

Syntactic and Semantic Agreement in Coordinated Clauses*

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1 Introduction

- Icelandic semantic vs. syntactic agreement manifests itself in live sports commentary. This results in a novel *3/4 pattern* (Bobaljik and Wurmbrand 2012) in the area of subject-verb agreement and *across clauses*.

- (1) shows the four logically possible agreement patterns in conjunction reduction with a formally singular but semantically plural subject (the sports team *Stjarnan* ‘the Star’ 3F.SG). One pattern – **PL & SG** – is excluded.

- (1) a. **Stjarnan**(SG) **er**(SG) með boltann og __ **sækir**(SG) fram.
 b. **Stjarnan**(SG) **er**(SG) með boltann og __ **sækja**(PL) fram.
 c. **Stjarnan**(SG) **eru**(PL) með boltann og __ **sækja**(PL) fram.
 d. * **Stjarnan**(SG) **eru**(PL) með boltann og __ **sækir**(SG) fram.
 ‘The Star **has/have** the ball and __ **is/are** advancing.’

- This pattern sheds light on where and when syntactic and semantic ϕ -features are introduced in the derivation, and where the features of the elided subject in conjunction reduction are copied from.
- We propose an analysis that draws on insights from various works on hybrid agreement, including *Head-driven Phrase Structure Grammar* (HPSG; Wechsler and Zlatić 2000, 2003), Pesetsky (2013), Landau (2016), E.F. Sigurðsson (2017) and Messick (2020) and H.Á. Sigurðsson’s (2011, 2014) theory of context linkers.
- We focus empirically on agreement with the names or acronyms of sports teams which are formally singular or have no clear formal number.

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- The main results of our corpus study are summarized in table 1.

Coordination	Count (%)
SG & SG	81 (43%)
SG & PL	60 (32%)
PL & PL	46 (25%)
PL & SG	0 (0%)

Table 1: Corpus results

- The table shows that we find every combination of both numbers except for **PL** followed by **SG**. → **3/4 pattern**
- (i) What prevents **SG** Agreement from following **PL** Agreement?
- (ii) How does this impact the theory of 3/4 agreement patterns?

Today’s talk

- §2 Icelandic conjunction reduction
- §3 The syntax of semantic features
- §4 Analysis
- §5 Implications: 3/4 agreement crosslinguistically
- §6 Conclusion

Broader significance

- Novel 3/4 *cross-clausal* agreement pattern (verified by corpus results)
- This hybrid agreement across clauses blurs the division between grammatical and pragmatic agreement (using W&S’s terminology)
- Reaffirms previous theories of 3/4 patterns where formal features enter the derivation prior to semantic features.
- This can be modeled within a theory of context linkers (as opposed to, e.g., concord and index features).

2 Icelandic conjunction reduction

2.1 *pro* in Icelandic conjunction

- Case-agreement patterns in Icelandic conjunction reduction show that the subject of the second clause (SubjConj2) is a syntactically active DP, distinct from the subject of the first clause (SubjConj1) (Rögnvaldsson 1982).
- Rögnvaldsson (1993) argued that the second subject is little *pro*, licensed by the finite verb (cf. Rizzi's analysis of Italian *pro*), but whose features are not identified by it → Instead they are identified by the subject of the first verb.
- This explains why Icelandic does not have *pro* generally, but can have *pro* in conjunction reduction sentences.
- The second subject *pro* can differ from the first subject in various ways.

2.2 Conjunction reduction mismatches

- Case, number and person mismatches occur in conjunction reduction in everyday Icelandic.
- Most importantly, the elided second conjunct does not have to match the *number* of the first conjunct.
- This is not restricted to live sports commentary or sports clubs (see Thráinsson et al. 2015; Xu 2020), e.g., the example in (2).

- (2) *Parið hefur verið saman í þrjú ár og **pro** búa í Dubai [...]*
 couple.the has.SG been together for three years and *pro* live.PL in Dubai
 'The couple has been together for three years and live in Dubai.'
 (mbl.is, 4 July 2022)

Case & Person mismatches in Icelandic conjunction reduction

- The elided second conjunct does not have to be in the same case as the first conjunct – apparent because of person vs. default agreement – see (3).

