by young people on these platforms contains slang elements. This phenomenon is not merely an expression of linguistic freedom but also reflects the identity of the younger generation, who seek to display uniqueness and a sense of closeness with their peer communities.

The use of slang indicates that young people tend to construct their group identity through informal language. This aligns with Partridge (1984) that slang functions as a marker of familiarity, group membership, and a way to differentiate oneself from other social groups. In the data, slang expressions such as *"gabut"*, *"mager"*, and *"bestie"* frequently appear in both posts and comments. This phenomenon demonstrates that language functions not only as a tool for communication but also as a means of constructing social identity in digital spaces.

b. Code-Mixing

The phenomenon of code-mixing in youth communication on social media is highly prominent, particularly in the form of inserting English vocabulary or phrases into Indonesian sentences. This is not merely an aesthetic linguistic trend but represents a communication style influenced by globalization, exposure to popular culture, and the impact of digital technology. For example, words or phrases such as *update status*, *random banget*, *healing dulu*, or *vibes-nya enak* naturally appear in young people's online conversations.

Code-mixing can be categorized into several forms: (1) intra-sentential code-mixing, which involves the use of foreign language elements within the structure of an Indonesian sentence. For example: "*Aku lagi healing di Bali minggu ini*" ("I'm healing in Bali this week"); (2) tag-switching, which refers to the insertion of short words or phrases for emphasis. For example: "*Serius deh, itu no comment banget*" ("Seriously, that's totally no comment"); and (3) intra-lexical mixing, which involves the creation of new words by combining foreign and local elements. For example: "*Nge-share fotonya dong*" ("Please share the photo").

c. Abbreviation

The use of abbreviations is one of the most dominant language styles in youth communication on social media. This phenomenon arises from the need to communicate quickly, efficiently, and practically in digital spaces, especially on instant platforms such as WhatsApp, X, or Instagram. Young people tend to shorten long words or phrases into abbreviated forms that are easier to type and read without diminishing the core meaning of the message being conveyed.

Abbreviations appear quite frequently, such as "wkwk" (laughing), "btw" (by the way), "otw" (on the way), and "idk" (I don't know). The use of these shortened forms demonstrates

communication efficiency on social media. Young people tend to prefer quick, brief, and practical communication, making abbreviations a relevant linguistic strategy. This phenomenon also illustrates how digital technology influences communication patterns to become more instant and condensed.

d. Formal Language

The use of formal language on social media among youth is relatively less frequent compared to slang, code-mixing, and abbreviations, it still holds a significant position in the dynamics of digital communication. Based on the collected data, approximately 17.18% of youth posts or comments on social media use formal language, either in the form of complete sentences with standard structure or through vocabulary usage that aligns with Indonesian language norms.

Although it appears the least frequently, formal language still emerges in specific contexts, such as when youth express serious opinions, provide important information, or engage in discussions on academic issues. An example of such usage is the sentence: *"Menurut saya, pemerintah seharusnya lebih memperhatikan pendidikan"* ("In my opinion, the government should pay more attention to education"). This indicates that young people still possess an awareness of language register; in situations that require seriousness, they are able to shift to a formal language variety.

