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**APPROACH TO ENGLISH AS A LINGUA FRANCA****Simona Čalovková***University of Presov, Presov, Slovakia*

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*During the first decade of a new millennium, interest in English as a lingua franca (ELF) increased dramatically. Therefore a lot of research has been done at a range of linguistic levels, such as lexis, grammar, pronunciation and pragmatics as well as on the morpho-syntactic properties of ELF interactions and the communication strategies used by ELF speakers in order to facilitate communication and avoid misunderstandings. This has also been reflected in the approaches and attitudes towards English as a lingua franca in English Language Teaching. That is why we might need to rethink not only how English is taught, but also which kind or variety of English. We should take into account a wide range of global trends and the current transformations that English is undergoing. In this article we pay attention to the definitions and features of ELF. We also deal with the reasons why English has become a global language. We concentrate on the global nature of English, the process of globalization, and the results of various empirical research which have raised profound questions about current principle and practice in English language teaching. According to the pedagogic implications of ELF, it is necessary to take into account the key areas in particular: the nature of the language syllabus, teaching materials, approaches and methods, language assessment and the knowledge base of language teachers. Apart from this, we would like to highlight that the main aim of this article is to demonstrate the communicative advantages of an ELF approach and to raise awareness of ELF among teachers.*

*Key words: english as a lingua franca, development of english as a lingua franca, globalization, pragmatics, world englishes, centripetal circles, pedagogic implications, sociolinguistics, english language teaching, language syllabus.*

**Introduction.**

English is no longer only a language used by its native speakers (NSs), but it also holds its dominant position around the world. It is estimated that English is a mother tongue of more than 400 million people, nearly 300 million people use it as their second language and more than hundreds of million people use English as a lingua franca in many different fields, such as tourism, business, academic institutions etc. [12]. English is nowadays mastered by more than 750 million non-native speakers (NNs). NNs outnumbered the NSs. It is estimated that 1.5 billion people speak English. English has without doubt the highest volume of people learning it as a foreign language and using it to communicate around the world. He also compares English to a vacuum cleaner readily sucking in words from whichever other languages it meets. Obviously, the numbers of NNs and NSs have risen since 2003 but it surely highlights the «power» and dominant position of English in the world [1].



This increasing number of NNs has also changed the ways of perspective on English and its perception. This fact has influenced a lot of linguists and students and their interest in this topic has resulted in the numerous empirical researches, attempts to describe and summarize the features of ELF and the nature of ELF interactions.

Generally speaking, every new phenomenon in different fields is usually followed by a growing need for a theoretical base, for its own definitions and characteristics. ELF consequently has become a vibrant field of research and debate over the past few years. The turning point has likely occurred at the start of the new millennium with the publication of two essential works dealing with ELF.

The first one is undoubtedly Jenkins' empirical study of ELF pronunciation, in which she described some formal and functional features. On the basis of these features she pointed out that native English pronunciation is not optimum in ELF communication context [8].

The second one is Seidlhofer's conceptual piece which can be understood as an important step forward because it has changed a conception of ELF. Seidlhofer highlighted that while ELF was the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide, little description of this linguistic reality was currently available. It «precluded us from conceiving of ELF speakers as a language users in their own and meant that native English norms continued to be considered the only valid target for learners [15]. As a result of these facts, two ELF corpora have been launched, the Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE) at the University of Vienna and the Corpus of English as a Lingua Franca in Academic Settings (ELFA) under the leadership of Mauranen in Helsinki. ELF field is also supported by the Asian Corpus of English (ACE) with Kirkpatrick's team. Last but not least, it is necessary to mention the first journal dedicated to a phenomenon of ELF, *Journal of English as a lingua franca*, published by de Gruyter Mouton.

According to the definitions and understanding ELF, it is also necessary to mention Seidlhofer's book «*Understanding English as a Lingua Franca: A Complete Introduction to the Theoretical Nature and Practical Implications of English Used as a Lingua Franca (2011)*» in which she offers an interpretation of ELF. She understands it as «*any use of English among speakers of different first languages for whom English is the communicative medium of choice, and often the only option*» [18, p. 7].