- (3) a. *Þeir sjá stúlkuna og **pro** finnst hún álitleg.*
*they.NOM see girl.the and **pro**.DAT think she promising*
 'They see the girl and consider her promising.'
 b. *Þeim líkar maturinn og **pro** borða mikið.*
*they.DAT like food.the and **pro**.NOM eat much*
 'They like the food and eat heartily.' (Rögnvaldsson 1982:559–560)


- Similarly, a different kind of conjunction reduction shows a mismatch between 1/3 person SG and 2SG; see the interaction between A and B in (5).

- (4) *Eins og ég segi alltaf: Ég held með FH og **er** stoltur af því.*
 as I say always I **support.1SG** FH and **is.1/3SG** proud of it
 'As I always say: I support FH and I am proud of it.'
- (5) A: *Eins og ég segi alltaf: Ég held með FH ...*
 as I say always I **support.1SG** FH
 'As I always say: I support Liverpool ...'
- B: *... og **ert** stoltur af því. Ég veit, pabbi.*
 and **pro are.2SG** proud of it I know Daddy
 '... and you're proud of it. I know, Daddy.'

2.3 3/4 pattern in live sports commentary

- Icelandic live sports commentary (*sources: Vísir.is, Fótbolti.net*) is a convenient source for number mismatches.
- Formally singular sports club names/acronyms can trigger plural agreement.

Icelandic sports clubs – These are formally (morphosyntactically) singular


 Stjarnan ‘the star’ FEM.**SG**

 KR ‘Reykjavík Football club (acronym)’ **SG**

 FH ‘Hafnarfjörður Gymnastics Club (acronym)’ **SG**

 Keflavík (place name) FEM.**SG**

 Grindavík (place name) FEM.**SG**

 Selfoss (place name) MASC.**SG**

- Formal feature mismatch is usually due to the fact that commentators are referring to the teams on the field and their players, rather than the club itself.

→ **Note**, however, that such number mismatches occur in everyday language as well.

- We focused on conjunction reduction with overt coordinating conjunctions, *og* ‘and’ or *en* ‘but’, and finite verb agreement
- Every combination of **SG** & **PL** occurs in our corpus, except for **PL-SG**
- **SG-SG** examples in (6, 7).

(6) Stjarnan **sækir** hratt og __ **setur** boltan[n] inní
Stjarnan attacks.PRES.SG quickly and *pro* puts.PRES.SG ball.the in
‘Stjarnan attacks quickly and scores a goal.’

(7) FH **sækir** þó stöðugt og __ **er** að reyna að
FH attacks.PRES.SG though constantly and *pro* is.PRES.SG to try.INF að
ógna markinu.
threaten.INF goal.the
‘FH is constantly attacking and trying to threaten the goal.’

- **PL-PL** examples in (8, 9).

(8) Keflavík **nýta** sér það og __ **keyra** upp
Keflavík use.PRES.PL SELF it and *pro* drive.PRES.PL up
‘Keflavík takes the advantage and powers through.’

(9) KR **vinna** boltann og __ **sækja** hratt á HK
KR win.PRES.PL ball.the and *pro* attack.PRES.PL quickly on HK
‘KR wins the ball and quickly attacks HK.’

- **SG-PL** examples in (10, 11).

(10) Grindavík **fær** horn og __ **taka** stutta útfærslu núna
Grindavík gets.PRES.SG corner and *pro* take.PRES.PL short execution now
‘Grindavík gets a corner kick and now takes a short execution.’

(11) Selfoss **er** á mikilli siglingu
Selfoss is.PRES.SG on great sailing
og __ **ætla** að bæta upp fyrir stóru orðin
and *pro* go.PRES.PL to make up for big words.the
‘Selfoss is doing great and they are going to make up for those lofty promises.’

→ We, and the speakers who we have consulted, share the intuition that **PL-SG** examples – and only that combination – is an ungrammatical pattern; see the made-up ***PL-SG** examples in (12, 13, 14).

(12) * Stjarnan **sækja** hratt og __ **setur** boltann inní
Stjarnan attack.PRES.PL quickly and *pro* puts.PRES.SG ball.the in
Intended: ‘Stjarnan quickly attacks and scores a goal.’

