

# **نظرية جومسكي النحوية وتطبيقها في اللغة العربية**

**المدرس**

**توفيق عبد الأمير هاشم الغزالي  
الجامعة الإسلامية في النجف الاشرف**

**Chomsky's theory of minimalist As framework in analyzing  
wh- movement in Modern standard Arabic language**

**Lecturer**

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### Abstract

The present study is an attempt to examine Chomsky's theory of movement and see if it is applicable in Arabic language. and also verbless sentences distribution by exploring their syntactic comportment and presenting two minimalist proposals to justify the motivating wh-movement in such verbless sentences as well as checking their agreement features. Although, the verbless sentence does not contain any overtly lexical copular verb in the context of present tense in modern standard Arabic, but there still an authorization of case and agreement features. Arabian verbless investigations involve a vacancy in addition to discard copula Norm hypothesis. This suggests depending on the minimalist syntax model by (Chomsky, N., 1992a, 1995b); Arabic verbless statements should have no verb as well as verb phrase, because of the two possibilities that inflected through tense for representing the present tense explanation: one without a verb another through a verb (copula).

**Key words** : Arabic language structures , verbless sentence , case and agreement features , wh – movement .

### المستخلص

الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لتطبيق نظرية جومسكي في القواعد النحوية على الجمل البسيطة التي لا تحتوي على فعل مساعد في زمن المضارع وكيفية انتقال أدوات السؤال من موقعها في الجملة الى موقع اخر ومدى تأثيرها في المعنى لدى السامع او المتلقي والقارئ وتتضمن تبريرا بسيطا لعدم امتلاكها الأفعال المساعدة او قد لا تحتوي على أي فعل في الجملة، ان نظرية جومسكي قابلة للتطبيق في اغلب اللغات كونها أعطت تفصيلات دقيقة لترتيب وتركيب الجملة قواعديا. . وهذا الاقتراح يمكن استخدام نظرية جومسكي وتطبيقها في اللغة العربية

**الكلمات المفتاحية** : تراكيب اللغة العربية - الجملة التي لا تحتوي على فعل - حالة الجملة علامة توافقتها - السؤال في اللغة العربية .

## **Introduction**

The construction of Arabic verbless sentence has vagueness for considerable argumentations among Arab grammarians in their syntactic analysis of nominal and verbal sentences. The objective of this paper is to find out and supply a significant account for the best explanation about the license of case and agreement properties and Wh-movement processes by the principles of the minimalist framework supported by (Chomsky, N. 1995b; Benmamoun, E., 2000b & Fakih, A., 2003a, 2005b).

The present study adopts (Chomsky, N., 1995b) as a model for analyzing the movement of question words in English as well as Arabic language as the umpire of minimalist analysis that addresses the eradication of question words from the location of subject and verb in modern standard Arabic verbless sentences. Moreover, providing a minimalist proposal for what motivate the question word movement in verbless structures and refer to how such wh-raising happens.

### **1 Verbless sentences in Arabic language**

Verbless statements are one of the essential aspects in Arabic language syntax that is being depicted as a simply statement during the present situation lacking an explicit linking verb (Benmamoun, E., 2000b).

(Bahloul;1993:209) points out that there is a paradox appears between verbal sentence and nominal sentence; in the former, the verb inflects for "aspect-tense and agreement", while the latter "seems without any lexically executed verbal element".Bahloul, claims that the previous discussion was not satisfactory, because it was unable to provide a suitable analysis; due to the fact that the derivation of nominal sentences are from their essential verbal counter parts. The eternal context is the intangible aspect of copula that can contribute for something as distinction between verbal and nominal sentences (ibid; 210).

Plunkett (1993;248), examines the lack of the capula in verbless constructions in standard Arabic , more particularly, in the present tense and goes deeply to suggest that "the o-marked present tense does not need to be supported by a verbal element in Arabic".

Benmamoun (1999; 183) tries to differentiate between the perfective In Arabic style, highlighted on availability and the deficiency of the copula; he has perceived that the former "carries past tense features" and investigated that the theoretical evidence "comes from the distribution of

the verbal copula". Benmamoun concludes that the copula is obligatory in the past tense, while on the contrary in the present tense situation.

