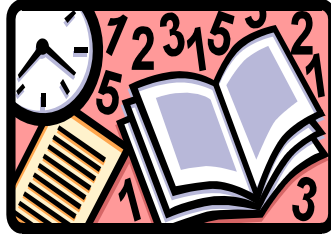


Lecture 2

REGIONAL DIALECTOLOGY

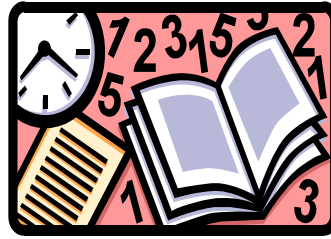
Approaches to Language



■ Guess what these mean & perhaps where they're from?

- i. snowblossom
- ii. time for a snap
- iii. mask the tea
- iv. a great mawther
- v. a bairn
- vi. I'll fill up your piggy, it's time for bed

(Holmes 2001: 128)



- Different groups of people who speak the same language may speak it in a different way: variation
- Example: USA → Bostonians, New Yorkers, Texans, whites in Denver etc. variation in the way they speak English
- Dialect: mutually intelligible forms of a particular language that exhibit systematic differences
- Dialect: NOT an inferior form of language (a language is a collection of dialects) Fromkin et al (2014)

+ Dimensions of variation



- Geographical
- Social
- Stylistic
- Diachronic
- Individual



DIALECT



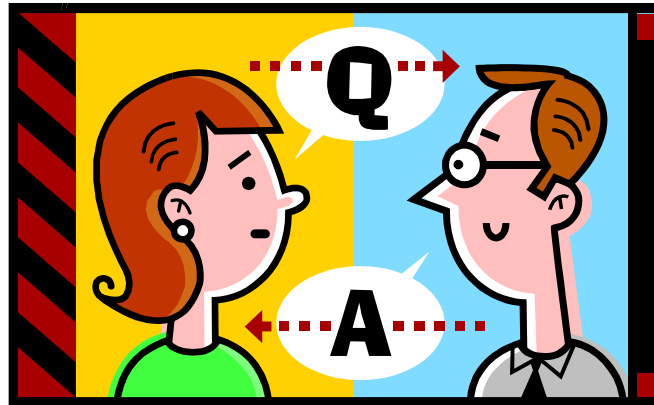
- Term used to define **regional** and **social** variation in language use.

Regional variation – variant language use according to geographic location of speakers

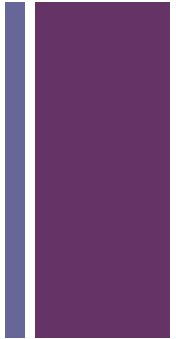
Social variation – variant language use according to individual & social factors – e.g. gender; age; socio-economic class, educational level; social network; occupational grouping; aspirational grouping/peer group etc.

- Differentiation of dialects – necessary to define linguistic features, e.g. accent; grammatical characteristics; lexical items; phonological features e.g. intonation/rhythm/pitch
- Central concern of sociolinguistics: the way in which language varies systematically

+ What accent do you have?



+ Dialectology



- *Dialectology/ linguistic geography, geolinguistics*
- *Regional dialectology*
- The identification and mapping of boundaries between different varieties on the basis of clusters of similar and different features in particular regions, towns and villages (Meyerhoff 2011: 13)
- *Social dialectology*
- The study of linguistic variation in relation to speaker's participation or membership in social groups, or in relation to other non linguistic factors (Meyerhoff 2011: 17)
- Note: both refer to the systematic study of language variation

CATEGORISATIONS:

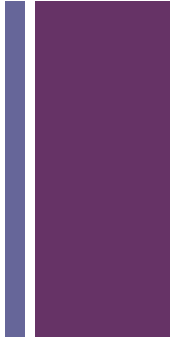
Should We Dispel Accepted Notions?

- Prevalent proposal:
 - dialect is a 'sub-variety' of a standard language
 - distinction made on the basis 'power', 'solidarity' – social and political considerations

E.g.: Danes, Norwegians and Swedes can converse with each other;
Danish, Norwegian & Swedish= separate languages (separate countries & systematic grammatical differences)

- 'A language is a dialect with an army and navy.' Max Weinreich





Linguists – consider all varieties to be equal – equally complex; equally able to express meaning; marker of identity.

