

Academic and Journalistic Writing in English and Japanese: A Contrastive Study on Stance and Engagement Expressions¹

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Abstract

This is a part of the series of English-Japanese contrastive rhetoric research, conducted with the primary focus on the way language is used to express opinions in writing. Following a previous study on newspaper editorials (Lee, 2009), this research involves the examination of 60 research articles from academic journals; 30 articles published in USA and 30 published in Japan. An analysis was made based on Hyland's (2005) model on stance and engagement in both studies. The results from the two studies are compared to ascertain whether the contrastive characteristics identified are due to the nature of the data, or the linguistic and rhetorical differences between English and Japanese writing. The findings have revealed that the frequent use of 'questions' and a paucity of 'boosters' in both journalistic and academic writing in Japanese are due to the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of Japanese writing. In contrast, English journalistic writing is characterized by frequent use of engagement expressions, which was not found in English academic writing. An examination of the ratio of stance and engagement expressions in two different types of data: journalistic and academic, suggests that English writers are more conscious of the genre difference than Japanese writers.

Keywords: English-Japanese contrastive rhetoric, stance, engagement, genre, academic writing, journalistic writing

1. Introduction

Contrastive rhetoric research examines differences and similarities in writing styles across cultures. "It considers texts not only as static products but also as functional parts of dynamic cultural context" (Connor, 2002, p. 493). The current study forms part of the series of English-Japanese contrastive rhetoric research conducted with a focus on the way language is used by writers to express their opinions in writing. Building upon the findings from research conducted on academic writing (Lee, 2006) and journalistic writing (Lee, 2009), this study reexamines research articles using Hyland's (2005) model of stance and engagement and evaluates the findings against those on journalistic writing.

¹ I would like to express my appreciation to the two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and suggestions.

Recent research on academic and professional writing has unveiled a number of differences across linguistic cultures. For instance, Mauranen (1993) found that Finnish writers wrote less text about text, or *metatext*, and that they placed their main point later in the text in comparison to those written by native English speakers. Scollon and Scollon (1997) compared English and Chinese language newspapers published in Hong Kong and China, and found a difference in the practice of quotation written in the two languages; the English newspapers present clear and unambiguous quotation while no standard practice was observed in Chinese newspapers. Noorian and Biria (2010) examined opinion articles written by American and Iranian EFL journalists based on Dafouz's (2003) taxonomy of interpersonal metadiscourse markers, and found that American journalists employed significantly more commentaries—markers which assist in establishing reader-writer rapport through the text—than Iranian EFL journalists.

In the area of English-Japanese contrastive rhetoric, a number of studies (Kobayashi, 1984; Kubota, 1992, Hinds, 1990; Maynard 1996) have identified the inductive nature of Japanese which tends to place main ideas toward the end of a text, in contrast to English which places main ideas at the beginning in both academic and journalistic writing.

In contrast to previous English-Japanese contrastive studies, which mainly focused on paragraph organization, Lee (2006,2009) examined how language is used to express opinions and arguments in a text. Research articles and newspaper editorials are both designed to present the writer's opinions and arguments to the reader. Thus, Lee (2006) examined 32 research articles selected from major applied linguistics journals written in English and Japanese; 16 published in USA and 16 in Japan, and found that only 3 'booster' markers were used in Japanese research articles in contrast to 76 in English articles.

Lee (2009), using Hyland's model on stance and engagement expressions, examined 60 newspaper editorials selected from major newspapers circulated in USA and Japan; 30 from the New York Times and 30 from *Asahi Shimbun*. The results uncover the following contrastive characteristics between English and Japanese newspaper editorials:

- i. Editorials written in English use more engagement expressions than those written in Japanese with 72 instances of engagement expressions found in English and 29 in Japanese editorials.
- ii. Editorials written in Japanese use more 'questions' than those written in English, with 27 instances in Japanese and 14 in English editorials.
- iii. Editorials written in Japanese rarely use 'boosters' with only 2 instances found in Japanese in contrast to 31 in English editorials.

