

## ESAP Course Approach from a Content Teachers' Perspective

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### **Abstract**

*ESAP or English for Academic and Specific Purposes is a branch of ESP ; the learners needs' based English language teaching approach .Increasingly general English is being replaced by English of Specific Purposes and English is being progressively used as the medium of instructions for Business , Medicine, engineering , computer sciences , ect...at higher education and university level. This paper investigates the ESAP situation in the department of political science at Chlef University. Our main focus is to depict the English language teaching and learning situation from both teachers of English and content disciplines teachers' perspective .The study was carried out with 04 teachers representing the whole staff of English teachers in the department and 09 randomly selected content teachers actually in charge of the different students' modules in undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The study used a Likert scale questionnaire beside instances of informal chats to collect data from the two groups of teachers: English and content teachers. The results revealed that content teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the current students' learning output in the English course.*

**Key words:** ESAP ESP Political science Content teachers

### **Résumé :**

ESAP (ABAS) qui signifie l'anglais pour des buts académiques et spécifiques est une branche d'ESP (L'anglais de spécialité) ; la nouvelle approche de l'enseignement de l'anglais basée sur les besoins des apprenants. En plus, l'anglais général est remplacé par l'anglais pour de finalités spécifiques et qui a été progressivement utilisé comme un moyen d'instruction pour certaines disciplines et sciences : la médecine, l'ingénierie, .... ect, et dans le but de servir différentes institutions, ainsi que l'université. Alors, cet article vise à étudier la situation de l'ESAP au département de sciences politiques de l'université de Chlef. L'étude a été réalisée avec un échantillon de 04 enseignants représentant l'ensemble du personnel des enseignants d'anglais dans le département et 09 enseignants actuellement chargés

des autres modules de matière politique , sélectionnés aléatoirement dans les deux cycles de licence et master. Le chercheur s'est servi d'un questionnaire à l'échelle de Likert à côté des instances de chats informels pour recueillir des données des deux groupes d'enseignants: professeurs d'anglais et de contenu politique (professeurs spécialisés en sciences politiques). Les résultats ont révélé que les professeurs spécialistes ont exprimé leur mécontentement à l'égard du niveau d'apprentissage actuel pour les étudiants dans le cours d'anglais.

**Les concepts clés sont :** ESAP (ABAS), ESP (L'anglais de spécialité) , sciences politiques , professeurs du contenu politique .

### 1- Introduction

English for Specific Purposes ESP has grown to become one of the most important of English Language teaching. ESP is a learner – needs' based approach .Thus , ESP practitioners' first responsibility is to find out what the learners' needs in the different language learning skills ( listening , speaking , reading and writing). According to Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 19), ESP is an approach to English language teaching in which the decisions as to content and method are based on the learner's reasons of learning. Indeed ,it is those different reasons of learning that turned out the different branches of ESP .In the tree of ELT ( Hutchinson and Waters , 1987) , ESP is divided into three main branches : English for Science and Technology ( EST) , English for Business and Economics ( EBE) and English for Social Studies( ESS).Each of these subject areas is further broken into two branches. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP). Jordan 1989/1997), an author with extensive research and practical experience in the area of EAP, concludes that there is a general agreement that EAP can be further divided into two additional groups: 1. "Common core" or "English for General Academic Purposes" (EGAP), and "Subject- specific" or "English for Specific Academic Purposes" (ESAP) ; our main focus in this study.

### 2-The Review of Literature

Before tackling the concept of the ESAP approach and the recent development made in that field, it might be useful to review some basic components of the ESP field; the big umbrella of the ESAP and other related subject areas.

### 3-The definition of ESP

Assuming that ESP appeared in the 1960's, This came as a result of three important converging trends : 1-the expansion of demand for English to suit specific needs of a profession,2- The

development in the field of linguistics which was characterised by shift from the mere description to language features to discovering the rules of language in real communication yielding the need to develop English courses for specific group of learners and 3-education psychology with shift of attention on learners' interests and needs' role in their motivation and effectiveness of learning.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) defined ESP an approach to English language teaching that involves no particular teaching materials or methodology. Yet, according to those researchers, the main question should be « why does a learner need to learn a foreign language? »

With regard to its relatively long time to mature (since the 1960's), we would expect a definition to ESP that has already been crystallised among the ESP community. Yet, debates about providing a clear definition to ESP still occur around pertinent issues such as whether or not English for Academic Purposes (EAP) could be considered as part of ESP in general. Nevertheless, English for Academic Purposes is often identified as a subcategory of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). By definition English for Academic Purposes (EAP) is described a student's need for "quick and economical use of the English language to pursue a course of academic study" (Coffey, 1984 : 04).