(13) * Keflavík **nýta** sér það og *pro* **keyrir** upp
Keflavík use.PRES.PL SELF it and __ drive.PRES.SG up
Intended: ‘Keflavík takes the advantage and powers through.’

(14) * Grindavík **fá** horn og __ **tekur** stutta útfærslu núna
Grindavík get.PRES.PL corner and *pro* take.PRES.SG short execution now
Intended: ‘Grindavík gets a corner kick and now takes a short execution.’

- As previously mentioned, our corpus results support our findings (see Table 1).
- This 3/4 pattern is also uniquely *cross-clausal*, unlike other patterns mentioned here (see section 5 and Appendix B).

Past tense agreement

- Our attested examples are mostly present tense (as above) but past tense examples also occur in our corpus, see (15).

(15) Selfoss **spilaði** síðast við Fjölni en **töpuðu** 2-1 á útivelli
 Selfoss played.PST.SG last with Fjölnir but lost.PST.PL 2-1 away
 ‘Selfoss last played against Fjölnir but they lost 2-1 away.’

Section summary

- We assume Icelandic conjunction reduction has *pro* in second conjunct.
- Further, various mismatches can occur in Icelandic conjunction reduction.
- Icelandic subject-verb agreement mismatches follow 3/4 pattern where **plural** cannot precede **singular**.

3 The syntax of semantic features**3.1 Hybrid agreement**

- Hybrid agreement patterns are often taken to be semantic in nature as well as (morpho)syntactic (e.g., Corbett 1979, Wechsler and Zlatić 2000).
- The current work argues that semantic agreement is, in fact, subject to syntactic locality constraints, suggesting that it is syntactically represented.

We assume that a single head can only bear one set of ϕ -features – hybrid agreement results from a clear division between the locus of semantic and syntactic agreement.

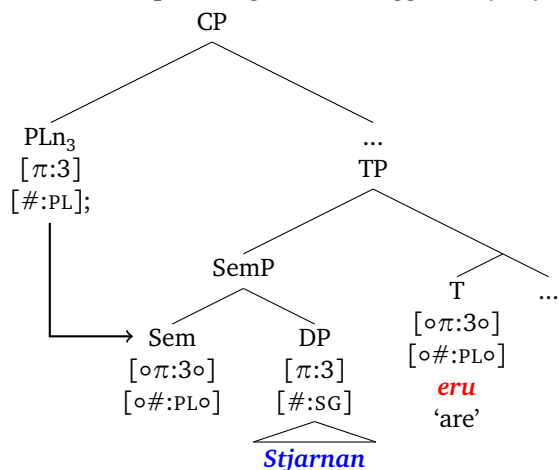
3.2 Phi-features and phase-edge linkers

- We propose that the locus of ϕ -features is (i) within the DP, and (ii) at the phasal edge (see (16) on the next page), adopting the notion of **context linkers** from Sigurðsson (2011; 2014; et seq.), here called phase-edge linkers.
- Sigurðsson (2011:281) argues that “the C-domain contains silent but probing (i.e., syntactically active) “speaker” and “hearer” features”, the so-called logophoric agent (Λ_A) and logophoric patient (Λ_P). These, together with Λ_3 (3rd person), are **phase-edge linkers (PLn)** and match arguments in the clause.
- We propose that the *pro* subject of the second clause enters the derivation devoid of ϕ -features, which must be filled in by either (i) the features of SubjConj1, or (ii) the features of left-peripheral PLn (Sigurðsson 2011, 2014).
- This can result in a 3/4 pattern, where a certain Semantic-Morphological combination is excluded (see also Messick’s (2020) *Monotonicity Agreement Constraint*):
 - Semantic features *can be introduced after* a dependency with the formal features has been established.
 - *However*, formal features *cannot be accessed* once semantic feature dependency has been established.

4 Analysis of 3/4 agreement

- Following Pesetsky’s (2013) analysis of Russian 3/4 agreement patterns, semantic agreement stems from a dedicated semantic gender head in the nominal phrase, structurally higher than the formal, morphosyntactic features.
- Once such a head is present – see the Sem(antic) head in (16) – the lower formal features are no longer accessible to other dependencies in the derivation.
 - Sem’s function is essentially to force feature valuation by a PLn.
- We furthermore assume that semantic feature values are assigned by left-peripheral PLns.