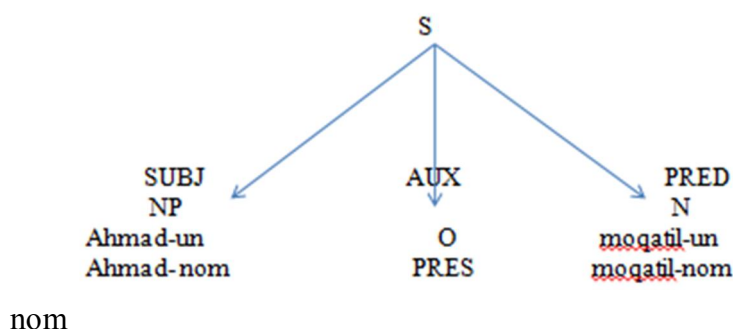
According to Plunkett (1993; 256), the existence of sentences is made by stresses without copulas in Arabic. It has observed that the prior analyses that especially focusing on the absence of copular verb in the present tense, but it is presented compulsory in the past tense context, as in the example (1) below:

- 1.a Ahmad -un                      moqatil-un  
       Ahmad-nom.                    moqatil-m.sing. nom.  
       Ahmad (is) fighter.
- b. ka:na        Ahmed-un        moqatil - an  
    be-past.    Ahmad- nom     moqatil-m.sing.acc  
               Ahmad was fighter.

In (1.a) and (1.b) above, throughout the present tense in (1.a), users do observe the absence of linking verb, whereas (1.b) shows existence of an overt verbal copula is compulsory. The cases in the past and the present are different (Bakir, M. J., 1980; Fassi-Fehri, A., 1993 & Benmamoun, E., 2000b).

Mouchaweh (1986:13) in his analysis says that verbless sentences are small clauses without functional projection above the lexical projection.

Benmamoun (2000, 3), discusses the feature structure of functional categories in Modern Arabic dialects. According to Jelinek's analysis (as quoted by Benmamoun,2000). (1.a) representation as follow:



Benmamoun (2000:44) attempts to conquer the problems that the preceding discussions faced in the same way "the feature that can be interacted with temporal adverbs, in present tense is projected syntactically that's why the subject is assigned by nominative case, and it is defined locality domains for NPIs" (= Negative polarity Items),

Benmamoun concludes throughout his discussion about the feature of tense in the dialects of Arabic language that a nonverbal predicate is controlled by TPs.

## **2 verbless constructions and case markers**

Obviously, the study of verbless constructions in modern standard Arabic differs from English and many other languages in the world. The absence of overt lexical verbal copula in verbless sentence permits the subject and its predicate receiving Case and manifest rich agreement inflection. This explains in (2)

2. a. Al - bint -u mohandisat- un  
The- girl -f. sing .nom. Engineer-f-sing.-nom.  
'The girl (is) an engineer'
- b . \*ta - ku:nu al – bint – u mohandisat - an  
3f.sing.be.pres. the-girl-f.sing.nom engineer.f.sing.acc
- c. al -rajul- u mohandis - un  
the-man-.m.sing.nom engineer.m.sing.nom  
'The boy (is) an engineer.
- d. \*ya - ku:nu al – rajul - u mohandis- an  
3m.sing.be.pres. the-man-m.sing.nom engineer.m.sing.acc

It has seen that (2a) and (2c) shows that the subject and its predicate have case-marked nominative in each sentence, and display the similar appearance of the agreement (person, gender, amount of aspect), even if these two sentences do not have an overt lexical copula. However, sentences in (2.b) and (2.d) are unacceptable because of the addition of the overtly lexical copula. Here someone may ask: How are Case and agreement features permitted in such verbless sentences in (2), and how to justify for this phenomenon?

The discussion that mentions here, follows the idea of Bakir (1980), Mouchaweh (1986), Fassi-Fehri (1993), Bahloul (1993), Plunkett (1993) and Benmamoun (1999; 2000),but in linguistic theory the idea that is given by (Chomsky1995;1999;2000) in the Minimalist analysis is adopted independently which illustrates that all tenses are not specified as [+V] and [+D] in modern Standard Arabic; as in sentences (2.a) and (2.c) above, the current time is allocated by nominal [+D] feature, because of the lack of [+V] marker in the T head (within verbless sentences) that must be tested for issues regarding the course of derivation by another legitimate verbal head, namely the verb.