Haugen (1966) – argues confusion over terms extends from the borrowing of the term ‘dialect’ into English from Ancient Greek in the Renaissance

- Ionic (works of history); Doric (Choral/Lyrical); Attic (Tragedy) – all considered as dialects

French also make a distinction between ‘dialect’ and ‘patois’ (non-standard language)

+ Language vs. Dialect

- Gumperz (1982) – socio-historical factors account for boundaries between languages & dialects. Divisions are not drawn on linguistic grounds:

Demarcation of separate languages:

India/Yugoslavia – grammatically similar varieties considered as separate languages.

Hindi & Urdu – almost identical grammatical systems

Urdu is written R -> L (Arabic & Persian script)

Hindi L -> R (Devanagari script – draws on Sanskrit)

Demarcation of similarity:

Wales/Iraq/Egypt/Morocco etc. – grammatically dissimilar varieties considered as same languages – literary & colloquial forms are grammatically dissimilar.

China – Cantonese & Mandarin – spoken varieties mutually unintelligible – but common writing system

+Dialect Characteristics

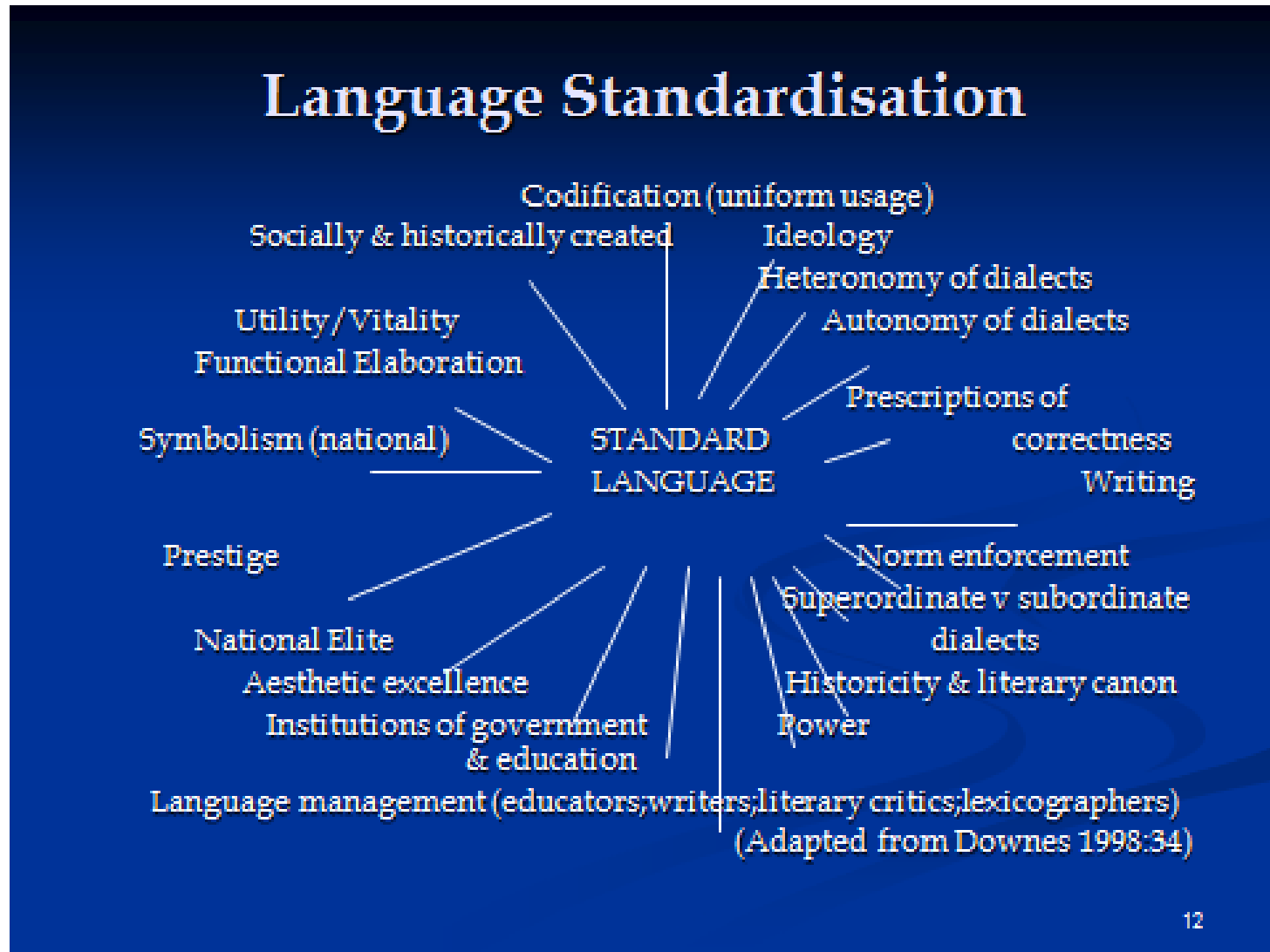
(Mesthrie et al 2009:43ff)