(16) *Semantic plural agreement triggered by Stjarnan*



- The derivation for examples like (17) (= 1) can proceed in the following ways

- (17) a. **Stjarnan**(SG) **er**(SG) með boltann og __ **sækir**(SG) fram.
 b. **Stjarnan**(SG) **er**(SG) með boltann og __ **sækja**(PL) fram.
 c. **Stjarnan**(SG) **eru**(PL) með boltann og __ **sækja**(PL) fram.
 d. * **Stjarnan**(SG) **eru**(PL) með boltann og __ **sækir**(SG) fram.
 ‘**Stjarnan** has/have the ball and __ is/are advancing.’

- In (18) (=17a), SubjConj1 triggers morphosyntactic feature agreement on the finite verb. The silent *pro* SubjConj2, which consists of unvalued ϕ -features only, copies these ϕ -feature values, resulting in the same kind of subject-verb agreement in the second conjunct.

- (18) $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP DP}_{i_{SG}} \dots]]$ & $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } pro_{SG} \dots]]$ (=17a)

- In (19) (=17b), SubjConj1 behaves the same way, but SubjConj2 gets its values from the PLn, resulting in semantic agreement.

- (19) $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP DP}_{i_{SG}} \dots]]$ & $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } pro_{PL} \dots]]$ (=17b)

- In (20) (=17c), a Semantic Phrase (SemP) merges on top of the DP. Its features come from a PLn, and since the referent in these is semantically plural (the players of the team), it gets a plural number value.
- From this point, if SubjConj2 gets its features from SubjConj1, as in the derivation of (17a), the result will be plural. If it gets its features from the PLn, as in (17b), the result will still be plural.

- (20) $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } [\text{SemP Sem}_{PL} \text{ DP}_{i_{SG}}] \dots]]$ & $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } pro_{PL} \dots]]$

- (21) $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } [\text{SemP Sem}_{PL} \text{ DP}_{i_{SG}}] \dots]]$ & $[\text{CP PLn}_{i_{PL}} \dots [\text{TP } pro_{PL} \dots]]$ (=17c)

- Either strategy leads to the form in (17c), and there is no way to derive (17d).

5 Implications: 3/4 agreement crosslinguistically

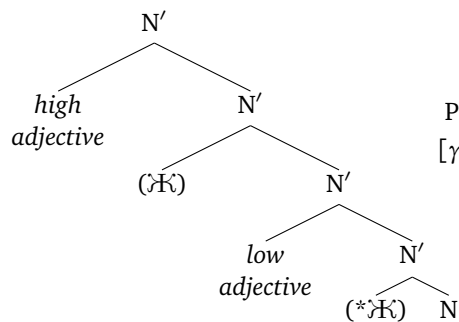
- Our approach is reminiscent of Pesetsky’s (2013) analysis of Russian gender mismatch: Semantic agreement stems from a dedicated **semantic feminine gender head** \mathfrak{K} in the NP, *structurally higher* than the formal, morphosyntactic features.

- (22) a. An optional null morpheme \mathfrak{K} ‘female’ may be merged at any point above a certain structural threshold within NP. Low adjectives fall below this threshold.
 b. Once \mathfrak{K} merges, the nominal counts as feminine for agreement purposes from then on. (Pesetsky 2013:39)

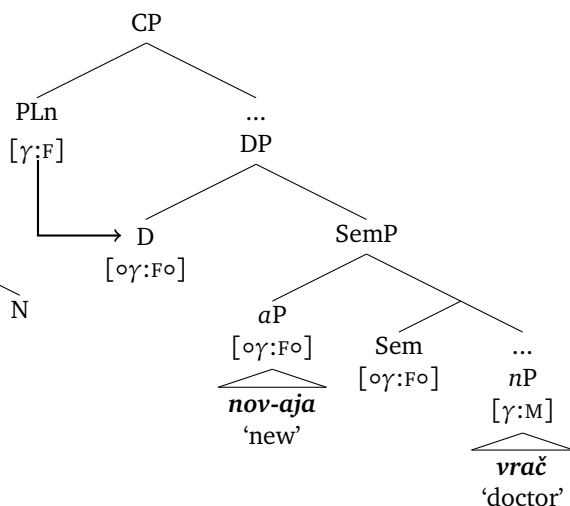
(23) *Russian* ('doctor' with female referent)

