

New Approaches to L2 Learning Motivation Research

Kazuro SHIBUYA

1. Introduction

Motivation has been seen as one of the main determinants that influence the success of second/foreign language (L2) learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972), for instance, emphasize that motivational factors can surpass those of aptitude, although the latter is widely accepted as one of the most influential aspects in language learning achievement. Owing to the major concerns of L2 motivation for practitioners and scholars, a number of studies that investigate the role and nature of L2 learning motivation have been conducted in recent decades. Among these, research by Robert Gardner and his Canadian associates were the most influential and dominant until the 1990s. A number of research findings contradicting Gardner's, however, were reported by researchers (e.g. Chihara and Oller, 1978 and Oxford, Talbott, and Halleck, 1989), leading to attempts to reexamine or develop Gardner's social psychological model and explore a new approach to L2 learning motivation in the 1990s (Dörnyei, 1998).

The purpose of this paper is to review past research on second/foreign (L2) learning motivation and identify the main currents which underlie the field, in order to give a better understanding of studies on L2 learning motivation. To this end, this paper firstly provides an overview of Gardner's motivation theory and examines issues raised by other scholars. Secondly, through a review of the studies which emerged in the 1990s, this paper examines these new developments to L2 learning motivation which attempted to reopen the research agenda.

2. Gardner's L2 motivation theory

Gardner's motivation theory, which was the most influential and dominant in the field of L2 learning motivation until the early 1990s, emphasized the socio-cultural aspects of motivation in language learning. This may be reasonable and natural, considering the difference between language learning and other subjects: language learning involves not only learning skills or lexical and grammatical knowledge but also 'an alternation in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being' (Williams and Burden, 1997: 115). One of the most well-known concepts of this social psychological model which spotlighted the influence of learners' attitudes towards the L2 and the L2 community on their L2 learning behaviour was called 'integrative motivation, defined by Gardner as a 'motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language' (Gardner, 1985: 82-3). Integrative motivation is a composite construct made up of three main components: (1) *integrativeness*, which reflects 'a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come close to the other language community' (Gardner, 2001: 5), (2) *attitudes towards the learning situation*, which consist of attitudes towards the language teacher and the L2 course, and (3) *motivation*, which comprised effort, desire, and attitude towards learning. In this framework, the integratively motivated learner is one who has a positive view of the L2, has a desire to identify with the L2 community, and tends to evaluate the learning situation positively (Dörnyei, 2001). It should be noted that integrativeness may not in all cases imply a positive attitude towards the L2 community, however: for example, Ellis (1997: 75) points out that 'some learners may be influenced by a 'Machiavellian motivation' – the desire to learn the L2 in order to manipulate and overcome the people of the target language'. Instrumental motivation, which is defined as 'the degree of effort a learner puts into learning an L2 as a result of the desire to achieve some functional goal (e.g. to pass an exam)' (Ellis, 1997: 140), is the utilitarian counterpart of integrative motivation in Gardner's (1985) motivation theory. According to his research, integrative motivation is more closely correlated with learners' achievement than instrumental motivation. The significant role of integrative motivation in language learning was thus emphasized and the concept

of the integrative/instrumental dichotomy in language learning motivation became pervasive among researchers. Dörnyei (1994: 273) has described Gardner's social psychological approach as 'too influential', by quoting Crookes and Schmidt (1991: 501): it is "so dominant that alternative concepts have not been seriously considered". Meanwhile, while the dichotomous concepts pervaded the field of L2 motivation study, some researchers began to question the notion that integrative motivation has a strong connection to success in language learning. A number of researchers (e.g. Oller, Baca, and Vigil, 1977, Chihara and Oller, 1978, and Oxford, Talbott, and Halleck, 1989) reported research findings contradicting Gardner's. Attempting to account for these different research results, Au (1988) raised the issue of the context in which these studies were conducted. One of the main focuses of the issue of context was the difference between second and foreign language environments. Oxford and Shearin (1994: 15) state that 'the motivations of foreign and second language learners are often highly disparate'; integrative motivation is much more meaningful for second language learners than for foreign language learners. Some studies reported that integrativeness can play a significant role not only in a second language context but also in a foreign language context where learners have little opportunity to meet with members of the target language group, or to experience the language first hand. For example, Dörnyei and Clement's (2000) study in Hungary, which is largely monolingual and monocultural, with foreign languages being taught primarily as a school subject with very limited direct contact with the target speakers, found 'integrativeness to be the most powerful general component of the participants' generalized language-related affective disposition, determining language choice and the general level of effort the students intended to invest in the learning process' (Dörnyei, 2001). Dörnyei (1990) suggests that instrumental motivation affects foreign language learners, especially at an intermediate proficiency level and below, while integrative motivation might play a role in going beyond the intermediate level in foreign language learning. Other scholars raised questions about the dichotomous model of L2 motivation, accompanied by a great deal of confusion and disagreement between researchers regarding classification. Au (1988) points out that some cases seem to be difficult to classify into either integrative or instrumental motiva-

