Discourse Markers in Arabic and English Newspaper Articles: The Case of the Arabic *Lakin* and its English equivalent *But*

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Abstract
Discourse markers, as words or phrases, play a significant role in promoting coherent segments of discourse. This paper investigates the use of discourse markers (DMs) in newspaper articles. By applying Fraser's framework, this study aims at investigating the functions and positions of DM *but* (English) and its equivalent *lakin* (Arabic) in newspaper articles written by native and non-native speakers of English and Saudi and Egyptian speakers of Arabic. It also highlights the similarities and differences in the functions and positions of DMs *but* and *lakin*. This quantitative study adopts a corpus-based approach. The data consist of articles collected from 12 newspapers categorized as: Arabic language newspapers published in Saudi Arabia (*Alriyadh, Al Jazirah, Al-Hayat*) and Egypt (*Al-Ahram, Al-Gomhuria, Eltahrir*) and English language newspapers published in Saudi Arabia (*Arab News, Saudi Gazette, Asharq Al-Awsat*) and the USA (*Washington Post, The New York Times, USA TODAY*). Findings demonstrate, first, that DM *but* is used frequently as a confirmation or addition marker by both native and non-native speakers. However, second, *lakin,* functions as the primary correction DM in standard Arabic. Moreover, third, the native Arabic speakers mostly share the same functions of using *lakin* despite different dialects they have. This study also reveals that *lakin* can be found only in the medial position, whereas, *but* is found in the initial and medial position. It concludes that DMs *but* and *lakin* evidence that functions of DMs proposed by Fraser are universal and they could be generalized.
Keywords: Arabic and English newspaper articles, but, discourse markers, functions and positions, lakin

Introduction

Discourse markers "are items in spoken discourse which act as signposts of discourse coherence" (Paltridge, 2012, p. 102) and include interjections, *oh*, conjunctions, *but*, adverbs, *now* and lexical choices, for instance, *y'know*. In an utterance, DMs can exit at the beginning, middle or end as anaphoric (pointing back) and cataphoric (pointing forward) types of references. A DM has different functions, for instance, *oh* acts as a marker of information management and signposts an emotional state, and initiates a self-repair. The DM *but* is used to preface a unit of an idea, *now* can be used to indicate a forthcoming idea or a comparison and *y'know* is implanted to attain involvement and consensus of hearers. DMs also establish a relationship between different discourse segments and carry a core meaning. However, their specific interpretation depends on a linguistic and conceptual context in which an item occurs. Some speakers of English may use DMs for a variety of pragmatic functions, while others may use them in a restricted way. Typically functional DMs are and, but, OK (Paltridge, 2012). DMs "signal relations between discourse units… play an important role in the parsing of natural language discourse and their correspondence with discourse relations can be exploited for the unsupervised learning of discourse relations" (Hutchinson, 2004, p. 684).

Schiffrin's (1987) initial work defined DMs as "sequentially dependent elements that bracket units of talk" (p. 31). By this, DMs are named as "utterance-initial items" (Schiffrin, 2001, p. 57) which are non-obligatory and function in the context of an in-progress talk and text. According to Schiffrin, DMs are a set of linguistic expressions that include varied words classes such as conjunctions (*and*, *but*, *or*) interjections (*oh*), adverbs (*now, then)* and lexicalized phrases such as *y'know, I mean,* etc. There are three different perspectives on DMs: semantic perspective, discourse perspective and pragmatic approach (Schiffrin, 2001). DMs are separate from other function words; they frequently occur at the beginning to continue the conversation. Discourse markers "ALL have the latter, pragmatic functions rather than the former, narrowly semantic, ones" (Zwicky, 1985, p. 304).

Fraser (1999) defined DMs are lexical expressions, that relate various discourse segments. They are drawn from syntactic classes of adverbs, conjunctions and prepositional phrase. With their interpretation negotiated by both linguistic and conceptual context, DMs have a core meaning, which is procedural rather than conceptual. Fraser's classification has three types. First, contrastive markers (e.g., but, contrary to this, in contrast to, nevertheless) signal that interpretation of the second sentence contrast with that of the first one. Second, elaborative markers (e.g., above all, also, besides, I mean, similarly, moreover) signal a quasi-parallel relationship between the second and the first sentence. Third, inferential markers (e.g., thus, so, as a result, of course, therefore, hence, then) signal that the second sentence should be taken a conclusion based on the first one (Fraser, 1999).