- a. **Nov-yj** **vrač** **prišël.**
new-M.NOM.SG doctor.NOM.SG arrived.M.SG
- b. **Nov-aja** **vrač** **prišl-a.**
new-F.NOM.SG doctor.NOM.SG arrived-F.SG
- c. **Nov-yj** **vrač** **prišl-a.**
new-M.NOM.SG doctor.NOM.SG arrived-F.SG
- d. * **Nov-aja** **vrač** **prišël.**
new-F.NOM.SG doctor.NOM.SG arrived.M.SG (Pesetsky 2013:36)

(24) a. *Pesetsky (2013:40)*



b. *Our approach*



- The British English 3/4 pattern presented by Smith (2017, 2021) is challenging.

(25) *British English*

- a. **The government has** offered **itself** up for criticism (with this economic policy).
- b. **The government have** offered **themselves** up for criticism.
- c. ? **The government has** offered **themselves** up for criticism.
- d. * **The government have** offered **itself** up for criticism.
(Smith 2017:826)

- On an HPSG(-inspired) analysis, we cannot use only concord and index features in (25c): *government* has a singular concord feature and subject-verb agreement is index agreement. In (25c), both the index number and the concord number value is singular.
- On the current approach, *themselves* must have access to the PLNs, either at a VoiceP-phase edge or at the edge of CP

- (26) a. ? The government has offered themselves up for criticism.
- b. $[_{CP} \text{PLn}_{3i} \dots [_{TP} [_{DP_i} \text{the gov't}] \text{has} \dots [_{\text{VoiceP}} \text{PLn}_{3i} \dots \langle \text{DP}_j \rangle \dots \text{themselves}]]]$

6 Conclusion

- Number mismatch in Icelandic conjunction reduction follows a 3/4 agreement pattern (which is supported by corpus data).
- Uniquely for 3/4 patterns crosslinguistically, the Icelandic pattern is *cross-clausal*.
- Further, Icelandic semantic agreement is subject to syntactic locality constraints and prevents further formal morphosyntactic agreement from being accessed.
- Based on these facts, we proposed a Phase edge linker analysis which accounts for the Icelandic data – and can be extended to previous 3/4 agreement patterns.

Appendix A: Agreement with silent nouns

- Some instances of semantic agreement in Icelandic could be explained with elided or silent nouns, see, e.g., (27) where a masculine plural noun *Englar alheimsins* 'Angels of the universe' is followed by FEM.SG agreement.
- A silent feminine noun like *bókin* 'the book' might explain this (written in all caps; see Sigurðsson, Ingimundarson and Whelpton 2022; cf. also Wiese and Maling 2005).

- (27) a. **Englar** **alheimsins** eftir Einar Má Guðmundsson
 angels.MASC.PL universe.GEN by Einar Már Guðmundsson.ACC
er komin út á ensku [...] is.SG come.FEM.SG out in English [...]
 ‘The Angels of the universe by Einar Már Guðmundsson has been published in English.’
- b. **BÓKIN** Englar alheimsins eftir
 BOOK.the.FEM.SG angels.MASC.PL universe.GEN by
 Einar Má Guðmundsson er komin út á ensku [...] Einar Már Guðmundsson.ACC is.SG come.FEM.SG out in English [...]
 ‘(THE BOOK) The Angels of the universe by Einar Már Guðmundsson has been published in English.’ (Sigurðsson et al. 2022:1)

- This is a less plausible explanation for the live sports commentary mismatches since it is not at all clear what noun is elided – the M.PL LEIKMENN ‘players’ could account for semantic agreement with male teams but not feminine agreement with female teams. For further discussion, see Sigurðsson et al. (2022).