tion. Clement and Kruideniet (1983) state that motivation of L2 learners who want to make friends among the target language people can be classified as either instrumental or integrative. Based on research investigating 218 American high school students learning Japanese, Oxford and Shearin (1994) suggest that L2 learning motivation theory emphasizing integrative and instrumental aspects might not cover all possible kinds of L2 learning motivation. They found approximately twenty distinguishable motivation categories including integrative and instrumental orientations.

One important aspect we should bear in mind with regard to these dichotomous types of motivation is that they can be seen 'as complementary rather than as distinct and oppositional' (Ellis, 1997: 76). For example, L2 learners can be motivated both instrumentally and integratively at the same time even though they may be motivated more instrumentally than integratively or vice versa. Ellis moreover (1997: 76) points out that 'motivation is dynamic in nature; it is not something that a learner has or does not have but rather something that varies from one to the next depending on the learning context or task'. It can be appreciated, then, that motivation is such an elusive and complex phenomenon that it may be necessary to examine it from a multi-dimensional perspective and in a conceptually flexible way.

3. New approaches to L2 learning motivation

In response of these questions regarding Gardner's social psychological model, a number of researchers have attempted to reexamine or develop the theory and explore a new approach to L2 learning motivation during recent years, especially in the 1990s, although researchers unanimously acknowledged Gardner's great contribution to the area of L2 learning motivation studies (Dörnyei, 1994, 1998, Oxford and Shearin, 1994). These attempts might be summarized as, (1) the development of more extended integrative/instrumental orientations; (2) a more pragmatic, education-centred approach to L2 motivation research which would be more relevant for classroom application; (3) the adaptation of the available constructs in various branches of psychology to L2 motivation theory; (4) Tremblay and Gardner's attempt to revise Gardner's social psychological model of L2 moti-

vation; (5) a comprehensive approach to synthesising the motivational components which are relevant to L2 learning; (6) a qualitative approach to research on L2 learning motivation; (7) studies on L2 motivation from a temporal perspective. In addition to these attempts, there have been studies investigating other L2 motivational factors which affect students' motivation: (8) significant others and (9) gender. All these approaches are reviewed below.

(1) The development of more extended integrative/instrumental orientations: Clement and Kruidenier's research in Canada (1983, 1985) proposed a model in which integrativeness developed into three other distinct general orientations to learn L2, namely *knowledge*, *friendship*, and *travel orientations* in addition to *instrumental orientations*. Moreover, a fourth orientation, *socio-cultural*, was also identified when L2 was a foreign language. In a study investigating young adult learners in a foreign language situation in Hungary, Dörnyei (1990) identified three loosely-related dimensions that were subsumed under integrative motivation: 1) *interest in foreign languages, cultures, and people*; 2) *desire to broaden one's view and avoid provincialism*; 3) *desire for new stimuli and challenge*. These studies suggest that research in L2 motivation would need to take into consideration differences between contextual circumstances. With regard to the issue of context, Dörnyei (1994: 275) states that 'the exact nature of the social and pragmatic dimensions of L2 is always dependent on *who* learns *what* languages *where*.' When it comes to the contextual issues in L2 motivation studies, the difference between second and foreign language environments or between multi-lingual and mono-lingual environments has been often focused upon. However, there seems to be a further range of contextual difference that we should take into consideration. For example, even in a foreign language situation in which the same target language (e.g. English) is learned, the situation seems to differ in countries where educational systems are different; grammar/translation-centred classes are dominant in Japanese middle and high schools while other countries may emphasize communication-centred classes. Moreover, English education is highly examination-centred in Japanese middle and high schools, while it is not always so in Japanese universities. The learning context is also different for people who are studying English after they have left schools and universities. It is

reasonable to suggest that differences between these educational backgrounds or learning environments in the community where the target language is learned would affect students' L2 attitudes and motivation, as well as the differences between an L2 and a foreign language context. It will thus be necessary for future studies to have more concern for the influences of difference between 'socio-educational' contexts on L2 learners' motivation.