#### **4- ESAP definition**

When English for General Academic Purposes (EGAP) is mainly concerned with general academic skills' teaching such as teaching study skills including reading, writing; speaking and listening English for Specific Academic purposes (ESAP) focuses more on the vocabulary and the skills of the specific subject teaching. The common element in both branches is the study skills which are a « key component » of EAP (Jordan, 1997, p.5). Like any sub-branch of ESP, English for Specific Academic Purposes is based on the learners' needs which are a key issue of ESAP syllabus and the relevant teaching materials development. Different approaches have been put forward to set out the structure of and effective needs analysis design in well-determined situations and specified language functions. This started first with the work of 'Munby's *Communicative Syllabus Design*' in 1978 with its main skeleton 'Communication needs processor'. Taking Munby's work as guideline, Chambers (1980) introduced the term *Target Situation Analysis*.

#### 4-1-Target Situation Analysis

Needs Analysis approach started in the 1970's but with a limited focus to linguistic and register analysis' needs. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) suggest, needs were seen as separate language items of grammar and vocabulary. Actually the base of needs analysis is Munby' model (1978) with the suggested model Communication Needs' Processor which include a suggestion of procedures for identifying 'target situation needs'. This would entail the analysis of the language communication in the target language settings to be able to provide a communicative needs profile for a specific group of students. In fact, it is the process undertaken by teachers and course designers to diagnosis the learners' requisites for a language course. With regard to ESP, the definition of « needs » differs according to the different stages of the ESP learning process. Thus, other connotations to the term « needs » are often generated such as 'necessities', 'lacks' and 'wants'. In the target needs analysis approach, identifying the learners' needs should be the first step in designing language programmes (Martinez & Sanz, 2008, p. 69, 85). According to Gabriela and Sonsoles (2015, p.143.148), identifying needs involves: 1- the target situation analysis which involves providing information about the skills and language needed for the context in which learners will use L2; 2- the learning situation analysis, which provides information about subjective needs; and 3- the means analysis, which provides information about the educational contexts. Being considered as the basis of syllabus and material design, the target situation analysis aims to determine what students need to be able to do in English as a result of the course, and achieves this outcome by means of activities which mirror those of the target work situation (Chambers 1980, based on Mumby's communicative needs processor, 1978).

#### 4-2 The Present Situation Analysis

The Present situation analysis (PSA) is a complementary phase to the Target Situation Analysis (TSA) (Basturkmen, 2006). PSA draws on the attention on what learners are able to do with language at the beginning of the course. Dudley-Evans & St. John (1980, p124) state that PSA estimates strengths and weaknesses in language, skills and learning experiences. Three basic information sources can be used by the ESP practitioner to establish the PSA (Richterich and Chancerel, 1980): the students themselves, the language-teaching establishment and the « user-institution » which is the students' work place for example. The ESP practitioner can collect information from

the surrounding society and cultural attitude held towards the English language and its use as a foreign language.

In short, for an effective needs analysis approach establishment, one should consider both the TSA and the PSA simultaneously. Dudley –Evans & St John (1998 p.124) developed the following examples under the headings of TSA (Target Situation Approach) and PSA ( Present Situation Approach).

TSA	PSA
-I have occasional meetings with British colleagues	-I find it difficult to write persuasively
2-Student X needs to read more widely	2-My problem is finding the right word
3-I have to write reports	3-I face difficulties in face to face talk

#### 5-Description of the target ESAP course:

The English courses offered by the teachers of English in the department of political science at Chlef University focus on the development of the reading comprehension skill of texts with a potential of the recurrent political science vocabulary and concepts. The language courses are delivered to both postgraduate and undergraduate level students by General English teachers. The students take the two credits English course for two academic semesters long. Four English teachers are in charge of the course for the different students' levels. All of them are non-permanent teachers among 36 content teachers actually in charge of different political sciences' modules. The four English teachers and the 9 randomly selected content teachers ( see their profile in table1) were asked to identify their attitudes towards the English module implementation general output in the political science department and express their views and their assessment to the English language current significance and relevance with the general objectives of the political science curriculum. The study was limited to third year undergraduate level students since they are in the transitional stage to the Master's level. It is worth mentioning that there is no significant difference in the English course content learning outcomes between undergraduate and postgraduate level.