However, in modern standard Arabic, verbless constructions are unnecessarily being supported by a lexical verb because in present tense, the verb does not require moving to the tense where the latter does not have a [+V] feature. For clarifying that the lexical verb does not have to be realized since the T head has no a [+V] aspects therefore it has to be checked only by another legitimate checker, namely the verb. Moreover, if a lexical verb is inserted in such constructions, ungrammatical sentences will be produced, as shown in (2.b) and (2.d) above; this supports our argument that the tense of such verbless sentences (denoting the current time) is allocated only for one categorial marker, namely the feature [+D].

Furthermore, Chomsky (1995) points out, English tense are classified for two definite aspects, the aspect [+V] as well as the aspect [+D]. The feature [+V] demonstrates the relation of verb with tense, but the aspect [+D] determines subject relation. The following example of English in (3) illustrates this; the auxiliary verb moves to tense in order to check its [+V] feature, while the subject DP raises out of Spec of VP through Spec of TP in order on license its [+D] feature.

3. Nada has left early.

It is claimed in the context of Benmamoun (2000) following Chomsky's (1995) that movement to tense in modern standard Arabic does not come from the need to supply a host for tense, and that a lexical verb is unnecessary in verbless sentences (that only show the present tense).

For exploring the reason why a verbal head lack to be present in the context of modern Standard Arabic verbless sentences in (2) above, it is assumed that the T head does not have a feature [+V] which is necessary to be permitted/checked by a leagle head in the derivational course. Hence, the only candidate that ought to be seen is one that can allow the feature [+D]; it is therefore the subject that can test the morpho-syntactic estate of the nominal [+D] feature. In other hand, specified feature licensing and the EPP, referring that such verbless sentence does as such because their tense is specified for one categorial feature- that is to say the nominal [+D] feature which has to be permitted by the subject in the syntax. Given this, to claim that [+ D] is the feature responsible for Case licensing and Agreement characteristics. It thus follows where the syntax does not contain the case and agreement aspects. The statement interpretation should crash at PF, given the Minimalist assumption that

all features must be interpretable (in the course of derivation) in an attempt to show convergence for the derivative. On the other hand, is in contrast with Standard Arabic in which the English T head (of the present tense) has a [+V] aspect; it is the existence of a verbal head in which has to be tested for [+V] aspect obligatorily, as shown in (3) above. This means that the present tense in English distinct from that of Standard Arabic in that in the former only one categorial feature is used - namely, the [+D] feature, while in the latter (i.e., English) two categorial features are used - namely, the [+V] feature and the [+D] feature.

Anyway, when the tense of such sentences is in the past or in the future, the verbal copula must be lexically realized obligatorily. Here, it is argued that in Standard Arabic the differences between the present tense, on the one hand, and the past and future tenses, on the other, follow if the verb should not have to move in the present while in past and future cycles it have to move. This contrast can be attributed to the fact that the past and future tenses have a [+V] aspect, which must be tested with a verb, while the present tense (in the context of verbless sentences) is not prepared to a [+V] aspect. It has seen that the occurrence of the verbal copula in the past and future tenses below, where (2) is reproduced as (4) and (5) for convenience.

### 3.1 In the past tense

- 4.a. ka:nat al - bint - u mohandisat - an  
be-pst-3f.sing the-girl-f.sing.nom. engineer.f.sing.acc.  
"The girl was an engineer."
- b. \*al - bint - u mohandisat - un  
the-girl-f.sing.nom engineer.f.sing.nom
- c. ka:na al - rajul - u mohandis - an  
be-pst-3m.sing the-man.m.sing.nom engineer.m.sing.acc  
'The man was an engineer.'
- d. \*al - rajul - u mohandis- un  
the man-m.sing.nom engineer.m.sing.nom