Appendix B: More 3/4 patterns

- Another Icelandic 3/4 conjunction pattern with imposters: The imposter ‘the undersigned’ in conjunction with a name, e.g., ‘John’, can have either default verb agreement (DFLT) or 1PL agreement
- The sentence is degraded with DFLT verb agreement and a 1PL reflexive, but ungrammatical with a 1PL verb agreement and the DFLT SÍN reflexive.

- (28) a. Undirritaður og Jón **skammast** **sín** fyrir ummælin.
 undersigned and Jón are.ashamed.DFLT SELF.DFLT for comments.the
- b. Undirritaður og Jón **skömmumst** **okkar** fyrir ummælin.
 undersigned and Jón are.ashamed.1PL SELF.1PL for comments.the
- c. ??Undirritaður og Jón **skammast** **okkar** fyrir ummælin.
 undersigned and Jón are.ashamed.DFLT SELF.1PL for comments.the
- d. *Undirritaður og Jón **skömmumst** **sín** fyrir ummælin.
 undersigned and Jón are.ashamed.1PL SELF.DFLT for comments.the

‘The undersigned and John are ashamed of the comments they made.’
 (Wood and Sigurðsson 2014:210)

- Landau (2016) analyzes Hebrew hybrid agreement using two sets of ϕ -features: **concord** (*case, number, gender*) and **index** (*person, number, gender*) features (building on the HPSG approach).
 - *ha-be’al-im* ‘the owner(s)’ is *formally plural* (= **plural concord feature**).
 - Plural agreement on ‘previous’ (= *concord* or *index* feature – depending on adjective attachment). Singular agreement (= **singular index feature**).
 - Finite verb agreement = **index agreement**. If ‘previous’ is singular, then = index feature – then the finite verb must also be singular (*only one index feature value allowed for number*). Hence, the ungrammaticality of (29d).

(29) Hebrew

- a. **ha-be’al-im** **ha-kodem** **maxar** et ha-makom lifney šana.
 the-owner-PL the-previous.SG sold.3SG ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owner sold the place a year ago.’
- b. **ha-be’al-im** **ha-kodm-im** **maxru** et ha-makom lifney šana.
 the-owner-PL the-previous.PL sold.3PL ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owners sold the place a year ago.’
- c. ? **ha-be’al-im** **ha-kodm-im** **maxar** et ha-makom lifney šana.
 the-owner-PL the-previous.PL sold.3SG ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owner sold the place a year ago.’
- d. * **ha-be’al-im** **ha-kodem** **maxru** et ha-makom lifney šana.
 the-owner-PL the-previous.SG sold.3PL ACC the-place before year
 Intended: ‘The previous owner(s) sold the place a year ago.’
 (Landau 2016:984–985)

- Messick (2020) observes a 3/4 pattern with so-called *Monstrous agreement* (similar to *Indexical shift*) in Telugu.
 - Telugu 3P pronoun, *tanu*, can control 1P agreement on verb & predicate nouns/adjectives
 - Agreement markers can shift and surface as 1P (Messick 2020:43–44)

- In embedded clauses with copular verb & predicate adjective, see (30):
 (i) OK 1P copular verb & 3P predicate adjective
 (ii) !* 1P predicate adjective & anything other than 1P copular verb
- (30) a. Raju [tanu picci-vaaDi-**ni** ava-taa-**nu** ani] čəpp-ææ-Du
 Raju [3SG mad-1SG-1SG be-FUT-1SG COMP] say-PAST-3MSG
- b. Raju [tanu picci-vaaDi-**∅** ava-taa-**Du** ani] čəpp-ææ-Du
 Raju [3SG mad-3SG-3SG be-FUT-1SG COMP] say-PAST-3MSG
- c. Raju [tanu picci-vaaDi-**∅** ava-taa-**nu** ani] čəpp-ææ-Du
 Raju [3SG mad-3SG-1SG be-FUT-1SG COMP] say-PAST-3MSG
- d. *Raju [tanu picci-vaaDi-**ni** ava-taa-**Du** ani] čəpp-ææ-Du
 Raju [3SG mad-1SG-3SG be-FUT-1SG COMP] say-PAST-3MSG
 ‘Raju said that he will become mad/a mad man.’ (Messick 2020:45)

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