

## A Holistic Needs Analysis for Developing Critical Reading Material to Enhance EFL Reading Proficiency

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### ABSTRACT

This study delves into the development of critical reading material for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading classes through a comprehensive need analysis. Employing the Four D model encompassing defining, designing, developing, and disseminating, the research process unfolded in distinct phases. The initial phase involved a preliminary investigation at the English Language Education Department of Muhammadiyah Purworejo University to discern students' challenges within real-time learning contexts. Subsequently, a prototype of the needs analysis was formulated based on the findings from the preliminary study. Validation of this needs analysis occurred through consultation with two experts and field testing to ascertain the questionnaire's efficacy. The validation process revealed a high feasibility rate (85%) in assessing students' needs. Additionally, a preliminary field test involving 30 students from the English Language Education Department at Muhammadiyah Purworejo University was conducted to evaluate the questionnaire's practicality. The outcomes of the needs analysis served as a foundational framework for the development of critical reading materials, subsequently utilized in EFL reading classes.

**Keywords:** critical reading, EFL reading, needs analysis, pedagogical approaches, reading comprehension

### INTRODUCTION

The intricate nature of the reading process, emphasizing that effective reading goes beyond mere word recognition (Van et al., 2022). It involves a multifaceted approach encompassing critical thinking, vocabulary mastery, language skills, time management, reading strategies, and concentration. This perspective underscores the necessity for students to actively develop

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these aspects to truly comprehend written material. Albdour's insights stress the importance of not simply decoding words but actively engaging with the text through critical thinking and leveraging language skills to enhance comprehension. Further, Memiş & Sivri (2016) support this perspective by emphasizing the significance of linking new information with prior knowledge during the reading process. Moreover, Rosdiana (2015) stated that critical reading is a strategy that provides students with instructional support before, during, and after reading process. According to their research, effective comprehension involves actively connecting and integrating the text with existing knowledge. They advocate for students to identify, critique, and relate the reading material to their prior experiences and understanding. Memis and Sivri's findings align with Albdour's stance, emphasizing the need for readers to engage with the text critically, using their existing knowledge as a scaffold to deepen comprehension.

Combining Albdour's emphasis on the multifaceted nature of reading skills and Memis & Sivri's advocacy for connecting new information with prior knowledge, a comprehensive approach to developing reading abilities emerges. Students must actively cultivate critical thinking, enhance vocabulary and language skills, manage their time effectively, employ reading strategies, and maintain focused concentration. Furthermore, integrating new information with existing knowledge allows for a deeper and more meaningful understanding of the material being read. This approach aligns with the experts' views, advocating for a holistic development of reading skills that encompasses both cognitive strategies and the utilization of prior knowledge to enhance comprehension.

Critical thinking and proficient reading abilities stand as crucial skills for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students, facilitating an accelerated and enhanced learning process. Reading holds a pivotal role in the overall development of English proficiency, serving as the primary avenue through which students engage with academic content in English. The correlation between the capacity to read critically, academic achievement, and the necessity for critical thinking both in professional settings and daily life has been extensively highlighted in research by scholars such as E. Lestari, S. Sukarni, P. Dewi (2023), Ennis (2018), Maulid, Artha, Manalullailli (2023), Wilson (2016) and Živkovi (2016). Notably, adept readers, in contrast to struggling counterparts, tend to excel in examinations by employing a diverse array of strategies to navigate through texts and surmount comprehension obstacles (Kim, 2020). The proficient application of these strategies transforms students into critical readers, enabling them to employ higher-order thinking skills effectively. It suggests that the critical reading skills students acquire will benefit them in university and in their future careers (Wilson, 2016).

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The concept of being critical, however, may bear ambiguity in certain contexts. Within the realm of language learning, the term "critical" does not inherently connote negative connotations, such as solely identifying errors or flaws. As articulated by Milan (1995), being critical in this context encompasses "utilizing meticulous evaluation, sound judgment, and the ability to reason" (p. 218). This distinction underscores the importance of employing discernment and thoughtful assessment rather than solely emphasizing fault-finding. Exploring critical reading's role to support students' critical thinking and reading comprehension skills when reading a text is prominent (Din, 2020) and (Arifin, 2020). Critical reading highlights the essence of employing analytical and evaluative skills to comprehend, interpret, and respond to texts comprehensively and insightfully, crucial for fostering deeper understanding and language proficiency development among EFL learners.