Similarly, Jenkins describes ELF as the common language of choice, among speakers from different linguacultural backgrounds. In other words, English being used among NNs from the Expanding Circle. However, there is no tendency to exclude speakers of the Inner and Outer Circle from a definition of ELF. Moreover, the majority of researchers include NSs to their definitions of ELF. They claim that it does not matter which circle speakers come from because in ELF communication they all need to make adjustments and efforts in order to make it more intelligible and appropriate for the interlocutors. This can involve, for instance, code-switching, repetition, echoing of items, the avoidance of local idiomatic language, and paraphrasing [9].



According to the mentioned corpus VOICE, ELF is defined as an additionally acquired language system which serves as a common means of communication for speakers of different first languages. In comparison with Jenkins, this definition also includes NSs. It means that ELF has to be acquired by NSs as well as by NNSs.

In relation to ELF research, Jenkins states two further provisos. Firstly, ELF distinguishes between *difference* from English as a native language (ENL) and *deficiency* (i. e. interlanguage or learner language). In other words, an item that differs from ENL is considered to be an error. On the contrary, in ELF context it may be a legitimate ELF variant. However, it does not mean that all ELF speakers are proficient. They can also be learners. Above all, it usually depends on communicative effectiveness whether the items are considered to be ELF variants or ELF errors. Secondly, ELF researchers do not claim that ELF features should be taught to English learners [9]. All things considered, the main characteristic of ELF communication is mutual cooperation and understanding regardless of «correctness» for instance by employing «let it pass» and «making it normal» principles [5].

From this point of view, we need to mention Firth's contribution to discussion on ELF. In his research, he has been dealing with the following questions. Is lingua franca English a form or variety of English in its own right, capable of being «codified» and «modelled» and presented as an alternative to the more traditional «standard» English models conventionally found in ELT materials? In order to answer them, he identified «lingua franca factors» according to which «*competence in ELF interactions, then, entails not so much mastery of a stable and standardized code or form, but mastery of strategies for the accomplishment of accommodation of diverse practices and modes of meaning*» [5, p. 163]. Therefore, it is not possible to define ELF as a form or as a variety of English. It cannot be characterized outside interactions and speakers in specific social settings. Similarly, Prodromou also claims that ELF can be seen as emergent because «*its structure is always deferred, always in a process but never arriving*» [15, p. 34]. In the same way, Meierkord notes that ELF «*emerges out of and through interaction,*» and for this reason ELF never achieves a stable or even standardized form [14, p. 129]. According to each context of communication, ELF is situationally determined and as a «form» irremediably variable [1].

To sum up, ELF research and publication have developed since the first Seidlhofer's studies. It has been conducted at a range of linguistic levels, mainly pronunciation (Jenkins), lexis, lexicogrammar (Cogo and Dewey, Breitender, Seidlhofer), and pragmatics (e. g. Firth, House, Meierkord, Cogo, Mauranen) [1].

In order to uncover the ELF features and its status, it is necessary to take into the consideration a lot of studies relating to multilingualism (House, 2003; Canagarajah, 2007), multicompetence (Cook, 2002), additional language learning (Firth and Wagner, 2007), intercultural communication (Knapp and Meierkord, 2002), spoken interaction (Firth, 1996) and the daily sociolinguistic reality for millions of people around the world (Crystal, 2003) [5].

From the phonological point of view, Jenkins identified the crucial phonological features and labelled them the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) and the non-crucial «non-core». She interested in the features of accommodation, i. e. the features which speakers adjusted in order to make their pronunciation more intelligible to their



NNSs interlocutors. As far as the LFC is concerned, Jenkins added that it was not intended as a pronunciation model, but as a set of guidelines for intelligibility [8]. According to the empirical investigation into ELF lexis and lexicogrammar, it has been noticed that an emphasis on identifying language features (that might be considered characteristic of ELF spoken communication) has shifted towards a focus on the communicative functions. All these linguistic features are co found ELF variants (not errors) when contrasted with Standard English forms. For the purpose of illustration, we present a list of the lexicogrammatical characteristics:

- dropping the third person present tense –  
*e. g. She like skiing.*
- confusing the relative pronouns who and which,  
*e. g. She came with the girl which looked like an angel.*
- omitting definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in ENL, and inserting them where they do not occur in ENL  
*e. g. x English language*
- using of incorrect forms in tag questions,
- inserting redundant prepositions,  
*e. g. We have to study about.*
- overusing certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as do, have, make etc.,
- replacing infinitive-constructions with that-clauses,  
*e. g. I want that...*
- overdoing explicitness,  
*e. g. black colour rather than just black. [17, p. 220].*

The focus of ELF pragmatics research has been on the strategies the speakers use in order to resolve or avoid instances of miscommunication. In other words, when signalling a non-understanding, speakers have at their disposal a great amount of strategies that range from non-verbal (overriding, lack of uptake) to intermediate (e. g. minimal feedback or hypothesis forming) to verbal responses (e. g. repetition of a non-understood part). One of the common strategies is *repetition*. As a result, many studies in the ELF pragmatics deal with the means by which interlocutors from different socio-cultural backgrounds achieve understanding and build common ground [2].

There are also the strategies such as *clarification*, and *self-repair*. Kaur shows how her ELF corpus of communication among the students at a university in Kuala Lumpur displays an amount of repetition and *paraphrasing*. The students used these strategies in order to avert problems of understanding in specific contexts, for instance after a prolonged silence, minimal response or overlapping talk [14].

Moreover, whereas the earlier studies based on simulated conversations data showed that non-understandings were solved by topic change or *let it pass principle*, later research has shown that ELF communication is heavily contend-oriented [8]. This research has also reported on the various *negotiation strategies*, in which ELF speakers engage during moments of non-understanding as well as on *pre-empting strategies* which can be used before the trouble occurs. All in all, pre-empting strategies have proved to be relevant, as they show that mutual understanding in



ELF is not taken for granted. ELF speakers make an effort to monitor understanding at every stage of communication, even before non-understanding has taken place. Additionally, in pre-empting strategies, the trouble has not materialized in conversational terms, but the speaker may have some reason to think that what s/he is saying may be troublesome and needs to be pre-empted or pre-negotiated [2].

When we take into the consideration the field of pragmatics more broadly, we can notice a tension between on the one hand, signalling and constructing identity, and on the other, ensuring intelligibility. Identity can be understood as a set of resources that identify a particular group and they are not known to others outside the group, while intelligibility can be understood as the use of shared and «known-in-common» resources [5].

Seidlhofer states that this tension is reflected in *idiomatic expression*. She claims that ELF speakers do not avoid such construction. Instead, they creatively build their own idioms. Seidlhofer gives proof of this in the VOICE corpus by showing how ELF speakers create idiomatic expressions in the here and now of their conversation as well as how they cooperate, accommodate, and make themselves understand. Moreover, by creation of their own expressions they then become markers of in-group membership [20].

In addition to pragmatics, attention has also been paid to the use of discourse markers, which are extensively discussed in NSE communication, but relatively ignored in ELF studies. Therefore, House tackles the discourse marker *you know* and finds that in ELF discourse the relational function of this marker is not particularly salient, on the contrary to ENL discourse. Instead of using the phrase as a marker of politeness, involvement, cooperation, ELF speakers use it to reinforce a position, for discourse planning and production [7]. In other words, they use them to do something in discourse rather than to relate it to the other speakers. They even create their own discourse markers. This creativity of ELF speakers is explored by Mauranen in their use of chunking (the creation of phraseological units to manage interaction in ELF). For the most common chunks for expressing someone's opinion are considered *in my opinion* and *from my point of view*. These two chunks are usually adapted by ELF speakers who have also created a new chunk, *in my point of view* (a synthesis of NSE *in my opinion* and *from my point of view*) [15].

Recent approaches to ELF have changed during the last decade due to different orientation of researchers. Their interests moved from the focus on the ELF features to concentration on the underlying processes at any given moment in an interaction. Most of the earlier ELF research was focused on what was regular in their data rather than what was variable. Therefore, some scholars have taken into account the flexibility and fluidity of ELF. It helped them also to explore how ELF varies according to contextual factors and how these factors impact on speakers' accommodative behaviours. Moreover, they have taken into the consideration how ELF speakers demonstrate substantial linguistic variation from various purposes, such as the ways of expressing their cultural identity, the promotion of solidarity, sharing of humour etc. All in all, ELF research has approved that ELF cannot be considered as a variety as it had been thought with regard to the European context because variability mentioned above is one of ELF's defining character [5].