Social Media Language Styles and Academic Literacy

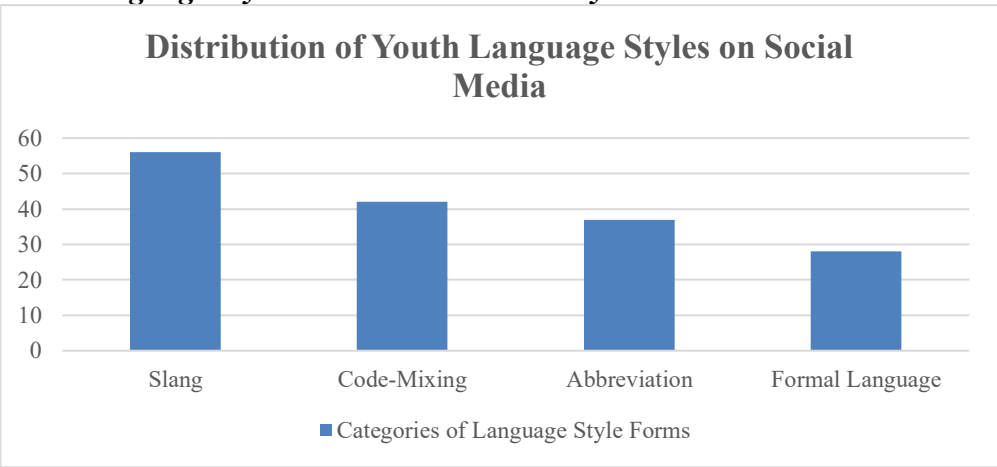


Figure 1. Distribution of Language Style

Based on the data obtained regarding the variations in youth language styles on social media, it was found that the use of slang, code-mixing, abbreviations, and minimal formal language has both direct and indirect correlations with academic literacy skills. In general, the language styles emerging on social media reflect a pattern of communication that is fast-paced, concise, creative, and rich in emotional expression. However, these styles often conflict with the demands of academic writing, which prioritize accuracy, structure, and formality. The main findings can be outlined as follows.

a. Influence of Slang on Academic Literacy

The excessive use of slang on social media can blur the boundary between informal and formal language. When this habit carries over into academic contexts, students may tend to insert non-standard expressions into their academic writing. For instance, terms such as *"gaje"* (nonsense), *"mager"* (too lazy to move), or *"nolep"* (no social life) occasionally appear unintentionally in essays or reports.

This negatively affects academic writing skills, as students struggle to distinguish appropriate language registers. Moreover, frequent exposure to slang influences their ability to read formal texts, since younger generations are more accustomed to interpreting implicit, concise, and emotionally charged meanings, making academic texts feel rigid or "heavy."

On the other hand, slang also reflects linguistic creativity. If properly guided, this creativity can be transferred into academic writing, for example, through a fresher writing style, the use of contextually relevant examples, or increased sensitivity to meaning and nuance.

b. Influence of Code-Mixing on Academic Literacy

The phenomenon of code-mixing between Indonesian and English is highly prevalent on social media. Expressions such as "literally capek banget" ("literally so tired"), "so true, aku relate" ("so true, I can relate"), or "gue lagi insecure banget lately" ("I've been feeling really insecure lately") are clear examples. In the context of academic literacy, code-mixing has two sides of influence.

First, many students become accustomed to mixing foreign terms without fully understanding their academic meaning. For example, the word *"research"* is often used merely to mean *"looking for data"*, whereas in an academic context, *research* implies a scientific methodology and systematic procedures. This reflects a limited depth of understanding of academic terminology.

Second, Code-mixing can also expand students' vocabulary as they are exposed to English terms from an early age. This may enhance their ability to read academic texts in English, which now dominate much of the global academic literature. Thus, code-mixing can serve as a linguistic asset if directed toward strengthening academic vocabulary comprehension, but it can become an obstacle if left as a mere trend of casual communication.

c. Influence of Abbreviation on Academic Literacy

Abbreviations (such as LOL, BTW, OTW, IDK) foster a habit of thinking in brief and concise terms. As a result, many students struggle when required to write longer texts with coherent argumentative structures.

Interviews with several respondents revealed that they perceive writing long essays as "complicated" and "time-consuming," largely because they are unaccustomed to composing complete sentences. They are more familiar with expressing ideas through abbreviations or symbols. For example, instead of writing: "*Saya akan segera datang ke kampus karena ada rapat kelompok penelitian"* ("I will come to campus soon because there is a research group meeting") they would write: *"OTW kampus, ada rapat kelompok penelitian."*

This also impacts their reading abilities: when faced with formal texts containing long and layered sentences, readers who are used to abbreviated forms often lose concentration and feel "bored," as the presentation style is too far removed from the communication patterns they are familiar with on social media.

d. Influence of Formal Language on Academic Literacy

One key finding is the lack of formal language use on social media. This affects students' ability to adapt to the demands of academic writing, which requires a formal and systematic style. When asked to write scientific reports, many students struggle to maintain consistent use of standard language. For example, they often write in an informal, conversational structure: *"Menurut aku, penelitian ini tuh penting banget karena banyak banget orang yang masih salah paham"* ("I think this research is really important because so many people still misunderstand it"). This sentence clearly does not follow academic conventions, but reflects common patterns of social media communication.