Since the study of DMs is of great theoretical and practical significance, we try to find out discourse functions of the most frequently used DMs *but* and *lakin* by analyzing 12 Arabic and English language newspapers. Through examining some examples, we can get a better understanding of the functions of DMs and also how they are used. By applying Fraser's framework, this study aims at investigating the functions and positions of the DM *but* (English) and its equivalent *lakin* (Arabic) in newspaper articles written by native and non-native speakers

of English and Saudi and Egyptian speakers of Arabic. It also highlights the similarities and differences in the functions and positions of DMs *but* and *lakin*. The first section of the study, introduction, presents some scholarly definitions of DMs. The second section presents a review of previous studies about DMs in general and the DM *but* and its equivalent in Arabic (*lakin*). The third section unfolds methodology, sampling, and the framework which we are using and discussing and defining the corpus, which is our data collector. The fifth section analyzes the data, obtained from the corpus, under Fraser's framework. Finally, in section five, we conclude by summarizing Fraser's framework on *lakin* in Arabic and its dialects (the Saudi and Egyptian Arabic), and on *but* in English.

Uses and Functions of Discourse Markers: An Overview
In the 1970s, different studies have been conducted on DMs (Fraser 1999; Schiffrin 1987). Research on DMs constitutes an essential step in the study of natural language discourse. As a common linguistic means of communication, DMs make the communication smooth and successful as well as improve the coherence of the discourse. Fraser (1999) classified DMs as lexical expressions that are drawn mostly from "the syntactic classes of conjunctions, adverbs, and prepositional phrases" (p. 931) and they demonstrate a "relationship between the interpretation of the segment they introduce, S2, and the prior segment, S1" (p. 931). They possess a core meaning, which is procedural rather than conceptual. Their specific interpretation is dependent on the context that is both linguistic and conceptual (Fraser, 1999).

Al Mughrabi (2017) acknowledged that discourse makers are cohesive devices and linking words of different types that exist in oral or written discourse. Their function is to stick words and sentences together. This study analysed the development level of Arab EFL learners in using DMs in writing through analyzing their errors. It was argued that the quality of students' writing depends on the usage of DMs. It relied on two types of questions related to the use of DMs, which included additive (*and*, *furthermore, besides, in addition* – adding/explaining ideas), causative (*because, so, therefore, as a result, thus* – signaling results and reason), adversative (*but, yet, instead, on the other hand, although* – showing contrast) and temporal (*first, firstly, second, next, finally* – marking a chronological order). The questions were divided on 40 undergraduate students (20 males & 20 females) belonging to the first, second, third, and fourth year English-major. The study concluded that the use of DMs improved with the evolution of their academic background.

Hussein (2008) investigated the use of DM *but* in English and in standard Arabic (The Holy Quran). The study refuted previously held notions that *but* is an ambiguous linguistic expression in English. Instead, supported by the data from standard Arabic, it provided a unitary account of the meanings encoded by *but* and argues that there is a standard procedure that can be followed in four different ways to derive such meanings. Further, it put forward that *but* is a sense-general linguistic expression rather than an ambiguous one. It revealed different linguistic expressions that are non-synonymous and translate *but* in standard Arabic as *lakinna*, *bainama*, *bal,* and *lakin* representing four meanings: denial of expectation, contrast, correction, and cancellation.

Alhuqbani (2013) examined discourse functions of the primary contrastive DM *but* in English with its equivalent, *lakin*, in standard Arabic. For this purpose, 10 informants (five Arabic-

English speaking and five native English informants) were presented a judgment test of 48 examples. The study demonstrated that *lakin* in standard Arabic functions as the primary contrastive DM similar to *but* in English. It also showed that English contrastive DM *but* can have several translations in Arabic, *bal, bianama,* and *lakinna*. However, none of these functions as a primary contrastive DM equivalent to *but* since they do not examine the semantic meanings of the English *but*. It was claimed that only the DM *lakin* denotes most of the semantic meanings of *but*. The study concluded that *lakin* and *but* despite sharing many of discourse functions differ in terms of non-discourse marker functions/sequences where the former does not capture the same semantic meanings of the latter.