- In ordinary usage, the distinction between language and dialect is a political rather than a linguistic one [1 dialect is chosen & standardised]. The way a speech continuum [i.e. the way we divide dialects & languages over a specified geographic area] is cut up and labeled in the 'real world' is often based on political factors.
- Many linguists consider all dialects of a language to be equal, unless proven otherwise. That is, everyone's way of speaking is equally valid and capable of conveying fine nuances of meaning.
...and everyone speaks in a dialect.
- Some linguists, however, believe that not all dialects are equal. In particular the standard variety of a community may have the advantage over others in matters like vocabulary development for more technical and formal purposes. [...and command of the prestige variety may lead to greater social/economic advancement].

+ Dialectal Characteristics (Cont'd)

- The standard form of a language is a socio-historical product rather than an entity that necessarily pre-dated other varieties of that language.
- Accent is often part of the defining feature of a dialect, but may be separated from it & it is possible to speak the standard form of a language while using an accent associated with a particular region.
- Where the distinction between the two (language and dialect) is not significant for the analysis being done, linguists prefer to use the term 'variety' [or code].

+ Language standardisation





HISTORY OF DIALECTOLOGY:

Linguistic Survey of India



- Linguistic Survey of India– (regions now known as Pakistan & Bangladesh) - Sir George Grierson & local government officials (classification of languages of India, 1894 onwards)
- Data:
Asked informants to:
 - *recite the parable of the Prodigal Son
(in the local dialect based on text in Hindi or Bengali)
 - *offer a piece of folklore, prose or verse
 - *translate 241 words or phrases
- Based on the degrees of similarity across villages: grouping of village speech into dialects & then dialects into languages.
- Dialect continuum: 179 languages/544 component dialects of these languages
(Mesthrie et al: 45)

+ Dialect continuum



I-----II-----III-----IV-----V-----VI-----VII



Dialect Continuum



- Sometimes a dialect changes very slightly as one travels from one region to an adjacent region, to the extent that a distinct isogloss cannot be drawn between dialects.
- The linguistic situation in such regions is called a **dialect continuum**.
- In fact, in some border regions, such as the border between **France and Italy**, there is no distinct line that separates the two languages. Instead, as you travel from Italy to France, the language gains French features and loses Italian features from village to village.

HISTORY OF DIALECTOLOGY: Europe



- Early interest (19th century) = historical + written texts – propose laws showing the phonetic correspondence between words of languages of the world
- An example of a sound law: the correspondence between <bh>; in Sanskrit ; in Germanic languages and <f>; in Latin.
- The word for ‘brother’ is *bhratar* in Sanskrit; *brothor* in Old English and *frater* in Latin.

HISTORY OF DIALECTOLOGY: Europe



- 19th/20th century – geographical dialectology: *linguistic geography/ geolinguistics*

1. interest in spoken forms (considered to preserve older, more uniform/regular forms);
2. consideration that rural speech was being ‘eroded’ by the demands of modernisation/urbanisation – particularly in Europe.