Three critical issues contribute to students' low reading proficiency. Firstly, the materials provided by educators, such as textbooks and e-books, often lack engagement due to lengthy texts, leading to boredom and disinterest among students. To enhance reading pleasure and motivation, it is crucial to offer captivating materials, such as online English comics, rich in illustrations and compelling stories. These can serve as an initial step to ignite interest and encourage further reading. Secondly, many students struggle to identify suitable reading materials that align with their interests, hampering the development of a reading habit. Teachers and parents play a pivotal role in guiding students to discover materials tailored to their preferences, fostering enthusiasm for reading. Lastly, waning motivation in reading stems from a lack of interest in the materials provided, significantly impacting students' English learning journey. The choice of reading material significantly influences both motivation and skill development. Critical reading skills are essential here; educators should encourage students not only to read but also to analyze, evaluate, and question the content. By instilling critical reading techniques, students can derive deeper understanding and engagement from diverse materials, further enhancing their reading skills and motivation.

Reading material selection plays a pivotal role in students' reading performance and overall learning success. Kamal (2018) emphasizes that teachers play a crucial part in enhancing the effectiveness of the reading process by choosing suitable materials. Research experiences indicate that students engage with a diverse range of reading materials, including novels, textbooks, and journals. However, lengthy, monotonous content lacking illustrations can demotivate students, leading to worry, reduced concentration, and diminished interest in reading (Akyol, 2014). Particularly, novice readers tend to prefer materials like poems, legends, short life stories, and fables accompanied by visuals or images (Lipp, 2018). Beginner readers find comics beneficial due to their incorporation of illustrations, aiding comprehension of the text (Krusemark, 2016). Thus, offering varied

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materials with visual support is crucial for maintaining student motivation and enhancing reading engagement.

Educators employ a needs analysis, commonly referred to as a needs assessment, as a fundamental tool in material development, as highlighted by (Richards, 2001). This process serves to comprehensively gather crucial information essential for effective curriculum design. It involves several key functions, including identifying the specific skills students require, scrutinizing the current curriculum, pinpointing discrepancies between the learners' needs and their current abilities, delving into specific learning challenges, understanding the motivations behind students' participation in the learning program, assessing program effectiveness, and discerning preferred learning styles, activities, materials, and assessment methods. Furthermore, the needs assessment also delves into understanding the dynamics and preferred roles in the student-teacher relationship. By encompassing these elements, educators can tailor materials and learning experiences that better suit the learners' needs, ensuring a more targeted and effective educational experience.

Based on the provided information, a gap in research regarding the development of needs analysis specifically targeting critical reading emerges. Although multiple studies have explored various aspects related to reading comprehension, literacy, and critical thinking skills, a comprehensive and dedicated investigation into the construction of a needs analysis framework for critical reading appears notably absent. While studies like Rambe (2017), Salam (2017), Nusa et al. (2020), Asyura, Cinto Dwi &Fitrawati (2021) Suarcaya, P., & Prasasti (2017) and Cahyaningrum et al. (2022) have contributed substantially to understanding reading comprehension, critical reading, and related skill development, none have exclusively addressed the creation of a needs analysis model specifically tailored to foster critical reading abilities. In addition, critical reading enables younger students to cultivate critical thinking (Arifin, 2020). This gap indicates a significant opportunity for researchers to delve into constructing a comprehensive needs analysis framework focusing explicitly on critical reading skills. Such research could involve investigating the specific requirements, challenges, preferred approaches, and necessary materials for developing a structured needs analysis model aimed at enhancing critical reading proficiency among students across various educational levels and disciplines in the information era.