### 3.2. In the future tense

- 5.a. sa - taku:nu al - bint - u mohandisat- an  
will-3f.sing-be the-girl-f.sing.nom.  
engineer.f.sing.acc.  
"The girl will be an engineer."
- b. \*al - bint - u mohandisat - un  
the-girl-f.sing.nom engineer.f.sing.nom

c. sa – yaku:nu al – rajul– u mohandis- an  
will-3m.sing - be the-man-m.sing.nom  
engineer.m.sing.acc

‘The man will be an engineer.’

d. \*al – rajul- u mohandis - un  
the-man-m.sing.nom engineer.m.sing.nom

Examples (4) and (5) reveal the fact that the existence of the verbal copula is mandatory in the future and past tenses. Moreover, tense and agreement in sentences indicating that past and future contexts must be supported by the presence of their overtly lexical verb which raises to their head position for feature checking at a later stage of derivation; this is an essential requirement of the grammar of Standard Arabic to ensure the grammaticality of its derived structures. Moreover, the absence of such a lexical verb in such sentences denoting past and future tenses leads to ungrammaticality which Standard Arabic does not tolerate, as shown in (4b, 4d) and (5b, 5.d); the reasons why such sentences are ungrammatical are that there is no verbal head which must move to T(ense) to check its categorial feature [+V], on the one hand, and that it is difficult to distinguish their tense from that of the present tense on the other, thus giving rise to ambiguity.

#### 4. Minimalist account of Wh-movement in verbless sentence

##### 4.1 Chomsky's 1995 model

(Chomsky, N., 1995b) indicates that in overt syntax strong features should be tested while weak ones ought to be permitted in covert syntax (i.e., at LF). (Chomsky, N., 1995b) has enlarged his aspect dissection of permitting to contain Abstract problem management addition "Q (= [+wh])," believed it is contained by the essential construction of its problem section. Through the investigating of wh-movement, (Chomsky, N., 1995b:199) indicates that the limited differences are not found in relation of languages also the question word in situation's idea so it continues forward in pointing language differences in the "internal morphology of wh-phrases." Chomsky emphasizes that there are certain morphological characteristics that need to be reviewed in the head domain. Hence, the movement of a wh-operator to the testing realm of [Spec, CP] necessity needs engagement. In view of this, it is suggested here that complementizer C in an English interrogative clause includes an abstract affix Q (Chomsky, N., 1995b: 289), that does have a significant Q-feature; Chomsky implies that COMP has a significant Q-feature in



English, and so does the user which increases that as well. (Chomsky, N., 1995b:199) proposes that “the operators increase for characteristic checking to the testing domain of C: [Spec, CP] or adjunction to Spec (absorption), thereby convincing their scopal properties.” Following Watanabe's (1991) analysis, (Chomsky, N., 1995b:199) stresses In which the Q-aspect is morphologically significant over human languages, “the wh-operator feature is universally strong.”

#### 4.1.1. Wh-movement from subject position

In modern Standard Arabic verbless sentences there are no overtly lexical copular verb, but the subject and its predicate still receive Case and display rich agreement features. It is also mentioned that how Case and agreement features are tested in the Minimalist syntax. Here, it is argued that a Minimalist account that tries to show what forces the Question Word mobility to [Spec, CP] in verbless constructions in Standard Arabic, what is the reason behind such wh-raising in morphological motivation? And what is required behind its leaving when the mobility activity has happened in?

The following shows how wh-raising from the subject position of verbless sentences is examined and also how can the Arabic knowledge communicate with minimalist research to show if the movement of words in Standard Arabic seems to be covert or overt (6):

6.a. Q[ Mohammad - un fi al - madrasat - i ]  
<sup>IP</sup> Mohammad-nom. in the-school-gen.

‘Mohammad (is) in the school.’

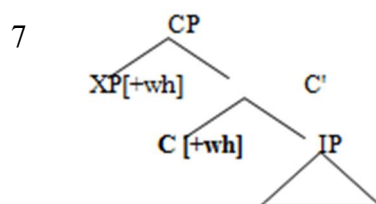
b.  $\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{CP} \\ \uparrow \\ \text{C} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} [+Q] \\ \text{IP} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Mohammad -un} \\ \text{Mohammad-nom.} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{?ayna} \\ \text{where} \end{array} \right]$

c. Spell-Out:  $\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{?ayna} \\ \text{CP} \\ \text{where} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} [+Q] \\ \text{C} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Mohammad-un} \\ \text{IP} \\ \text{Mohammad-nom.} \end{array} \right] \left[ \begin{array}{c} t_{?ayna} \end{array} \right]$   
 ‘Where is Mohammad?’