(2) A more pragmatic, education-centred approach to L2 motivation research which would be more relevant for classroom application: although a number of L2 motivation studies have contributed to better understanding of the motivation concept, they did not always offer an applicable guide to teachers. Some researchers thus proposed motivational strategies which are applicable in the classroom (e.g. Brown, 1994; Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Williams & Burden, 1997). Dörnyei and Csizer (in press) attempt to propose 'ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners' based on empirical data with regard to the beliefs and practices of 200 practising teachers working in various teaching situations. Such efforts may become increasingly popular and necessary because how to motivate learners has been always one of the central concerns for teachers.

(3) The adaptation of the available constructs in various branches of psychology to the L2 motivation theory: along with the development of motivational psychology, a number of researchers have attempted to adapt motivational theories from the field of cognitive psychology to L2 motivation research. For example, Clement and his colleagues (1980, 1994) conducted a series of empirical studies investigating *linguistic self-confidence*; Williams and Burden (1999) and Ushioda (1996b, 1998) investigated the attributions of L2 learning successes and failures on the basis of qualitative approaches; Noels and her colleagues (Noels *et al.*, 1999, 2000) conducted research on self-determination in L2 contexts; and so on. Among these studies, very little research on attributions in L2 motivation has been conducted so far, although the importance of attributions in L2 motivation has been emphasized in the literature by a number of researchers (e.g. Skehan, 1989; Dörnyei, 1990; Tremblay and Gardner, 1995). Dörnyei (2001: 57) identifies 'the traditionally quantitative nature of L2 motivation research' as one of the rea-

sons for this:

the effects of causal attributions are complex, varying as a function of the type of attributions made and the attributional style and biases of the learners, and questionnaire-based studies focusing on linear relationships of broad categories have not been adequate to do this intricate process justice.

A qualitative approach may thus be more appropriate for studies closely associated with learners' perceptions, such as attributions of L2 motivation, in the manners of studies by Williams and Burden (1999) and Ushioda (1996b, 1998).

(4) Tremblay and Gardner's attempt to revise Gardner's social psychological model of L2 motivation: in response of other researchers' criticism of Gardner's social psychological construct of L2 motivation, Gardner and Tremblay (1995) attempted to revise Gardner's social psychological construct of L2 motivation. In line with other researchers, they adopted expectancy-value and goal theory which had been recently developed in cognitive psychology and combined them with Gardner's earlier model. It may be true that Gardner's approach emphasized the social psychological aspect of L2 motivation, but this does not necessarily imply that his model concerns only the social dimension of L2 motivation. It should be noted that Gardner and his associates attempted to conduct empirical research on a number of motivational determinants not linked to the social aspect, such as pedagogical factors, language anxiety and parental influence (Dörnyei, 1998). With regard to Gardner and Tremblay's attempt to revise Gardner's earlier model, Dörnyei (1998: 127) points out that:

The firm empirical grounding and the theoretical clarity of the model make the Gardner and Tremblay (1995) study a particularly important data-base investigation, and one that will undoubtedly inspire further research.

As in the case of Gardner's revised model, a cognitive view of motivation, which

more and more L2 motivation studies have recently adopted, can be seen as one of the most important perspectives on L2 motivation research.