	Age	Gender	Degree	Teaching Experience	Rank	Status
Teacher 1	38	F	Magistere	4 years	SL(Senior Lecturer)	Permanent
Teacher 2	42	M	Magsistere	5 years	SL	//
Teacher 3	45	M	PHD	8 years	Professor	//
Teacher 4	35	M	Magistere	3 years	SL	//
Teacher 5	39	M	Magistere	6 years	SL	//
Teacher 6	47	F	PHD	10 years	SL	//
Teacher 7	28	M	Magsistere	2 years	SL	//
Teacher 8	35	F	Magistere	5 years	SL	//
Teacher 9	28	F	Magistere	1 year	SL	//
English Teacher A	27	F	B.A Degree	4 years	Assistant teacher	Non permanent
English Teacher B	25	F	//	1 years	//	//
English Teacher C	30	F	//	3 years	//	//
English Teacher B	33	F	//	4 years	//	//
English Teacher D	29	F	//	5 years	//	//

Table 1: the Content Teachers' Profile

#### 6- The Methodology:

Dudley-Evans and St John (1998:4-5) state that “*ESP makes use of underlying methodology and activities of the discipline it serves.*” According to Freeman (2003), the most effective means of teaching language learners with academic needs is through content-based instruction. It is true that the target situation under the focus of the present study is quite far from to be placed in the context of content-based learning since students are only taught English grammar and vocabulary. Yet, they are often asked to read and understand texts that contain and cover political science terms and concepts. Indeed, Teachers of English often take that specific context area of politics to teach political new terms and vocabulary. Graves (1987) emphasized the role of the content areas in learning new vocabulary when he states that “*Content areas provide fertile ground for learning new words; they can help learning new meanings for familiar words, new terms for familiar concepts, and new words for new concepts. The content*

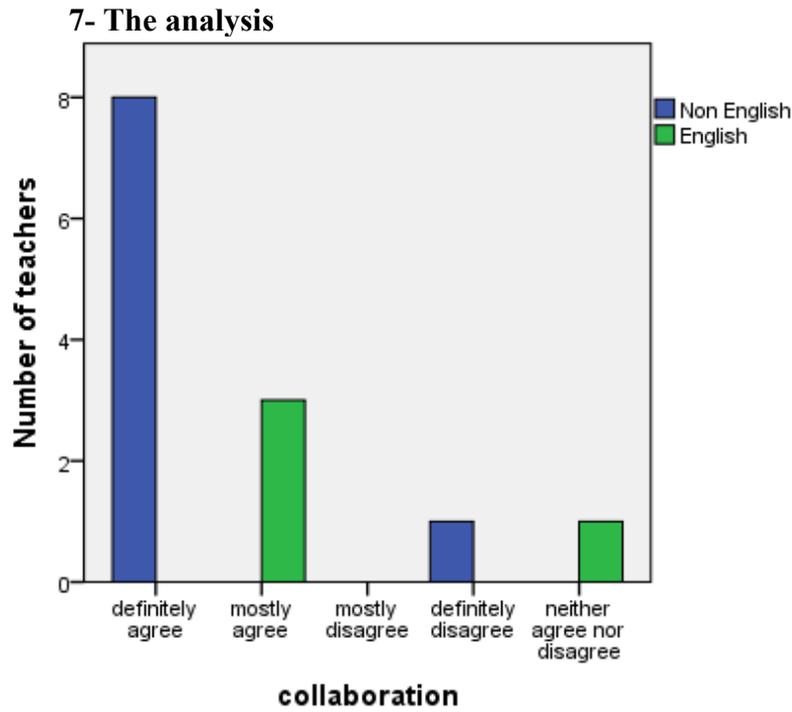
*areas also can provide opportunities to clarify and enrich the meanings of known words which, with effective instruction, can enable students to move words from their receptive (words they understand) to their expressive (words they use) vocabularies”.*

The purpose of the study was to identify both of the content and the English teachers' views in order to support the researcher in the identification of the students' needs for the English course being immersed in the political science context. The other purpose could be seeking possible future collaboration issues between the content instructors and the EFL teachers to develop an ESAP syllabus that can be more specific and relevant to the political science sphere in terms of content and learning outcomes.