However, the minimal presence of formal language on social media also reveals a generational gap between academic discourse and the everyday language of youth. This gap can be seen as an opportunity to develop academic literacy approaches that are more relevant and adaptive to students' linguistic realities, for instance, by using social media as a platform for practicing simple academic writing.

Educational Linguistics on Language Style

Based on the data obtained, it was found that the language styles used by youth on social media are closely related to the development of academic literacy. From an educational linguistics perspective, this phenomenon can be understood as a dynamic process in which everyday language including informal forms such as slang, code-mixing, abbreviations, and popular expressions affects an individual's ability to engage with formal language, which is essential in academic contexts.

First, social media language style functions as a tool for expressing identity. Young people use slang, abbreviations, and foreign language mixing to signal their membership in certain communities. From an educational linguistics perspective, this reflects the development of sociolinguistic competence. However, this competence does not necessarily correlate with the ability to write or read academic texts, which require formal structure, standard vocabulary, and coherent argumentation.

Second, the difference in register between social media language and academic language poses challenges for literacy. Research findings show that most respondents struggle to shift from informal language styles to formal academic writing. For example, the use of abbreviations (e.g., *btw*, *asap*, *omg*) or code-mixing (*soalnya I feel confused banget*) often appears in academic texts. This highlights that intensive exposure to digital language styles may reduce sensitivity to formal language conventions.

Third, from an educational linguistics perspective, this relationship can be explained through the concept of language skill transfer. Exposure to informal language on social media does not always have negative effects. Some youth even demonstrate increased creativity in writing, cross-linguistic adaptability, and faster comprehension of communicative contexts. However, these skills need to be guided through language education so as not to blur the line between informal and formal registers.

Fourth, this research also identifies pedagogical potential in the use of social media language styles. If teachers or lecturers can utilize digital language examples as entry points for teaching formal writing, youth language on social media can serve as a bridge toward academic literacy. For instance, abbreviations can be expanded into exercises for writing their full forms correctly, or code-mixing practices can be redirected into translanguaging activities in academic writing.

Thus, the relationship between youth language styles on social media and academic literacy is not entirely contradictory, but rather complex, dynamic, and educational in nature. From an educational linguistics perspective, digital language style can be seen as both a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge because it risks blurring the formal-informal boundary, but also an opportunity because it opens up space for creativity and pedagogical innovation in language learning.

Discussion

Based on the data presented above, it is evident that the use of slang in academic literacy presents serious issues. First, young people who are overly accustomed to using slang in everyday communication tend to experience difficulty distinguishing between formal and informal language, especially when required to write scientific papers or academic reports. For instance, some university students still unconsciously use words such as *gaes* or *bucin* in

reflective writing, even though such expressions are not appropriate according to academic conventions. Second, the habit of using slang in digital communication contributes to a decline in sensitivity toward proper and standardized Indonesian language norms. This negatively affects their ability to construct academic arguments in a coherent manner and in accordance with formal linguistic standards.

The use of slang not only represents a new linguistic form but also signifies the social closeness of the group that uses it. This aligns with the findings of Nuraeni & Pahamzah (2021), who explains that slang is a form of linguistic expression developed to strengthen group solidarity among adolescents and to create a sense of emotional closeness among its speakers.

However, it should also be noted that the use of slang does not necessarily have entirely negative effects. From an educational linguistics perspective, slang can serve as a bridge between the academic world and the everyday realities of young people. For example, lecturers can use slang terms to capture students' attention in the classroom, then gradually shift the discussion toward more appropriate formal language. In this way, slang can function as a starting point for the transformation toward academic literacy, rather than being seen solely as an obstacle.

Code-mixing, from the perspective of educational linguistics, has ambivalent effects. On one hand, this phenomenon reflects the relatively strong bilingual capacity of today's youth. They not only understand the meaning of foreign words but are also able to place them appropriately within social and digital communication contexts. This indicates an increase in cosmopolitan competence, that is, the ability to adapt to global developments. This is supported by research conducted by Larasati et al., (2021), which shows that language mixing does not occur merely due to vocabulary limitations, but also as a communication strategy, a stylistic choice, and a reflection of current trends among social media users. Thus, code-mixing serves as a marker of modern identity and a component of digital culture practice.