Oda and Abdullah (2018) explored DMs used by some Arab news channel and what was their purpose. This study adopted Hyland's (2005) model that subdivides DMs into transitional (logical) and frame markers, reminders (endophorics), and code gloss markers. It witnessed that under the first category Arabic news items used four types of transitional markers: additive DMs (link syntactic units such as clauses, phrases or verbs, e.g., *in addition*, *and, also*), adversative DMs (compare and contrast an argument, e.g., *but, while, however*), causative DM (establish a relation of cause and result or a premise and conclusion, e.g., *because*), and conclusive DMs (summarise preceding proposition or present conclusions, e.g., *in order to, the reason for*). Under the second category, the Arabic news items used the following two types of frame markers: sequencer DMs (sequence parts of speech and arrange events, e.g., *next, first, second*), and topicalisers DMs (signal the coming modifications in a talk, e.g., *immediately, today*). Under the third and fourth categories, the Arabic news items also used reminder DMs (refer to other parts of the previous text e.g., *it*), and code gloss markers (explains the writers' perspectives e.g., *including, especially about*). Findings revealed that Arabic news items used interpersonal DMs (hedges, certainty markers, attitude markers etc.).

Al Kohlani (2010) argued that DMs are not just connecting words; instead, they serve as crucial tools for achieving commutative acts in a text – essential elements in the production and perception of a text. They function across sentence boundaries to link textual units beyond the sentence and influence text-receivers' interpretation. Al Kohlani explored the use of DMs in Arabic newspaper opinion articles and studied their function at two levels of text structures: the sentence and the paragraph. Taking a semantic-pragmatic relation based approach, the study analyzed 50 texts as data. It adopted a three-step analytical model to identify DMs and suggests functional classifications for DMs at the sentence, and paragraph levels. It claimed that at sentence boundaries, classification of DMs include additive, contrastive, explanatory, inferential, sequential, alternative, exceptive, background, subjective, and interactive, and at paragraph boundaries DMs performed three functions: continuity, refocus, and change of topic.

Kurdi (2008) probed the use of three English DMs *so*, *you know*, and *I mean* by Syrian Arabic learners of English as a foreign language. The data consisted of recorded interviews with 18 Syrian informants/learners of English in both English and Arabic. This study investigated the influence of the first language on the production of DMs in English. Findings indicated that the learners used DMs for a variety of functions without any influence from Arabic.

DMs have different uses and varied functions at different levels of discourses. Al-Khawaldeh (2018) pointed out the functions of DM *wallahi* in Jordanian Spoken Arabic under pragma-discourse perspective. This study employed 26 participants different in gender, age, education, and job. The data consist of a corpus of 8 hours of spoken discourse that included face to face as well as cell phone conversations. It exemplified that DM *wallahi* acted as multifunctional. It served the following ten functions in the corpus (26 conversations): introduced as an acceptance, apology, threat and a complaint, and served as a request softener, marker of elaboration, container, marker of confirmation, marker to comply with a request, and a filler marker.

The use of DMs also varies across speakers/learners of English in different settings (native and non-native). Algouzi (2015) examined the two corpora, the Saudi learners', and British native speakers' for the use of DMs. The data consisted of 50 interviews conducted by the teaching staff at four different colleges, and universities. The interviewees were Saudi male and female undergraduates (learners belonging to the third and fourth years of study). This study explored the use of English DMs in the speech of Saudi learners (non-native), and compared it to those used by native speakers of English. By focussing on *so*, *you know* , and *like* as the most frequent DMs in two corpora, it advocated that native speakers of English used *so* , and *like* more regularly and, comparatively, Saudi learners used *you know* more frequently with a variety of discourse functions. Findings demonstrated that out of the three DMs used by Saudi learners, only *so* was introduced in the textbooks, and other two markers were acquired by the students probably through exposure to media or through their peer interactions.