The research aims to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation in teaching reading, specifically targeting EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. The study intends to address the existing discrepancies by developing a needs analysis model centered around critical reading for teaching EFL reading. The identified problems within reading instruction underscore the necessity for clarification on three pivotal research questions, namely:  
(1) How is the definition of the needs analysis of critical reading, outlining

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its fundamental components and conceptual underpinnings; (2) How is the design specifics of the needs analysis of critical reading, elucidating the structural framework and key elements employed in its development; (3) What methodology is employed in constructing the needs analysis of critical reading, delineating the systematic process undertaken to devise this model. Consequently, the study endeavors to culminate in the creation of a robust needs analysis instrument. This tool is intended to facilitate the collection of comprehensive data pertaining to students' specific target needs and learning requirements within the EFL reading class. Thus, the overarching research problem revolves around the development of a needs analysis model centered on critical reading, addressing the discrepancies between theory and practice in EFL reading instruction, and ultimately crafting an instrument to effectively gauge students' needs in this educational context.

## METHOD

The research undertaken was an encompassing Research and Development (R&D) initiative aimed at crafting a needs analysis model tailored for the critical reading approach within EFL reading instruction. Employing the structured 4D developmental model proposed by Thiagarajan, S., & Semmel in Adriani, D., Kemala, P., Lubis, D., Andi, M., & Triono (2019) served as the methodological framework due to its systematic sequencing of activities, adaptable to the diverse needs and characteristics of the student cohort. The process of creating 4D model teaching materials starts with the conceptualization and design phases. This model, delineated into four distinct stages of defining, designing, developing, and disseminating, offered a structured pathway for the study's progression. The initial step involved a comprehensive preliminary study, evaluating the existing reading class at Purworejo Muhammadiyah University. This phase encompassed an analysis of the reading instructional materials and teaching kits. Moreover, the results stemming from this needs analysis phase were instrumental in informing the subsequent stages of model development.

Moving into the second phase, the researcher proceeded to design the prototype of the needs analysis, meticulously shaping it based on insights derived from the preliminary study findings. This design phase was anchored in the theories of critical reading and tailored to align with the specific characteristics and needs of third-semester English Department students within the reading class context. Subsequently, the third phase involved rigorous product validation and revision processes, integrating feedback and recommendations from subject matter experts. Following the refinement stage, field testing was conducted to gauge the efficacy of the needs analysis questionnaires. Finally, the fourth and last step encompassed the dissemination of the study's outcomes, accomplished through publication in a scholarly journal. This comprehensive process adhering to the 4D model not only ensured systematic development but also aimed to

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contribute to the academic discourse surrounding critical reading in EFL reading instruction, as articulated by the researcher's methodological approach and rigorous implementation.

The study's participants comprised 30 students enrolled in the critical reading class during the odd semester of the Academic Year 2023/2024 within the English Language Education Program, forming the core cohort for the needs analysis. The primary tool utilized to gather data was a needs analysis questionnaire designed to unveil the students' target needs and learning requirements. Written in Bahasa Indonesia to ensure better understanding and engagement, the questionnaire was administered to the participants via Google Forms, streamlining the data collection process for the study. This approach aimed to obtain comprehensive insights into the students' perspectives, enabling a robust analysis of their needs within the critical reading course.

Regarding data collection and analysis, the study embraced a mixed-methods approach, garnering both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were derived from interviews and documentation, and these sources were subjected to qualitative descriptive analysis techniques. The researcher systematically analyzed these qualitative data by categorizing words and themes, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the participants' viewpoints and experiences. On the other hand, quantitative data stemmed from the questionnaires, primarily aimed at measuring the average percentage of students' identified needs. This quantitative approach facilitated the numerical representation and assessment of the students' perceived needs, contributing statistical insights to complement the qualitative findings. The integration of both qualitative and quantitative data offered a more holistic understanding of the student's needs within the critical reading class, enriching the depth and comprehensiveness of the study's conclusions.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Throughout this process, it's crucial to maintain flexibility and adaptability, allowing for adjustments based on unexpected findings or shifts in learner needs. The ultimate goal is to create a roadmap that informs the creation of targeted educational materials and approaches to enhance critical reading abilities effectively.