However, on the other hand, the excessive use of code-mixing has the potential to undermine academic literacy. For instance, students who are accustomed to writing on social media using mixed language patterns often unconsciously carry these habits into formal writing, thereby compromising the consistency of academic language structures. Words such as *deadline*, *task*, or *meeting* are frequently used in place of their Indonesian equivalents like *tenggat waktu*, *tugas*, or *rapat*. As a result, this practice may not only lead to ambiguity but also weaken students' positive attitudes toward Indonesian as an academic language.

Furthermore, this tendency also gives rise to the phenomenon of foreign language prestige. English, in particular, is often perceived as more trendy, modern, and intellectual, making its use a symbol of social status or a specific identity. As a result, some young people feel more confident presenting themselves through code-mixing rather than using pure Indonesian.

Abbreviations in academic literacy have ambivalent implications. On the positive side, they encourage linguistic creativity, efficiency in conveying messages, and reflect young people's ability to develop new linguistic symbols. On the negative side, however, they may reduce students' ability to distinguish between formal and informal contexts. For example, the habit of writing *tdk* (tidak), *bgt* (banget), or *gpp* (nggak apa-apa) in online conversations may carry over into academic writing, resulting in texts that do not conform to formal language standards. This finding aligns with research by Halfian et al. (2023), which asserts that abbreviations on social media are a form of linguistic efficiency suited to the fast-paced, concise, and group-specific nature of digital communication. This illustrates how social media has given rise to new language variations that shape distinct communication patterns.

In addition, overly popular abbreviations can create an intergenerational gap in understanding. Generations unfamiliar with social media often struggle to comprehend short

messages filled with abbreviations or acronyms. This indicates that abbreviations in social media affect not only linguistic aspects but also shape the social identity of youth communities.

From the perspective of academic literacy, formal language functions as a bridge between everyday communication on social media and the academic demands of the classroom. Youth who are accustomed to using formal language in certain social media contexts tend to find it easier to compose scholarly writing, comprehend academic texts, and develop arguments systematically. In other words, although its frequency is lower compared to other language forms, the contribution of formal language is highly significant in supporting the development of academic literacy among young people.

However, it should be noted that the use of formal language on social media is still often perceived as "less popular" among youth, as it can give the impression of being rigid or incompatible with the casual norms of digital interaction. As a result, many young people use formal language only selectively, rather than as a part of their everyday communication. This condition reflects a form of digital diglossia, in which youth choose different language varieties depending on the communication domain they engage in.

The phenomenon of language on social media is not only related to linguistic functions but also has sociocultural dimensions. Research by Ahmed (2020) emphasizes that social media is an arena where identity, style, and linguistic creativity are both reproduced and negotiated. In other words, the use of slang, code-mixing, and abbreviations not only reflects language change but also demonstrates the dynamics of an increasingly global digital culture (Androutsopoulos, 2015). The younger generation utilizes these language forms as symbols of modernity as well as to strengthen bonds within their online communities.

Overall, the language styles used by youth on social media have an ambivalent impact on academic literacy skills. On one hand, they may weaken the ability to write and read formal texts due to habits of using non-standard language, abbreviations, and code-mixing. On the other hand, they open up spaces for creativity, expand vocabulary, and develop sensitivity to language dynamics, which can become valuable assets if properly guided.

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the linguistic styles commonly used by youth on social media, such as slang, code-mixing, abbreviations, and formal language, significantly influence academic literacy practices, especially in writing and reading formal texts. While these forms of language represent creativity, identity construction, and social solidarity in digital spaces, they also present challenges in maintaining formal academic standards. The findings demonstrate that without conscious guidance, the transfer of informal linguistic habits into academic contexts may weaken mastery of academic writing and reading skills. Nevertheless, from an educational linguistics perspective, these phenomena can also be turned into learning resources that encourage contrastive awareness and translanguaging strategies to bridge informal and formal language practices.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that educators utilize the phenomenon of language on social media as teaching material to raise awareness of the contrast between informal and formal registers, so that learners can become more skilled in managing their language choices according to the context. Future researchers are encouraged to expand their studies to other emerging social media platforms to discover new variations in digital language styles. Meanwhile, young people as active social media users need to realize the importance of balancing linguistic creativity with academic literacy skills to remain relevant both in the digital realm and in academic and professional settings.

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