DMs play significant role in organizing, interpreting Arabic text. Al-Khawaldeh, Awal, and Zainudin (2014) presented a corpus-based placement of Arabic DM used in the journalistic discourse of sports news. This study examined a corpus of 80 articles from the online versions of Arab news websites: *Aljazeera.net* and *Alarabia.net*. Based on Fraser's model, this study addressed four issues identification, classification, frequency, syntactic classes, and position. It identified 73 DMs and categorized them into: elaborative (*wa, kama, khasatan-khususan, idhan, ay, haithu*), contrastive (*fima, bianama, rghma, biada anna, lakin*), inferential (*li, bisabab, mimma, liana, idha, ithra, hatta*), and temporal (*baad, qabl ,indama, thumma, iqiba, hinama*). The study advocates that DMs such as conjunctions (*bainma* "while", *adha* "if", *lianna* "because"), adverbs (*aydhan* "also", *hiina* " when", *haithu* "where"), prepositions (*li* "in order to, for"), nouns (*jarraa* "because", *bughyata* " for, *raghm* "despite", *baida* "but") unify different text units and explicitly signal semantic relationship between them.

By surveying the literature on DMs studies, it is established that previous studies mostly focused on non-news/newspaper discourses to analyze the uses and functions of different types of DMs (e.g., Algouzi 2015; Alhuqbani, 2013; Al-Khawaldeh, 2018; Al Mughrabi, 2017; Hussein, 2008; Kurdi, 2008). In contrast, less attention has been paid to how DMs functions in English and Arabic newspaper articles. This study aims to investigate the functions and positions of DMs *lakin* in Arabic newspaper articles and its equivalent *but* in English language newspaper articles.

Research Objectives
This study aims to explore:
1- the functions and positions of DM *but* in newspaper articles written by native and non-native speakers of English;
2- the functions and positions of DM *lakin* in newspaper articles written by Saudi and Egyptian speakers of Arabic;
3- the similarities and differences in the functions of DMs *lakin* and *but* in Arabic and English language newspaper articles.

Research Questions
This study answers the following research questions:
1- What are the functions and positions of DM *but* used in newspaper articles written by native and non-native speakers of English?
2- What are the functions and positions of DM *lakin* used in newspaper articles written by the Saudi and Egyptian speakers of Arabic?
3- To what extent do DMs *lakin* and *but* share any discourse functions under Fraser's framework?

Method
Under the quantitative analysis, this study probes the functions and positions of the English DM *but* and its Arabic equivalent *lakin*. The study uses a corpus-based approach and draws on a collection of newspaper articles randomly chosen from 12 different Arabic (six) and English (six) newspapers. The newspaper data are classified into four groups illustrated in Table 1. The first one is Saudi newspapers, published in Arabic language, which are: *Alriyadh*, *Al Jazirah* and *Al-Hayat*. The second is Egyptian newspapers, published in the Arabic language, that are: *Al-Ahram*, *Al-Gomhuria,* and *Eltahrir*. The third group represents the English language newspapers (non-native), *Arab news*, *Saudi Gazette,* and *Asharq Al-Awsat*, published in Saudi Arabia. The last group consists of the English language newspapers (native) such as *The Washington Post, The New York Times* and *USA TODAY*.

Table 1
Newspapers used in the study

1st Group Saudi newspapers (Arabic)	2nd Group Egyptian newspapers (Arabic)	3rd Group English language newspapers (non-native/Saudi)	4th Group English language newspapers (native/American)
Alriyadh	*Al-Ahram*	*Arab News*	*Washington Post*
Al Jazirah	*Al-Gomhuria*	*Saudi Gazette*	*The New York Times*
Al-Hayat	*Eltahrir*	*Asharq Al-Awsat*	*USA TODAY*

The theoretical framework of this study is based on Fraser's (2006, 2009) model that distinguishes six functions of the DM *but*: simple contrast, confirmation with elaborative DM, denied of the content, correction, *but* with relative degree form (even more/less etc.) and exception. Moreover, Fraser (2006) illustrates the positions of the DM *but* that it can only appear in the initial and medial positions and cannot be found in the final position. Therefore, the study focused only on the

functions and the positions of *but* and *lakin.* According to Fraser (2006), "the class of DMs is defined functionally as those lexical expressions which signal a relationship between adjacent messages, all are members of one of five syntactic categories: coordinate conjunction; subordinate conjunction; preposition; prepositional phrase; adverb" (p. 194)