### a. Defining Needs Analysis of the Critical Reading Material

In the initial phase of defining the needs analysis for critical reading material, the researcher embarked on a comprehensive preliminary study to gain a deep understanding of the prevailing situation within the reading classes. This preliminary study was designed to meticulously evaluate the existing structure and dynamics of the reading class, including an in-depth analysis of the teaching kits and learning materials currently utilized. Acting

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as a direct observer during this phase, the researcher took on the role of an active participant, keenly observing the intricacies of the learning process while diligently documenting insights and observations through field notes. Specifically focusing on a Critical Reading Class tailored for third-semester students enrolled in the English Language Education Program, this stage aimed to uncover and comprehend the nuances, challenges, and strengths of the existing educational setup.

The outcomes and findings derived from the preliminary study serve as the foundational bedrock for the subsequent development of a needs analysis centered around critical reading material. These results act as a pivot point, providing crucial insights and empirical evidence that inform the crafting of the needs analysis. By delving into the specifics of the observed learning environment and taking note of the strengths and weaknesses identified during the preliminary study, the needs analysis aims to delineate the precise requirements and gaps in the existing critical reading material. This phase serves as a crucial juncture, steering the focus towards a more targeted and tailored approach to address the identified deficiencies, thereby paving the way for the creation and implementation of an effective and responsive critical reading curriculum for the benefit of the students in the English Language Education Program.

#### **b. Designing Needs Analysis of Critical Reading Material**

The researcher's comprehensive analysis of the preliminary study results culminated in the identification and classification of students' target needs and learning needs, illuminating crucial facets for effective teaching in a reading class. Target needs were meticulously segmented into three pivotal components: necessity, wants, and lacks. The necessity component underscored the topics that students exhibited the most inclination towards, signaling the areas of highest interest and relevance. Want, the second component, delved into the depth of students' aspirations regarding critical reading skills, elucidating the extent to which they aimed to enhance their comprehension and analytical abilities. Lastly, lacks encapsulation of the lacunae or deficiencies students encountered while grappling with the passages, shedding light on areas requiring further attention and support.

Moreover, the researcher delineated five distinct components encapsulating the students' learning needs. The goal, as the primary component, outlined the overarching purpose students aimed to achieve upon completing the reading class, providing a clear direction for learning outcomes. Input, the second component, intricately detailed the desired sources for reading materials, the ideal length of texts, and outlined effective learning activities spanning pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages, as well as methods for evaluating learning progress. Setting, the third component, delineated the optimal time allocation for different aspects of the reading class, ensuring an efficient and balanced learning environment. The fourth component, the teacher's role, elucidated the anticipated roles

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and responsibilities of instructors in facilitating the learning process, emphasizing their crucial support in guiding and nurturing students' reading abilities. Lastly, the student's role, the final component, outlined the feasible roles and responsibilities students could assume during the learning process, encouraging active participation and engagement to foster a conducive learning atmosphere.

This meticulous breakdown and presentation of both target and learning needs in the questionnaire (as illustrated in Table 1) provide a comprehensive framework for educators to understand students' inclinations, aspirations, and areas requiring attention, thereby paving the way for the design and implementation of a more tailored and effective reading curriculum.

Table 1:  
*The Specification of Questionnaire*

No.	Categorization	Aspect	Sub Aspect	Number of Items
1	Target Needs	Necessity	Topic	6
		Wants	Required skills of Critical reading	7
		Lacks	Comprehension problem	8
2	Learning Needs	Goal	Purposes of critical reading	8
		Input	Length of text	5
			Pre-reading Activities	2
			While-reading Activities	3
		Setting	Post-reading Activities	4
			Learning assessments	3
			Time allocation	5
		Teacher's Roles	Teacher's role in the learning process	9
		Students' roles	Student's role in	9

The process of designing a needs analysis questionnaire is a crucial step in understanding the specific requirements and preferences of students, particularly in a Critical Reading class. By utilizing a Likert Scale-based questionnaire with 13 well-thought-out questions, the researcher aimed to delve deeper into the students' perspectives. Unlike traditional Likert Scale questionnaires with predetermined response options, this questionnaire allowed students to express their thoughts and formulate their answers, providing a more comprehensive view of their needs and preferences. This

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approach facilitated a nuanced understanding of the student's desires and challenges within the realm of critical reading. The questionnaire's validation by two validators further reinforced its credibility and ensured its alignment with the target needs and learning objectives of the students.