(5) A comprehensive approach to synthesising the motivational components relevant to L2 learning: Dörnyei (1994) proposed a comprehensive model of L2 motivation that synthesized the various components involved in foreign language learning motivation. Dörnyei's model was composed of three main dimensions: the *Language Level*, the *Learner Level*, and the *Learning Situation Level*. This model, which systematically integrated a number of different lines of research, may shed some light on the multifaceted nature of L2 motivation. Dörnyei himself (1994, 1998), however, pointed out the weaknesses of this model: the lack of an indication of any relationships between the components, the difficulty of empirical testing of components because of their being diverse in nature, the lack of a goal component from self-determination theory, and the simplification of the *Language Level* such that it does not fully indicate the intricate processes determining the social aspect of L2 motivation. In spite of these weaknesses, this model is of great help for studies seeking to understand the nature of L2 motivation from a comprehensive perspective. Williams and Burden (1997) made another similar attempt to synthesize the motivational components involved in L2, based on mainstream psychology, especially cognitive and social constructivist frameworks. Their framework is composed of two main elements: *Internal factors* and *External factors*. *Internal factors* – influences coming from inside the learner such as an interest in the given task or feelings of competence – subsume nine components: intrinsic interest of activity, perceived value of activity, sense of agency, mastery, self-concept, attitudes language learning in general, other affective states, developmental age and stage, and gender. *External factors* – influences from outside the learners such as the influence of other people – encompass four components: significant others, the nature of interaction with significant others, the learning environment, and the broader context. Although it lacks any directional indication of relationships between these influences, similar to Dörnyei's (1994) model, the framework covers almost all of the influences involved in L2 motivation that have been investigated so far.

A great deal of research on L2 motivation has been done on the basis of reduc-

tionist models that are able to explain the phenomenon with great precision regarding the specific behavioral domain and allow empirical tests to examine the models. It may indeed be the case that reductionist models can be adequate to elucidate a certain, well-defined motivational behaviour, but they may be inadequate to explain the complexity of the motivational phenomenon to a great extent, because they reduce a number of related motivational influences in order to carry out an empirical test and thereby build a solid theory. These models may thus be appropriate from a theory-building perspective, but they may not be so from the perspective of explanation of the intricacies of L2 motivation. Dörnyei (2001: 12) points out that 'a striking feature of all mainstream motivation theories is their lack of comprehensiveness'. Therefore, a holistic approach to L2 motivation, based on comprehensive models representing multiple perspectives such as Dörnyei (1994) or Williams and Burden (1997) may make a great contribution to describing the multifaceted phenomenon of L2 motivation with more precision than ever before.

(6) Qualitative approaches to research on L2 learning motivation: although qualitative approaches have been increasingly adopted in the field of social science and in psychological studies, very little qualitative research on L2 learning motivation has so far been conducted. Recent examples of the very few qualitative studies on L2 motivation were those by Ushioda (1998) and Williams and Burden (1999): Ushioda conducted qualitative research from a temporal perspective, based on the data from a longitudinal interview with motivated Irish learners of French. Her study indicated that learners' motivation evolved from motivation such as positive L2-learning experiences to motivation directed towards future goals such as personal goals; William and Burden conducted qualitative research which investigated learners' attributions for success and failure in learning French, based on the interview data with 36 students from 10 to 15 years of age. The study revealed teachers' significance role in the development of students' attributions. Dörnyei (2001: 239) suggests reasons for the very limited number of qualitative studies on L2 motivation: 'because of the strong initial influences of quantitative social psychology on L2 motivation research, qualitative studies have traditionally not been part of the research repertoire in the field'. One of the

strong advantages of a qualitative approach, however, is that it allows researchers to gain a deeper insight into the relations and interplays of the various factors involved in L2 motivation, and to portray the multidimensional dynamic construct of L2 motivation with greater precision and richer description. Ushioda (1994, 1996b) argues that while the quantitative approach is inevitably limiting regarding the representation of the dynamic nature of L2 motivational construct the qualitative approach would be much more sensitive to it. While quantitative research concerns the general tendency of the motivational phenomenon 'between the individuals' with regard to a specific factor, the qualitative approach may concern the relations of factors involved in the motivational phenomenon 'within the individual'. With regard to the qualitative approach, Dörnyei (2001:240) states that:

In contrast to the quantitative tradition, whose strength lies in detecting general trends across learners, this line of investigation is more appropriate to uncover the complex interaction of social, cultural and psychological factors within the individual learner.