This paper uses a corpus-based approach as its tool in data collection. In the field of linguistics, corpus/corpora mean the body of language. McEnery and Wilson (1996) discussed the corpus analysis and agreed that corpora are a new approach/method(ology) in studying and investigating linguistic phenomena. Tognini-Bonelli (2001) also noted that there are two types of corpus analysis, which are the corpus-based approach and the corpus-driven approach. The corpus-based approach uses corpora/corpus as a source of examples to check the frequency of a linguistic feature in a small set of data. In contrast, the corpus-driven approach uses all the data in the selected corpus, and, from that, the research would build and show the linguistic pattern the researcher found in this corpus. Following Tognini-Bonelli, Partington (2006) added one more type in the corpus analysis, which is the corpus-assisted approach. This approach uses corpora/corpus as one of the data sources in investigating linguistic phenomena. To sum up, there are three types of approaches in adopting a corpus: the *corpus-based* approach, the *corpus-driven* approach, and the *corpus-assisted* approach. In this study, we adopt the corpus-based approach as our data collector.

Analysis and Discussion

The present study aims to investigate the use of English DM *but* and its Arabic equivalent *lakin*. For this purpose, the data were analyzed in four groups for an accurate comparison between the English DM *but* and the Arabic *lakin* in three stages. First, a comparison was drawn between native English speakers (American newspapers) and non-native English speakers (Saudi newspapers) in the use of *but*. In this sense, the third and fourth groups of the data were used. Secondly, the comparison was drawn between the use of English *but* by native speakers and Arabic *Lakin* in Saudi newspapers i.e., taking the fourth and the first groups in the sake of analysis. The third stage intended to discover, by taking the first and second groups of data, whether there was a difference between the two dialects of the Arabic language, Saudi and Egyptian, in the use of *Lakin*. For each comparison level, there are approximate equivalent numbers of samples. For the native and non-native stage, there are 112 occurrences for *lakin* and *but*. For the Arabic and English comparison, there are 224 tokens for *but* and 209 tokens for *lakin*. Finally, for the third level of comparison is between the Saudi and Egyptian Arabic; there are 102 tokens for the Egyptian sample while 107 for the Saudi Arabic.

This section presents the main results and findings of this research paper. The findings prove that *lakin* and *but* share some socio-pragmatic functions. The findings display that Confirmation, Denied of the Content, and Correction are universal in these languages (i.e., English, Arabic, Saudi Arabic, and Egyptian Arabic). Other Fraser's functions such as Cancellation, Relative Degree Form, and Exception are not well-known in Arabic or its dialects. However, Arab speakers of English (non-native speakers of English) provide some examples of *but* in the Relative Degree Form which is not common based on Tables 3 and 4. This might be a result of the influence and impact of English culture. This section provides a statistical evidence of the sampling distribution.

Table 2
Difference between the use of DMs but by native and non-native speakers of English

	Simple contrast	Confirmation (addition)	Denied of the content	Correction	*But* with relative degree form	Exception	Cancellation	Total
Native *but*	9	28	26	13	23	5	8	112
Non-native *but*	4	38	26	17	19	5	3	112

The main purpose of this study is to reveal the functions of the DM *lakin* and its equivalent *but* in English using Fraser's framework. It is interesting to find out that the quantitative analysis of the collected data from the newspapers from these two societies has shown that they are almost the same. *But* has been used highly as a confirmation or addition marker, and has not been only used to reject old information as analysed in the following examples from native and non-native English language newspapers:

1. a. Crises are now looming, not just with Iran **but** also in the heart of Africa. [*US Today*]
   b. They met resistance from Democrat leadership **but** as the report added the "surprising thing" about that committee   [*The New York Times*]
   c. They have no choice **but** to retrain their own workers. [*The New York Times*]
2. a. This technology will be promising not only in making video games more realistic **but** also in making virtual scientific experiments more informative.   [*Asharq Al-Awsat*]
   b. The Kingdom is not only seeking to achieve its own interests **but** also those of its partners. [*Asharq Al-Awsat*]
   c. Aleppo are home not only to buildings that are UNESCO world heritage sites **but** also to important intangible cultural heritage. [*Arab News*]

From those examples, we can see that both native and non-native speakers of English have shown that they used *but* as a confirmative or additive marker and not simply reject old information with the new one. Furthermore, *but* as a denied of the content from both the data have been found that it is the second frequent function while exception and cancellation functions are the least used. Syntactically speaking, the data from English newspapers have displayed that noun phrases (i.e. pronouns, wh-words, names, relative pronouns) are the most phrases used following the discourse maker *but*. In contrast, the data from the non-native speakers of English have no such indications. In fact, verb phrases, prepositional phrases, and noun phrases following *but* have been witnessed. Also, it is hard to find out *but* in the initial position in the non-native English newspapers while it is quite common to find *but* at the beginning of a sentence in the English newspapers data.