It can be seen that the present attitudes to ELF are also influenced by Firth's studies as well as by Mauranen's terms *similect* and *second order language contact*, as ELF is based on contact between groups of similect speakers [15].

In other words, ELF speaking communities are an interesting example of language contact. Although they use one vehicular language, it is used by multi-lingual individuals coming from different language backgrounds that are reflected in their Englishes. It means that speakers use the same language, but in systematically different ways. Their idiolects display certain similarities in pronunciation, accent, syntactic features, lexical choices etc. There is also much in common with dialect contact. A number of lects<sup>1</sup> reflecting contact with English have been given nicknames like *Swinglish* (Swedish and English), *Dunglish* (Dutch and English), *Czenglish* (Czech and English). These lects, then, with their similarities, which arise from contacts of a particular first language (L1) with English, can be understood as similects [11].

ELF, then, embodies contact between speakers from different similects. To put it differently speakers who use ELF as their means of communication speak English that is a product of language contact between their other languages and English. A shared first language is then the source of similect affinity, and English comes in as they have encountered it in their learning process. ELF, then, «*means contact between these hybrid, contact-based lects – that is, ELF is a higher-order, or second-order language contact*» [11, p. 10]. This can also be seen in Mauranen. She similarly defines second-order contact. According to her, it means that the languages involved are each in contact with English, and it is these hybrids that are in turn in contact with each other. For instance, speakers of *Spanglish* with Spanish as their L1 and Swedes speaking *Swinglish* both use their own hybrid varieties of English to communicate. The resulting English emerges from a contact between the hybrids [15]. In addition to the recent attitudes to ELF, we would like to sum up three different perspectives from which ELF can be approached. In order to achieve a holistic notion, Jenkins et al. suggest a simple division, i. e. the macro, the meso, and the micro perspective [11].

As we have already stated above, *the macro-social perspective* on ELF is based on the complexity of language contact with English. It means that this perspective on ELF needs to address the notion of the community and the nature of a contact language in complex and varied situations. Secondly, *the meso view* on ELF is concerned with language use in social interactions. Thirdly, *the micro perspective* takes into account the cognition and interaction. Whereas interaction shapes our brains from the start, cognitions is thus attuned to its social environment. Jenkins et al. suggests that the most important cognitive processing phenomenon in ELF is approximation of intended expressions by which speakers can achieve communicative success. These three perspectives bring to light an integrated view of ELF. According to the social levels of language at all levels, ELF is a matter of language contact. From this point of view, ELF can be seen as complex, second-order contact between similects [11].

Finally, we would like to highlight the matter of globalization in connection

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<sup>1</sup>According to Jenkins et al. (2017), the term «lect» is understood as a neutral term for variant. Lect coheres with sociolect, dialect, idiolect, and etc.



with ELF research. Some scholars have begun to look beyond the fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics. They have taken into account a number of interrelated disciplines, such as economics, cultural theory, geography, and political science. When dealing with this matter, the various aspects of globalization have been taken into the consideration. From this point of view, ELF is a globalized and globalizing phenomenon. In other words, interactions in ELF are the means by which the world has become intertwined, by which human relations are maintained across conventional boundaries.

In addition to the role of globalization in ELF studies, we would like to put stress on a Belgian sociolinguist Jan Blommaert who has contributed to sociolinguistic globalization theory with the focus on historical and contemporary patterns of the spread of languages, as well as on new forms of social inequality emerging from globalization processes. He argues that our basic understanding of language and society need to be redefined. His sociolinguistics globalization stands for a new platform for thinking about language in society. He puts stress on the need of new terminology because «old sociolinguistics» cannot address new and unstable sociolinguistic realities, resulting from superdiversity.