The content teachers' questionnaire was translated into Arabic; the participants' native language. The questionnaire's main objective is to detect the content teachers' views towards the EFL current status in the political science curriculum and their evaluation and expectations from the implementation of the English module in the department of political science. The questionnaire was administered to 09 randomly selected teachers among the 36 teachers representing the academic staff in the department of political science department and 4 teachers of English actually representing the whole English staff in the political science department.

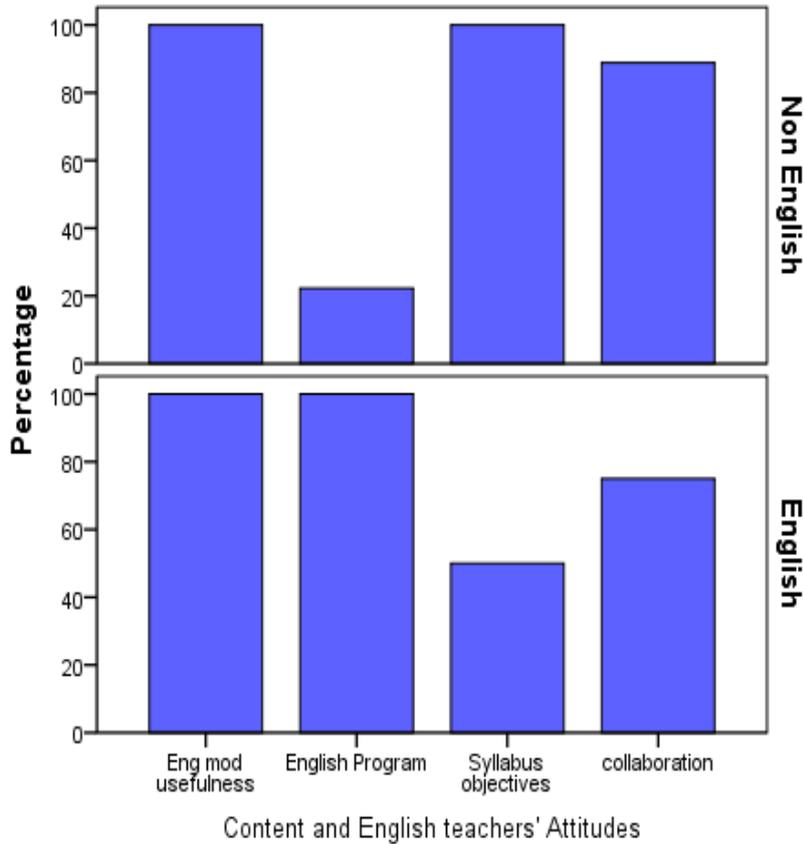
The questionnaire consists of two sets of questions. Section one is a list of 12 Lickert scale questions ranked from *definitely agree, mostly agree, neither agree nor disagree, mostly disagree*. The questions' main focus is to elicit data about the potential of EFL and content teachers' collaboration to set out and develop an effective ESAP syllabus that is relevant to the political science curriculum main outcome and learning objectives and based on the students' needs and interests. Section two entails one open ended question that aims to investigate the participants' suggestions on the appropriate strategies that could help in improving the EFL teaching and learning efficiency level in the political science department.

It is worth mentioning that a discussion went on with the political science content teachers during their completion of the questionnaires. Indeed they showed remarkable interests and enthusiasm to provide feedback to the research inquiries which helped to enrich the research with useful ideas from a variety of perspectives.