Regional Dialects



- Regional dialectology: the systematic study of how one language varies from one region/area to another.
- Mapping of dialects on a regional basis
 - historically began within the field of DIACHRONIC or HISTORICAL linguistics
 - known as DIALECT GEOGRAPHY or GEOLINGUISTICS
- Premise of regional dialectology – varieties, (languages/dialects) differ as speakers become distanced in time and space.



How do linguists study regional variation?



- Another example:
- Atlas Linguistique de la France 'ALF'
- 19th century
- Jules Gillieron (pioneer in dialectology): fieldworker
Edmond Edmont cycled in France stopped in small villages
asked the local vocabulary items and noted the local
pronunciation
- Consistent system of transcription was used



How do linguists study regional variation?



- A preliminary investigation or pilot survey is often carried out: gain some idea of the way usages vary over the area to be covered and to decide what sort of items are worthy of detailed investigation.
- A network of geographical localities where the fieldwork is to be conducted is decided upon. The number of such localities and the density of coverage is constrained by time, finances and number of fieldworkers, and possibly by the density of population in the area.



How do linguists study regional variation?



- A list of items to be investigated is drawn up in the format of a questionnaire. (Typical items are given in the box below.)
- Fieldwork is then conducted. One or more trained investigators travel to the localities selected and make contact with people who they consider to be most suitable informants. Questionnaires are completed in the presence of the consultant. Since the 1950s, greater flexibility has been afforded by the advent of the tape recorder, as some parts of the interview can be recorded and transcribed later.
- Data analysis is then undertaken. Lists are produced showing geographical patterns of distribution, usually with the aid of maps. Publication of lists and maps is a time-consuming and expensive undertaking which often occurs many years after the initial survey.

Petyt 1980: 49-51 cited in Mesthrie et al (2009)



How do linguists study regional variation?



- Some questions:
- Vocabulary: What do you call the thing you carry water in? (Shows whether pail or bucket or some other item is used in an English-speaking area.)
- Semantics: People starve from hunger; what else can people starve from? (cold in the north of England and Scotland.)
- Grammar: We say today it snowed; yesterday it also — (The answer shows whether snowed or snow or some other form is the usual one.)

(Mesthrie et al: 48)

+ Dialect maps: Isoglosses

- **Isogloss (same + tongue)**: A geographical boundary that delimits the area where a specific linguistic feature occurs
- These linguistic features can be phonemes, vocabulary items, grammatical constructions.
- Isoglosses serve to mark off clearly areas in which a feature is found from those adjacent areas where it is not recorded or occurs only exceptionally, or together with another form. (Mesthrie et al: 49)
- Example:

How would you pronounce the following words?

cup, luck, love, bus

- **Dialect boundary**: several isoglosses exhibit similar patterning (occurring close together)



Lexical Isogloss showing the use of “blackberries” vs. “brambles” in England



Map 2.2 The lexical isogloss: *blackberries* vs *brambles* (from Orton and Wright, *A Word Geography of England* 1974: 37)



Dialect maps: Relic areas and transitional areas



- In some areas we observe retention of old forms; the sound change wave has not reached these areas. These are referred to as 'relic areas'
- See Mesthrie et al:55 for an example of postvocalic /r/
- A speech area may share characteristics of both adjacent areas. This is referred to as 'transitional area'.



Review: The postvocalic /r/



- What do we know so far about the pronunciation of the postvocalic /r/ in English?
- Postvocalic r refers to the use of [r] after a vowel (e.g. *car*, *park*)
- It excludes the occurrence of [r] between vowels (e.g. *very*)



Relic areas: Chambers and Trudgill 1998



- 5. Rhotic dialects in England are found among the most conservative speakers (NORMs) in the rural south, around Liverpool in Lancashire, and in Northumberland (after Trudgill 1974c). The discontinuous distribution of the rhotic areas indicates that rhotic dialects are RELIC features in England



Dialect maps: centers of prestige (Wave theory)