Nowadays, English serves without doubt as lingua franca. Before we describe ELF as a phenomenon in its modern sense we present a brief outline of ELF's development. The global spread of English and its leading power can be seen as the consequence of more factors: a.) the British colonial power at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (English speaking colonies in America, Asia, Africa, South Pacific) with its peak at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, b.) the postcolonial economic power of the United States, c.) the process of globalization in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In order to understand the process of globalization in connection with the phenomenon of ELF, we put emphasis on its definition as well as its advantages and disadvantages. Rothenberg defines globalization as «*the acceleration and intensification of interaction and integration among the people, companies, and governments of different nations*» [18, p. 22].

Globalization is also characterized as a connection between nations, individuals and corporations. The authors agree that it is worldwide or global interconnectedness in all aspects of life. Above all, it is the US dominance over technology what makes English a global language known in the world. Apart from technology, there are the other events, such as political, social, economic which encourage English to be used throughout the world as a lingua franca [23].

On the other hand, there are not only advantages (e. g. easier travelling), but also disadvantages of ELF (e. g. English as a threat to multilingualism). She also explains that «*the dominant role of English in the world today is maintained and promoted through a system both of material or institutional structures (e. g. through English maintaining its current position as the dominant language of the Internet) and of ideological positions (arguments that promote English as a superior language)*» [17, p 61]. In other word, English has gained its importance and superiority over the other language because it is the mother tongue of the superpower countries and it has been the dominant language in the era of globalization.



The number of people using English is vast. Expanding use of English worldwide has reached a high status in more than seventy-five countries and it varies from one country to another [3].

In addition to the reasons we have mentioned above, we would like to summarize the other facts concerned with an intensive spread of English. According to the author dealing with the topic of English as a global/world/international language, we make a list of the following reasons:

- *historical reasons* in form of the legacy of British or American imperialism when country's main institutions carry out their proceedings in English (government, civil service, schools, religion...);
- *internal political reasons* due to which English is a neutral means of communication between the country's different ethnic groups (local variation of it as a symbol of national unity);
- *external economic reasons* by which English is understood as a language of international business and trade, tourist and advertising industries (organisations and companies are English dependent);
- *practical reasons* of international air traffic control, maritime, policing and emergency services that are in English;
- *intellectual reasons* – English is a language of scientific, technological and academic information (85% of all information stored in electronic system, also access to philosophical, cultural, religious and literary history of Western Europe);
- *entertainment reasons* – English is a language of popular culture and advertising (also main language of satellite broadcasting, home computers, video games, as well as illegal activities);
- *wrong reasons* – specifically linguistic features, beauty of the language, easy pronunciation, simple grammar, nevertheless the last category is the least important for the spread of English as a world language [3, 6, 9].

When discussing the global spread of English, it is also essential to mention Kachru's Three Concentric Circles of English (1986). This model is organized with regard to the phases of the spread of English, the patterns of acquisition, and the functional allocation of English in diverse cultural context [9].

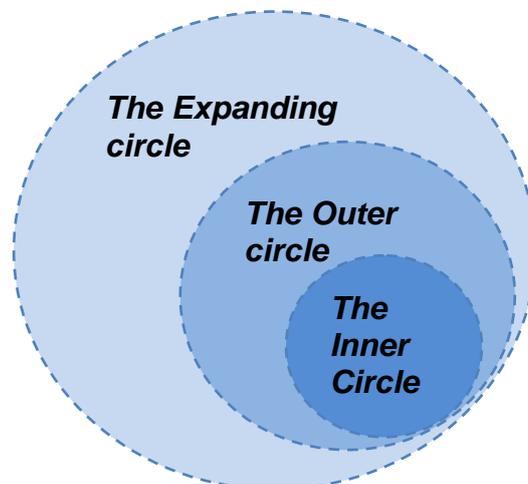


Figure 1. Kachru's three circle model of World Englishes (source: the author, 2018)