**Figure 01: Content and English Teachers' Collaboration**

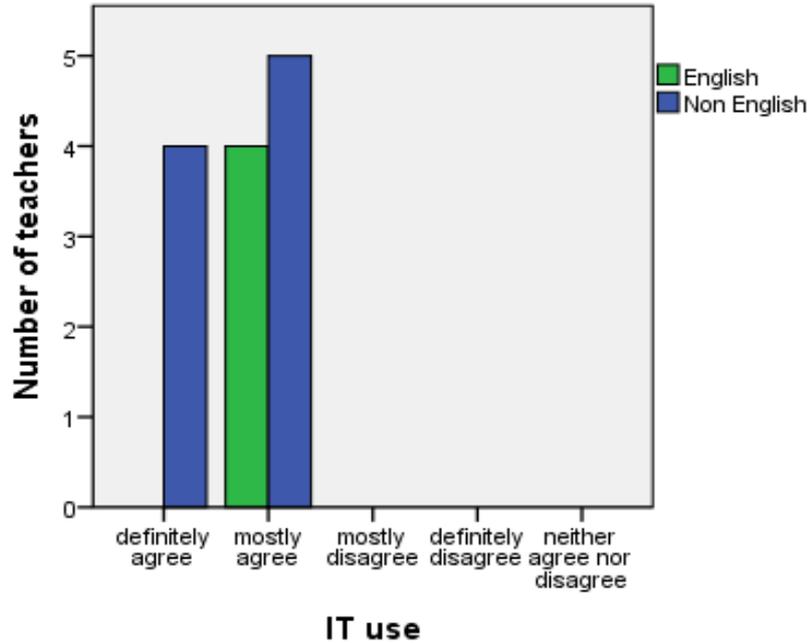
As depicted in figure 01 , most content teachers (08 out of 09) are for the idea of a collaborative work with the English teachers .This collaboration would cover issues like discussions on the real needs of the political science students in the English course , the important skills that they need to acquire and may go beyond that to set up the major objectives of the syllabus .Compared with the content teachers and although they tended some enthusiasm to the idea of collaboration with the content teachers, the English expressed a certain reluctance towards common collaborative framework with content teachers .Indeed, little collaboration is taking place within the English teachers themselves , a fact that might be owed to the status of the English teachers in the political science department since all of them are non-permanent teachers .Hence , each teacher seems to set her lessons learning outcomes alone without finding it necessary to cooperate with the other English colleagues let alone the content teachers in the political science department.



**Figure 02: Content and English teachers' Attitudes**

The study aims to identify both of the content and the English teachers' attitude towards the importance of the English course and the way it is dealt with in the political science teaching context. This would cover, as shown in figure 02, their views about the main content of the English course syllabus, the syllabus objectives and the usefulness of English module incorporation in the political science curriculum. As depicted in figure 02, both groups of teachers agree on the usefulness of the English course in the political science department as that they agree the fact that a language –content collaboration might lead to well-established EFL syllabus that would help students develop their English language skills match their actual needs in the other required political science disciplines. This might

entail their abilities to understand and analyse a political text , do an oral presentation , a conference summary , conduct a political interview ect... .Yet , not all English teachers seem to agree that English module syllabus with its relevant learning objectives should be totally set in accordance with the political science disciplinary content focus .



**Figure 03: The Information Technology as a Learning Tool**

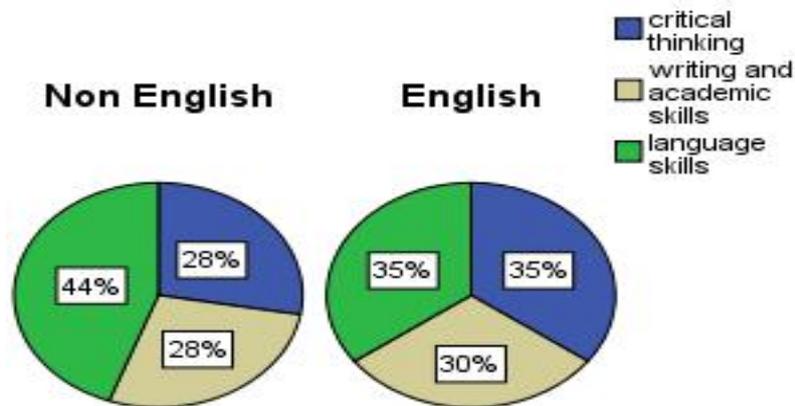
Almost all EFL and ESL practitioners share a common belief concerning the positive role of the information technology in language learning and teaching. With regard to our study, both content and English teachers agree on the positive contribution of the IT as a learning tool for the students in the political science department. In a discussion, both group of teachers talked about the impact of computers and other IT tools in the delivery of EFL courses and the whole content of the disciplinary courses in the department of politics .The discussion also covered the students’ attitudes towards the use of computers in those courses and the Internet different uses among both teachers and students. Teachers admit that they mainly use the Internet outside the classroom as a useful resource tool for developing their teaching materials. One English teacher admits that she sometimes

uses the PowerPoint software application to develop the students' presentation speaking skill.