Another advantage of the qualitative approach is thus to be able to spotlight individual learners, which would allow researchers to bring in as active participants in the research individuals, especially 'marginal groups' (e.g. poorly motivated or highly motivated learners), to whom little or no attention has generally been paid in the quantitative approach, although these groups have been always of great concern to teachers. It should be borne in mind, however, that this advantage can be, in turn, a disadvantage with regard to the issue of *representativeness* or *generalizability*. Qualitative research thus always requires *reflexivity*. Taking into consideration the imbalance between quantitative and qualitative studies in the field of L2 motivation, however, one can argue that more qualitative studies in this area is necessary and would lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon, although both approaches have their advantages and disadvantages.

(7) Studies on L2 motivation from a temporal perspective: a very limited amount of research emphasizing the temporal dimension of L2 learning motivation has been done previously; 'hardly any research has been done on analyzing the

dynamics of L2 motivational change and identifying typical sequential patterns and developmental aspects' (Dörnyei, 2001: 82). One of the reasons for this may be that a focus on the temporal aspect does not always fit well with the reductionist approach which has been dominant in the field of studies on L2 motivation; as a number of motivational factors are interrelated to each other in the process and change of the phenomenon, the attempt to investigate the temporal aspect usually requires researchers to engage with them simultaneously, while reductionist models usually focus on a few selected motivational aspects. Motivation is a phenomenon that does not always remain constant in the process of long-term activities such as the mastering of a L2. The amount of effort that learners expend on learning the target language and the reasons why they learn the language can change at different periods of time. Oxford and Shearin (1994: 7) point out 'complicated changes over time in a student's reasons for learning a language' by showing examples in their study:

a student who started out taking a Japanese language course simply to fulfill a requirement, later became intellectually entranced with the language and culture, and still later wanted to live and work in Japan and use the language every day....initial participation led to interest, which then led to further involvement and to changes in the reasons for L2 learning.

Williams and Burden's (1997) model reflects a perception of the motivational process as composed of three stages: reasons for doing something, deciding to do something, and sustaining the effort, or persisting. They argue that the first two stages may be seen as more concerned with *initiating motivation* while the last stage involves *sustaining motivation*. It should, however, be noted that they emphasize that these stages are 'non-linear' because 'reasons for doing something will affect persistence, the very act of sustaining effort can give rise to further reasons for action' (Williams and Burden, 1997: 122). Similar concept with regard to motivational process is the concept of 'resultative motivation': while motivation is in many cases assumed to be the cause of L2 achievement, the process can also

work in reverse. L2 learners who have experience of success in learning may become more motivated, or in some cases, less motivated – if challenge is insufficient – to learn. Resultative motivation is thus ‘motivation that learners develop as a result of their success in learning an L2’ (Ellis, 1997: 143). Dörnyei and Otto (1998) propose a ‘non-reductionist, comprehensive’ model of L2 motivation that describes motivational processes over time. The motivational process in the model is composed of three main phases: the *preactional phase*, corresponding roughly to ‘choice motivation’ that precedes the launching of action; the *action phase*, corresponding to ‘executive motivation’ that energises action while it is being carried out; the *postactional phase*, involving critical retrospection after action has been completed or terminated’ (Dörnyei, 2001: 85).

As the above indicates, L2 motivation can be seen as a ‘non-constant’ phenomenon with a complex mental process involving multiple stages or phases. Ushioda (1996b: 240) points out that ‘within the context of institutionalized learning especially, the common experience would seem to be motivational flux rather than stability’. Taking into consideration the importance of change and process in the L2 motivational phenomenon, as well as the very limited amount of research ever done before in this area, research on L2 motivation from a temporal perspective seems an important route to understanding the dynamic nature of L2 motivation.

(8) Significant others: significant others such as teachers and parents, who have been seen as one of the determinants that have a strong impact on learners’ motivation, have been investigated in the field of L2 motivation study. The motivational influence of teachers has been pointed out by many researchers. Clark and Trafford (1995), for example, reveal that teachers and students both view the teacher-pupil relationship as the most significant variable affecting pupils’ attitudes towards L2 learning. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) also suggests that teachers’ enthusiasm has a strong impact on students’ motivation to learn. Deci *et al.* (1997) provide some empirical confirmation of Csikszentmihalyi’s argument. Many scholars have meanwhile reported that students’ motivation to learn in school contexts is strongly affected by their parents. For example, Feensta (1996) pointed out that integrative motivation is facilitated by the ‘attitudinal atmosphere’ of the home. In a recent study, Gardner *et al.* (1999) also confirm that

parental encouragement is associated with the development of attitudes towards the learning situation and with the language-learning efforts of children.