The inner circle includes the countries where English is a native language (L1), such as USA, UK, Canada, New Zealand, Australia. English of this circle is said to be «norm providing». English of the outer circle (e. g. India, Kenya, Malaysia, Philippines) is understood as «norm developing» and it refers to English as a second language (L2) in the countries in which English has been spread in non-native environment and has become a part of multilingual settings. English of the expanding circle (e. g. China, Japan, Korea, Indonesia, Greece, Poland) is said to be «norm-dependant» and fulfils the role of a foreign language [9]. Despite Kachru's model usefulness, it was criticized for the connotation of linguistic superiority of the Englishes in the model's core and for the fact that the boundaries did not reflect the accurate state of the varieties contained. However, the model showed the diversity of English, differentiated between native and non-native Englishes and legitimized non-native Englishes as distinct varieties. All in all, the model achieved its aim to demonstrate the pluralistic reality of the language and show that English changes as it spreads [9]. According to the Kachru's circles, we support Jenkins in her opinions on the three-circle model's influence and essential contribution to our understanding of the spread of English. However, despite its importance, a lot of limitations have been revealed with regard to the recent changes in the use of English. Consequently, these changes have been taken into account and more models of the spread of English have been drafted [8, 9].

For instance, one of them is Modiano's first model of Centripetal circles of international English (1999), based on proficiency of speakers (native and non-native). The core is made up of speakers who are proficient in international English. The next circle includes speakers who are proficient in English as a native or foreign language rather than an international language. The third circle comprises the learners of English, i. e. those who are not yet proficient in English. Outside of this circle is represented by those people who do not know English at all. Apart from proficiency, the other important criterion is, that the speakers have no strong regional accent or dialect. In particular, where is the line between the strong and not strong accent? Where is the line between proficient and not proficient? Accordingly, Modiano redrafted his model. A few months later he moves away from intelligibility and bases it on features of English common to all varieties of English. English as an International Language (EIL) is at the centre and represents features which are comprehensible to the most of native and competent non-native speakers of English. The second circle includes features which are internationally common or obscure. The last circle is understood as the outer area consisting of five groups, i. e. American English, British English, major varieties (Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English, South African English), local varieties, foreign varieties. Features of these groups are peculiar to them and unlikely to be comprehended by most members of the other four groups [8]. A big advantage of Kachru's model is that it points to the development of English in these three contexts. However, this model does not take into account the level of proficiency in English. They find degree of expertise to be more important than the fact of where speakers come from and what other language(s) they speak. To sum up, Graddol refers to the proficiency level of speakers within the community whereas Kachru to the use of English in a society [6].



Further more, Graddol also proposes his model of the global spread of English. He highlights an ambiguity in terminology as well as he adds that the difference between «native speaker», «second language speaker», «foreign language speaker» has become unclear. Consequently, he redrafts Kachru's model and takes «functional nativeness<sup>2</sup> « as well as speakers' proficiency into consideration. In the revised model, the inner circle represents high proficiency, regardless of where the language is learned and used. In other words, the inner circle is not based on history, geopolitical designation, official status, but rather on use, expertise and competence in English. Therefore, it can include anyone from any of the three circles of the original model. The outer concentric circles represent lower proficiency. In this situation, Graddol's model shifts the focus away from nativeness and race and it can be understood as «an acceptance of the legitimacy of a broader spectrum of English speakers and the status of English as a world language. English as a world language implies a new definition of the language: English is all its speakers» [6, p. 22]. All in all, English is a global language that belongs to all its speakers.

### **Conclusions.**

This article puts stress on the phenomenon of English as a lingua franca which should be taken into account by teachers when preparing not only for their profession but also for the process of the English language teaching. We should be aware of a great number of teacher training manuals, which incorporate sections dealing with the spread of English in the world. So far there has been little detailed discussion of how different varieties of English, or how the dynamic variability of ELF, might impact on language teaching models or methodology. Generally, teachers and learners consider the distinctions between the British English or American English, but practically no consideration is given to empirical work on nativized Englishes or the expanding body of ELF research. In relation to ELF, there has been little discussion of what an ELF-oriented pedagogy might actually look like. However, what most assuredly has taken place is very considerable debate about the claims of ELF researchers with little regard to ELT methods, materials and practices. All in all, this article is promoting an ELF perspective not as an alternative approach intended to supplant existing pedagogy, but rather as an additional option about which teachers and learners can make informed choices [10].

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<sup>2</sup>In the Kachruvian terminology, the idea of functional nativeness (see Kachru, 2005, p. 12) hinges principally around the two dimensions of range and depth: the former refers to the domains of use of the language, the latter to its degree of social penetration.



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