The questionnaire's findings shed light on three fundamental aspects related to the student's needs in critical reading. In critical reading, it involved critical thinking. Critical thinking is the active and skilful use of observation, experience, reflection, and reasoning to gather, analyse, synthesize, or evaluate information, guiding beliefs and actions (Styron, R.A., 2014). Firstly, the identification of feasible reading topics—such as technology, education, environment, lifestyle, social culture, and tourism—highlighted lifestyle as the predominant topic of interest, garnering 29% of the students' preference. Secondly, the revelation that 70% of students still grapple with vocabulary insufficiency underscores a significant challenge that needs to be addressed in the curriculum. Lastly, the students' wants, encompassing the desire to understand implied ideas (at 60%), a keen interest in learning critical reading skills (70%), and a preference to initially focus on enhancing vocabulary (65%), provide invaluable insights for structuring the course content and teaching methodology. To enhance students' critical awareness, the teacher should use authentic reading materials from newspapers or magazines (Paul, 2016).

In conclusion, the meticulously designed questionnaire and its subsequent analysis have effectively pinpointed the target needs and learning preferences of students in the Critical Reading class. These findings serve as a compass for educators, signaling the crucial areas that require attention and emphasis within the curriculum. By understanding the students' aspirations, challenges, and inclinations, educators can tailor their teaching approaches, content delivery, and support mechanisms to better align with the identified needs, ultimately fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment for the students.

### **c. Developing a Needs Analysis of Critical Reading Material**

In the developmental phase of the research process, validation of the needs analysis is a crucial step to ensure the accuracy and effectiveness of the gathered information. In this specific instance, two validators associated with the University of Muhammadiyah Purworejo undertook the validation process, evaluating three key components of the questionnaire: instruction, content, and language. The first component, instruction, focused on assessing the clarity of the questionnaire's objectives and the suitability of the evaluation criteria employed. The second component, content, centered around examining the alignment between the indicators and the questions outlined in the questionnaire. Lastly, the language component aimed to assess the appropriateness of the language utilized within the questionnaire. The results of this validation process, as depicted in Table 2, likely provide detailed insights into the strengths and potential areas for improvement

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across these three critical components, thus guiding necessary revisions and ensuring the questionnaire's reliability and applicability in subsequent stages of the research.

Table 2:  
*The Results of The Validation Process*

No	Aspect	Indicator	Rater		Average	Percentage
			1	2		
1.	Instruction	The clarity of the objectives of the questionnaire	4	4	4	100
		The clarity of the assessment criteria.	3	4	3.5	87,5
2	Content	The appropriateness of every aspect in the needs analysis	3	4	3.5	87,5
3	Language	Appropriate language use.	3	3	3	75
		Understandable sentence.	4	4	4	100
		Readability of the text.	4	4	4	100

In the process of validating an educational product within the English education department, the involvement of experts in scrutinizing and evaluating the product is crucial. In this scenario, the inclusion of two experts who examined the product and provided comments signifies a concerted effort to ensure its validity. The experts employed a quantitative approach by utilizing questionnaires with Likert Scale responses, a method commonly used to gauge opinions and perceptions. By assigning numerical values to responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," the experts could objectively measure the assessment criteria proposed in the questionnaire. The subsequent analysis, following Suharto's formula, aimed to quantify the overall appropriateness and effectiveness of the questionnaire.