The representation in (6) demonstrates that the question word, which It must initially be relocated from its subject towards the first clause position of CP (a situation called by (Chomsky, N., 1995b:289) [Spec, Q]). This is exemplified in (6b). The movement of the question word? “Ayna” where’ in (6) is to undergo feature permitting. Following Chomsky's (1995b) Minimalist approaches of English wh-movement, an assumption on supplementizer C of simple question section is morphologically significant as well as it really consist on an abstract

affixal Q-feature; the top C position of CP fulfilled on underlying addition Q= ([+wh]), as illustrated in (6) above. Furthermore, the current article affixal Q is the Minimalist apparatus is taken In order to differentiate the statement of questioning from that of its declarative equivalent. Moreover, what motivates the question word raising in (6) is that the head C of CP has a strong morphological Q-feature which has to check against the raised wh-operator features under a Spec-head agreement relation. Hence, at Spell-Out the question word ?ayna 'where' moves to [Spec, CP]; such movement leaves behind a wh-trace, which is co-indexed with the raised wh-operator, thus forming an A'-chain relation. It can be pointed out that the question word raising of ?ayna 'where' to, what Chomsky (1995:289) calls, [Spec, Q] is an instance of wh-substitution; the overt raising of ?ayna licensing realm of [Spec, Q] deletes a morphologically aspect [+Q] marker, hosted in the head position of COMP via a Spec-head agreement relation, as shown in the grammatical derivation in (6c) above.

Given Spec-head agreement, as it is shown that what tests the moved question word ?ayna 'where' is a mechanism of an agreement relationship with the head C of CP, which is notated as C [+Q] (the head of an interrogative clause). Through other ways, the Spec-head partnership arrangement with both the Head C tests and also approves the enhanced wh-operator aspects in [Spec, CP] as shown in (7) just below. Hence, we observe that, like English, the question word in modern Standard Arabic is also marked as [+wh]. Therefore, it is suggested that a well-formed question word in Standard Arabic can have the following Spell-Out representation in (7).



On the other hand, the question, which arises, is that: Is movement of the word issue covert or overt in Arabic language? In order to account for this, let us first examine (6.c) reproduced as (8) below.

8. Spell-Out: \*<sub>CP</sub> [ <sub>C'</sub> [+Q] [ <sub>IP</sub> Mohammad-un ?ayna ] ]  
 Mohammad-nom. where

The reason why (8) is ungrammatical is because the question word? *ayna* “where” cannot remain *in-situ* after Spell-Out. The difference between (6c) and (8) shows that the raising of ?*ayna* ‘where’ cannot wait until the LF representation; we argue here that wh-raising in modern Standard Arabic disobeys the Procrastination Concept which favors slowing down motion to LF. Moreover, that ungrammaticality of (8) can be accounted for in terms of the strength of the morphological [+Q] features hosted in the head C of CP that attracts overt movement of the question word operator. The ungrammaticality of (8) is another reinforcement of our claim that the movement of concerns through standard Arabic is necessary and requires in an overt syntax so, the (8), when it was covert, could have been valid (but it wasn't). Chomsky (1995) points out that testing is completed by movement in the sense that a head with a matching morphology raises to the functional head to permit its abstract features or else a maximal projection with certain features moves to derive a specifier-head relation with the head in question. It thus appears that all movement is motivated by the testing of abstract head features or specifier features of functional heads. Chomsky (1993, 1995) indicates that all features should be tested orderly for them to be explainable in the syntax, as demonstrated in (6c) above.

Thus it can be seen that the question word ?*ayna* in (8) should move overtly to check its wh-feature versus the strong [+Q] feature of the head COMP in the testing domain of [Spec, CP]. What forces such raising is that the strong morphological features that are necessary to be checked in overt syntax. The Minimalist Checking Theory exclaims that before the spell-out, any powerful aspect are always authorized since every powerful aspect left unauthorized aspect triggers a crash derivative as seen in ungrammatical formulation (8) above. This also accounts for why (8) crashes; it does so because it cannot survive until LF. The result that can be seen here is that wh-motion is overtly due to strength of the inner form of the wh-clause. This is why English and modern standard Arabic are distinct towards wh-in-situ languages (like Japanese and Chinese) is that in the latter wh-words do not undergo overt raising, rather they move only at LF for feature checking considerations.