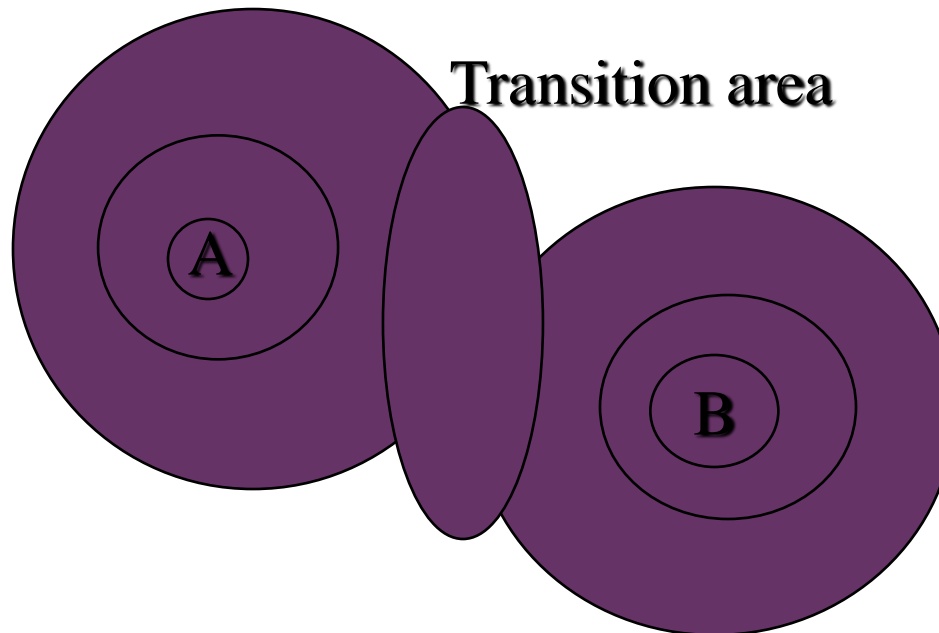


- How do linguistic features spread?
- The spread of linguistic features from a centre of prestige (a city or town) can happen in a wavelike way (wave theory)
- The isoglosses resemble the ripples created by a stone thrown into a pond.



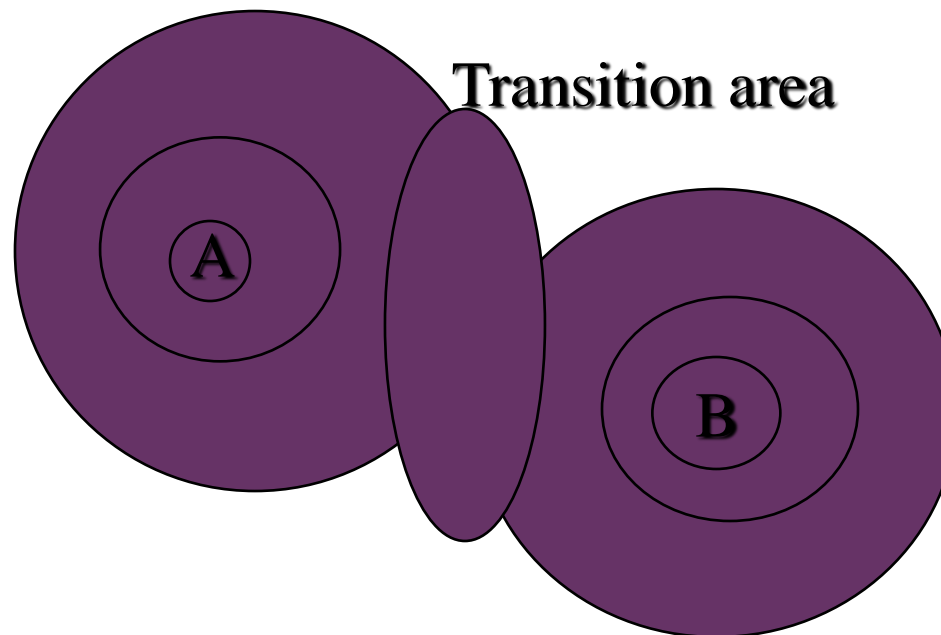
+Wave Theory

- Wave theory – accounts for:
 - in-group variation within a locality;
 - convergence & divergence of variant forms
- Or where forms originate from.
- Figure showing focal areas (a & b) & transition area (Mesthrie et al:54)