These external factors seem to be very influential on learners' motivation especially in a learning environment in which the target language is taught as a foreign language at schools and there is little opportunity for direct contact with the native speakers of the target language in the society: e.g. learning English in Japan. In this context, teachers are the main mediators who convey knowledge of the target language and parents are figures who can have a great influence on learners' attitude, beliefs, or values regarding learning the target language or regarding the culture and society where the target language is used. The influence of these factors on learners' motivation in the Japanese socio-educational context can be assumed to be of great significance.

(9) Gender: gender has also been seen as a significant factor in foreign language learning. For example, various studies (Burstall, 1975; Powell & Littlewood, 1983; Powell and Batters, 1985) show that girls tend to have a more positive attitude to learning foreign languages than do boys. Sung and Padilla's (1998) study reveals that female students were more motivated to study Asian languages than male students in the USA. Although these researchers hypothesized that the gender difference between L2 learners is related to social influences, their findings were not developed far enough to provide social explanations for the differences. Powell and Batters (1985: 16), state 'that pattern [the predominance of female teachers in language departments] is part of wider social sex-stereotyping of roles which is bound to influence a child's view of the world'. Sung and Padilla state (1998: 215): 'we are inclined to believe that the advantage of female students in motivation to learn a new language has more to do with gender role modeling than with any female predisposition to learning languages.' Although the researchers recognized social influences on pupils' perceptions of studying foreign languages, they conclude: 'We recognize the difficulty for researchers in gaining a clear picture of pupils' perceptions of subjects taught in school, especially as regards sex differences' (Powell and Batters: 20).

However, ethnographic and qualitative research suggests that gender is indeed a largely socially-constructed variable. Ehrlich (1997: 435) suggests that 'the vari-

ous ways that gender gets constructed and constituted in terms of a community's social practices result in varying acquisition outcomes'. Cameron (1992) criticizes explanations of gender difference which ignore social influence. 'We must criticize explanations of difference that treat gender as something obvious, static and monolithic, ignoring the forces that shape it and the varied forms they take in different time and places' (Cameron, 1992: 40).

4. Conclusion

In this paper, studies of L2 learning motivation are summarized. The review indicates that studies of L2 learning motivation have been largely dominated by a social-psychological approach inspired by Gardner and his Canadian associates' influential work prior to the 1990s. A marked shift occurred in the 1990s, however, in which a number of researchers attempted to conduct studies exploring the research agenda in order to shed new light on the subject.

The new approaches that emerged in the 1990s examined L2 motivation from a number of different perspectives. This was a welcome phenomenon because these diverse approaches allowed researchers to highlight different aspects of a complex, multifaceted construct of L2 motivation. An overall literature review, however, indicates that studies on L2 learning motivation have been dominated by positivist hypothetico-deductive approaches, or 'quantitative research', followed by quantitative analysis of data. It may be true that these approaches have produced much useful data, but there still remain a number of issues that they have been unable to resolve. Dörnyei (2001: 12), for example, points out that while the reductionist model of motivation may be perfectly adequate in explaining the motivational basis of a certain, well-defined set of motivational behaviours, it may not fully account for the intricate motivational life inside the actual classroom.

Among the new approaches, qualitative research may be most useful in providing a new understanding of the intricate and multilevel construct of L2 motivation, owing to a number of advantages that quantitative research lacks. Qualitative research allows researchers to make a careful examination of individual learners' personal views of their learning experiences, to generate descriptions and theories that are 'grounded in reality', and to investigate exceptional or extreme cases

which quantitative research usually ignores as 'outliers', in spite of some weaknesses (e.g. in terms of its reliability and generalizability). As Denscombe (1998: 173) points out, the distinction between qualitative and quantitative research is not always clear and 'in practice, the approaches are not mutually exclusive'. Studies adopting a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods may thus be one of the most useful ways of studying L2 learning motivation, just as Dörnyei (2001: 194) suggests that 'the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods might be a particularly fruitful direction for future motivation research'.

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