#### **4.2. Wh-movement from Verbless Predicate Position**

Entertaining enough, the verbless questions in modern Standard Arabic undergo syntactic movement of the question word from both the subject and predicate positions. Previously, wh-extraction from the

subject position has been illustrated. The question word movement from the predicate position happen in overt syntax can be explained as in (9).

- 9.a. Q[al-qamar' -u moneer -un ]  
<sub>IP</sub> the- qamar-nom. bright-nom.  
 'The moon (is) bright.'
- b.  $\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{CP} \\ \uparrow \\ \text{C} \end{array} \right] [+Q] \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{IP} \\ \text{the-moon-nom.} \end{array} \right] \text{al - qamar -u kayfa } ]]$   
<sub>how</sub>
- c. Spell-Out: [ kayfa [ [+Q] [ al - qamar - u t<sub>kayfa</sub> ? ]  
 How (is) the moon?

As it is shown in (9) the question word that evolves in the position of the predicate ought to undergo overt syntactic movement to an empty landing site, i.e., to [Spec, CP]. The overt wh-movement of kayfa 'how' in (9) is mandatory since it should get its own wh-features tested versus the strong morphological [+Q] feature hosted in the head C position. What motivates the overt raising of kayfa 'how' in (9) is the necessity to monitor its significant aspects in the chaos domain of [Spec, CP] configuration, thus ensuring that the economy principle is satisfied. In other words, the strength of the internal morphology of the wh-phrase in modern Standard Arabic justifies the overt wh-extraction.

Moreover, the overt wh-movement in (9) leaves behind a wh-trace that has to be co-indexed with its question word operator which lands in [Spec, CP]. The question word kayfa 'how', as an antecedent, binds its trace in the base-position. It can be pointed out that the wh-raising of kayfa to the clause-initial position takes place above the sentence, since the place of question laborer is a domain it c-commands. A closer look at (9.b) above shows that kayfa is, in fact, the predicate at LF, which is then forced to undergo overt raising to the licensing domain of [Spec, CP] to satisfy the principle of "economy of derivation". Hence, it appears that the overt wh-movement in Standard Arabic is driven by what Chomsky (1995: 289) calls feature licensing requirements.

##### 5. Conclusion : The researcher reached the following conclusions:

1. The verb does not need to move to the head position of T(ense) in the present tense (that demonstrates verbless sentences), while it has to do so obligatorily in both the past and future tenses. The reason why the past and future tenses behave as such can be attributed to the fact that they have a [+V] feature that must be licensed by a verb, a morpho-syntactic property lacking in the current time which is not limited to a [+V] marker. In other words, it has shown that T(ense) is specified as [+V] and [+D] in the past and future tenses, while it is specified only as [+D] in the present tense of verbless sentences.
2. In accounting for what motivates wh-mobility in verbless structures in modern Standard Arabic it is proposed that COMP in simple

interrogative clauses includes the abstract query affix Q, that is a morphologically significant [+Q] aspect, as does the question word operator (notated as [+wh] operator feature) that raises to it. Given Checking Theory, the wh-word in Standard Arabic is motivated syntactically motion clearly to [Spec, CP] for marker testing/licensing requirements. This overt movement operation is a morphological property driven by the needs to monitor the significant wh-aspects of a moved question word against that of the strong feature [+Q]- hosted in C position – via a Spec-head agreement relationship. Moreover, it has shown that such question word movement serves to license the [+wh] marker and makes Spec-top connection between a [+wh] marker hosted in the top C and the question word in its specifier position. What results of such wh-movement is that the question constituent acquires sentential scope, whose realm is the place which it c-requires, i.e., entire article. Furthermore, it has attributed the overt movement of the query word in Standard Arabic to the strength of the internal morphology of the wh-phrases.

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**Chomsky's theory of minimalist As framework..... (628)**

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