The outcomes presented in the table affirm the questionnaire's high level of appropriateness and effectiveness. The experts' assessment revealed that the questionnaire possessed clear objectives and assessment criteria, which facilitated easy comprehension for students as they navigated through the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire's alignment with the concepts of critical reading underscores its comprehensive development, ensuring that each aspect adhered to these foundational principles. Additionally, the language used Bahasa Indonesia in this instance, was deemed highly appropriate, contributing significantly to students'

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comprehension and ease in answering the questionnaire. Collectively, these evaluations affirm the thoroughness and suitability of the questionnaire in the context of English education, signifying its validity and potential effectiveness as an educational assessment tool.

Following the validator's recommendations, the researcher made essential revisions to the questionnaire, replacing scientific terms with more comprehensible Bahasa Indonesia equivalents. Furthermore, adjustments were made to the learning activities in line with critical reading principles such as dialogue, action-taking, and praxis. These modifications aimed to enhance the questionnaire's accessibility and align learning activities with the fundamental aspects of critical reading.

During the preliminary field testing at Muhammadiyah University of Purworejo involving third-semester students in the Critical Reading class, the revised questionnaire demonstrated its effectiveness. Results indicated that students found the instructions clear and comprehensible, enabling them to articulate their learning needs within the reading class. However, the findings from the shared questionnaire emphasized existing challenges among students related to vocabulary comprehension, preferred topics, implied ideas, and feedback from lectures. Despite this, the integration of critical questioning by instructors appeared pivotal, fostering diverse perspectives among students and stimulating critical thinking skills, influencing their speaking, listening, and writing abilities. Overall, these adjustments and preliminary testing underscore the potential effectiveness of employing critical reading to elevate students' critical awareness and comprehension within the English Language Education Program.

The iterative process of validating an educational product within the English education department, involving expert examination, quantitative analysis using Likert Scale questionnaires, and subsequent revisions, showcased a comprehensive effort to ensure the questionnaire's validity and effectiveness. The alignment of the questionnaire with critical reading principles and adjustments made in response to validator suggestions aimed to enhance accessibility and cater to students' learning needs. The preliminary field testing at Muhammadiyah University of Purworejo demonstrated promising outcomes, indicating the revised questionnaire's clarity and its role in articulating students' learning needs. While challenges such as vocabulary comprehension and topic preferences were identified, the integration of critical questioning by instructors exhibited the potential to foster diverse perspectives and enhance critical thinking skills among students. Overall, these validation efforts and subsequent adjustments underscore the potential effectiveness of employing critical reading to elevate students' critical awareness and comprehension in the English Language Education Program.

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## CONCLUSION

Developing a needs analysis tailored for critical reading material adapted to the characteristics of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, specifically Indonesian students, is crucial in creating an effective reading curriculum. Given the novelty of critical reading studies, educators must craft reading materials that resonate with EFL learners' unique traits and challenges. Nine fundamental aspects should guide curriculum developers in designing a reading class aligned with critical reading needs. These aspects encompass various dimensions such as selecting pertinent reading topics that engage students' interests, identifying suitable sources for reading materials, considering the ideal text length to sustain attention, delineating diverse learning activities encompassing pre-, during, and post-reading stages, allotting appropriate time for each activity, pinpointing necessary critical reading skills to be honed, addressing common problems encountered in reading classes, formulating relevant learning assessments, and elucidating the roles of both teachers and students in the learning process. To ensure the needs analysis captures a comprehensive understanding, educators should augment the needs analysis questionnaire with complementary research instruments such as interviews, observations, and document analysis. These additional tools offer diverse perspectives and deeper insights into students' needs and challenges in critical reading. Interviews allow for direct interactions, providing qualitative insights into students' perceptions, preferences, and struggles with critical reading tasks. Observation enables educators to witness firsthand how students engage with reading materials, their reactions, and any hurdles faced during comprehension. Document analysis, including reviewing previous curriculum materials or students' past performance records, can offer valuable historical context and highlight recurring issues that need addressing. Integrating these multiple research instruments bolsters the accuracy and depth of information gathered, facilitating the development of a more nuanced and tailored critical reading material for EFL Indonesian students.

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