Table 3
The difference between the use of English DM but and Arabic lakin

	Simple contrast	Confirmation (addition)	Denied of the content	Correction	*But* with relative degree form	Exception	Cancellation	Total
English *but*	13	66	52	30	42	10	11	224
Arabic *lakin*	5	49	54	97	0	4	0	209

From Table 3, we can observe that *lakin* in standard Arabic has some similar functions to English *but* in the newspapers. Both *lakin* and *but* have the functions of simple contrast, confirmation, denied of the content, correction, and exception but we cannot find the functions of cancellation, and *but* with relative degree form in standard Arabic *lakin*. *Lakin*, as a correction, has been used as the most frequent discourse function in Arabic newspapers. Native Arabic speakers used *lakin* highly to correct previous assumptions in discourse as analyzed in the following examples:

> 3.a. Wa Mushklatu-hu kant Idman almokhadarat allati lam yastdie an yanju mn qabthateha,***lakin*** lays wahda-hu, Idman la yagtasir ala al-mokhadarat [*Alriyadh*]
> b. His problem was drug addiction which he cannot escape from it, but addiction is not only drug…. [*Alriyadh*]

This example shows that *lakin* in standard Arabic is used not to deny any contextual expectation. However, it is used to correct the judgment that addiction is not only to the drug, but it can be to the Internet, etc. Hussein (2008) argues that *bal,* which has the same meaning of *lakin* used mostly to mean a correction and replacement of the content mentioned in the previous clause. On the other hand, confirmation is the most regular function of *but* used by native English and non-native speakers. Fraser (2009) illustrates that *but* does not only refer to contrast, but it may provide a reason for confirmation. Moreover, *lakin* can be found out mostly in the medial positions in Arabic newspapers while *but* can be seen habitually in the initial and medial position.

Table 4
Difference between the use of DM lakin in Saudi and Egyptian newspaper articles

	Simple contrast	Confirmation (addition)	Denied of the content	Correction	*But* with relative degree form	Exception	Cancellation	Total
Saudi *lakin*	1	28	34	40	0	4	0	107
Egyptian *lakin*	4	21	20	57	0	0	0	102

As we have two different societies, we might have some differences in the use of the DM *lakin*. Regarding Table 4, we can find that Saudi and Egyptian speakers share four significant functions of *lakin* which are simple contrast, confirmation, denied of the content, and correction. As

observed, exception is the function that is only used by Saudi speakers. The table shows that the most common function used by Saudi speakers is denied of the content whereas correction is the most regular function used by Egyptian speakers. In sum, native Arabic speakers have the same functions of using *lakin* in journalistic newspapers. Different dialects have not shown a significant effect on using *lakin* differently in Arabic society.

Conclusion

This study presents a comparison between the functions and positions of DM *lakin* in standard Arabic and its dialects (Saudi and Egyptian Arabic), and it is equivalent *but* in English. In this paper, we adopted Fraser's framework. Fraser (1999, 2006, 2009) clustered and grouped the DM *but* in English into seven main discourse functions as simple contrast, confirmation, relative degree form, correction, exception, cancellation. The analysis of the results has shown that *but* has been used primarily by native English and non-native speakers as a confirmation or addition marker not to deny the previous information. In contrast, *lakin* has been used widely as a correction, confirmation, or denied of the content marker by native Arabic speakers; they have not shown any examples of cancellation, relative degree form, and exception marker. Although there are different dialects among Arabic society, all native speakers use the same functions of *lakin*. This study puts forth that DMs *but* and *lakin* evidence that functions of DMs under Fraser's framework are universal and they could be generalized.

Finally, the study of Arabic and English DMs is not only beneficial to discourse understanding and generating, but also has a great influence on practice, such as second language education, translation of DMs, contrastive studies of DMs in various languages, etc. The findings of this paper have implications on teaching and learning English and/or Arabic as a second or foreign language. Therefore, it might provide a new perspective for Arabic and/or English learners.

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