+Wave Theory

- Each circle represents the outer limit of a particular feature.
- Areas A and B are centres of prestige (city or town): linguistic features (or linguistic innovations) spread outwards.
- Figure showing focal areas (a & b) & transition area (Mesthrie et al: 53-54)



+ Weaknesses Of Traditional Dialectology

Flawed design, methodology & analysis:

- poor selection of informants & area – limited & non-representative (NORMs: Non-mobile, Old, Rural, Male; Trudgill & Chambers, 1980); speech is not representative of the areas studied
- theoretically unsound (isolated linguistic features + decontextualised): linguistic features studied were treated as individual unrelated parts of language.

+ Weaknesses Of Traditional Dialectology

Flawed design, methodology & analysis:

- limitations of the questionnaire design: extreme length of the questionnaires , 'fatigue bias errors'
- emphasis on individual linguistic items at the expense of investigations of social interaction & groupings: main focus on parts of language, rather than on speakers of a language.
- Informants: were considered 'only as a source of data for a given location, as human reference books rather than as members of complex social groups' Mesthrie et al: 59

+ Modern Dialectology

- Abandoned older concerns with:
 - separating languages into dialects
 - emphasis on older/potentially dying dialectal forms
 - rural speech forms
- Focus on urban speech: new speech forms arising from contact between speakers of different backgrounds.
- ‘lects’ (smaller groupings within a dialect)– ‘genderlects’, ‘ethnolects’, ‘sociolects’
- Border dialectology – merging of varieties within regions such as New Towns e.g. Milton Keynes, UK or urban settings e.g. creole in London youths: study the linguistic behaviour of people living in the linguistic borderlands.
- Border dialect: how one variety within a dialect continuum shades off into another.



AREAS DEMANDING FURTHER INVESTIGATION



- Articulatory settings: the organs of the vocal tract have certain preferred positions or general setting (different from those they have in a state of rest)
- Articulatory setting: It may give a speech variety its characteristic 'colour' ; it is one of the ways in which dialects tend to be identified, e.g. as 'nasal' (Scouse dialect in Liverpool)
- Prosody (rhythm/pitch/intonation)
- Possibility to locate dialects in everyday discourse: e.g. politeness; markers, yes/ay; you know/you ken etc; cultural phenomena e.g. proverbs; nursery rhymes)
- Register: language variation according to the context in which it is being used, e.g. law, sports broadcasting, scientific discourse

(Mesthrie et al: 68-71)



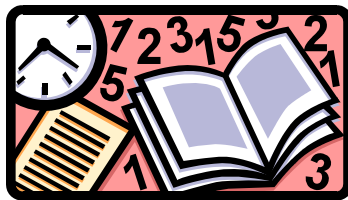
BBC Voices & Video



www.bbc.co.uk/voices/

Video

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W68VaOuY6ew>



- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of language standardisation as opposed to regional variation?
- If you were designing a dialect survey, what types of informants would you attempt to include in your study? Detail the kinds of demographic details that you would attempt to satisfy. What do you think might be interesting to study today in the UK or your country?
- You are trying to discover the local names for objects/concepts in different areas e.g. a glass/home – consider how you elicit these forms from speakers – how would you phrase your questions so that you don't actually use the forms themselves. Try to think of 5 different objects/concepts that you suspect vary in form geographically and see if you can test out your questions on class-mates.

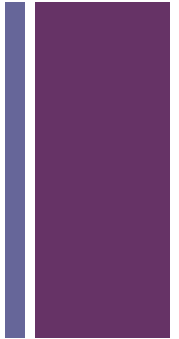
+ CONCEPTS INTRODUCED

- Accent
- Border dialectology
- Dialect
- Dialect boundary
- Dialect continua
- Diachronic/synchronic
- Geolinguistics
- Isogloss
- Language
- Relic areas
- Standardisation
- Transition areas
- Wave theory





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