	Frequency	Percent
neither agree nor disagree	1	11,1
definitely agree	1	11,1
mostly agree	2	22,2
mostly disagree	4	44,4
definitely disagree	1	11,1
Total	9	100,0

**Table 02: Content teachers' Attitude to Students General and Academic Skills' Development**

As depicted in table 02, a good number of the content teachers (5 of 9) cannot conceive an English course delivered to political science that focuses only on the development of the students' general English and academic skills. The political subjects' teachers insist on an English course that incorporate the discussion and the analysis of the most recent political science theories and concepts .As a matter of fact, they talked about the importance of a course programme that should match the nature of the specialism of the political science .



**Figure 04: Students' Skills under Focus**

Both groups of teachers agree on the importance of the language skills 'learning for the students' success though, unexpectedly, the content teachers' views were more explicit for devoting more time and focus on the development of language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing). Both of the discipline and English teachers also share a common attitude towards a syllabus that would incorporate the development of the academic skills for political science students (essays, reports, projects, dissertations).

#### **7- Informal Chats' Analysis**

Along with the questionnaire that was carried out with the teaching staff (content and English teachers) at the political science department, as a researcher I had a time for an informal chat with three political science discipline teachers after they already completed and handed back the target study questionnaires. The teachers explicitly stated that beside the urgent need for more trained English teachers in the political science field in order to manage the discussion and the analysis of the political science different terms, conceptions and theories, being in charge of such university students' level requires a degree and qualifications that exceed the level the License Degree (B.A); the current Degree for the four English teachers in the political science department.

The same teachers confirmed that the syllabus should be a common one designed from the Ministry of Higher Education for all political science students in Algerian universities that should be taught, most importantly, by permanent English teachers. One of the teachers even was for that idea that it would be more useful that the designed English syllabus is reviewed and assessed first by the political science discipline teachers before being taught by the English teachers themselves. They also mentioned that the need to double the amount of the teaching hours for the English module since, according to them, one hour and a half English session per week is not enough for both undergraduate and postgraduate university students' level. Furthermore, one of the teachers added that it would be more appropriate to provide more training for the content teachers in English language to the level that they can be charge of the English module themselves; a fact that can bring positive effects on the students' level in both content and language learning as well.

Finally, the teachers insisted on the importance of carrying out a Needs Analysis approach that would take the needs of the students into consideration before the selection of any teaching materials that would fit in this or that teaching syllabus. According to them, this

would comply with the labour market and the job opportunities for target students' group after graduation .With regard to the professional career after graduation , the teachers stated that the political science students can join either governmental or non-governmental posts .This may entail the media and journalism sector, the research centres , the diplomatic sector and in each field of these sectors , the mastery of the English language is of a primary importance.

### 8- Conclusion

The results of the survey revealed the apparent dissatisfaction of the content teachers with the English language course outcomes and its effect on the students' general performance across the other political science disciplines .The content teachers highlighted some other features that, according to them, any successful ESAP course should incorporate. These cover mainly the importance of carrying out a Needs Analysis approach which would identify both the political science students' present and target needs. Moreover, they insisted on an English course that would help students develop their academic skills including essays, projects and dissertations' writing. With regard to the IT use , both group of teachers agree on the importance of finding ways to integrate the new technologies in the English course curriculum despite the classroom lack of appropriacy in terms of equipment and Internet access .Finally , unlike traditional courses , the content teachers agreed that the preparation and the design of ESAP courses demands the joint effort and coordination of both groups of content and language specialist teachers .Hence , before using the teaching materials in their language classrooms , the language teachers need to study and familiarize themselves with the content of the political science different disciplines.

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