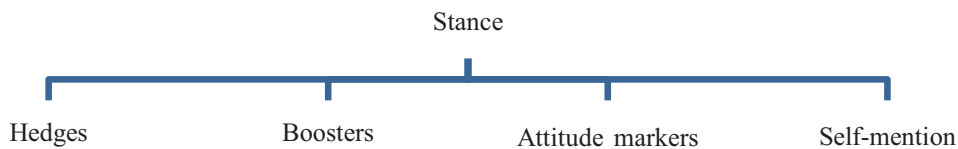
A question remains, however, as to whether these characteristics are due to the journalistic nature of the data, or the linguistic and rhetorical differences between English and Japanese writing. The objective of the current study is to address this question by reexamining research articles written in English and Japanese using Hyland's model on expressions of stance and engagement.

In the following sections, Hyland's model will be introduced (Section 2) and the findings of Lee's (2009) study will be reviewed (Section 3). Section 4 will provide information about the present study, including data collection, analysis procedures, the results and discussion. Section 5 will discuss the comparison of findings from two different types of data: academic and journalistic. Section 6 will present the conclusion reflecting the research question and the corresponding results of the study.

2. Hyland's Model on Stance and Engagement Expressions

Hyland (2005, p.176) defines "stance" as "the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments, while "engagement" is "the ways writers relate to their readers with respect to the positions advanced in the text". Based on an analysis of 240 published research articles from eight disciplines and insider informant interviews, Hyland presents key resources of stance and engagement as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively².

Figure 1. Key resources of stance

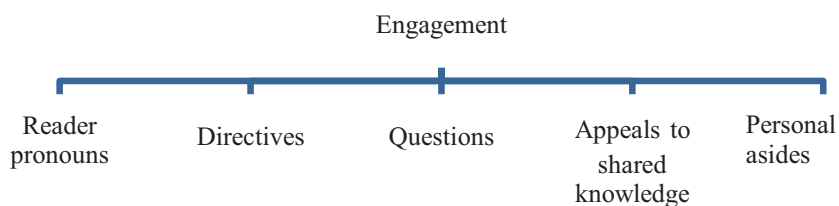


Hedges are devices that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition like *possible*, *might*, and *perhaps*. *Boosters*, on the other hand, are the devices which express the writer's certainty such as *clearly*, *obviously* and *demonstrate*. *Attitude markers* indicate the writer's affective attitude to propositions, such as surprise, agreement, importance, and frustration (Hyland, 2005). *Self-mention* refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001). Abbreviated examples given by Hyland follow:

Hedges:	Such experiments <u>may</u> not represent ...
Boosters:	...we <u>obviously</u> do not see a static image as ...
Attitude markers:	...are rather <u>important</u> and, for this reason ...
Self-mentions:	<u>I argue</u> that their treatment is superficial ...

² The original figure in Hyland (2005, p.177) presents key resources of Stance and Engagement side by side and it is named as "Figure 1. Key resources of academic interaction".

Figure 2. Key resources of engagement



Reader pronouns, such as *you*, *your*, and inclusive *we* are the devices to bind writer and reader. *Directives*, which are signaled by an imperative and a modal of obligation, are the device “to instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer” (Hyland, 2005, p.184). *Questions* are the strategy to involve readers by bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they can be led to the writer’s viewpoint (Hyland, 2002). *Appeals to shared knowledge* refer to “the presence of explicit markers where readers are asked to recognize something as familiar or accepted” (Hyland, 2005, p. 184). *Personal asides*, which is indicated by a dash or a parenthesis, is a device to “allow writers to address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said” (Hyland, 2005, p. 183). Abbreviated examples given by Hyland follow:

Reader pronouns:	Although <u>we</u> lack knowledge about ...
Directives:	<u>Consider</u> a sequence of batches in ...
Questions:	Is it, in fact, necessary to choose ...?
Appeals to shared knowledge:	Chesterton was <u>of course</u> wrong to suppose ...
Personal asides:	And <u>–as I believe many ...</u> -- critical thinking ...

3. Stance and Engagement Expressions in Editorials

Using Hyland’s model of academic interaction, Lee (2009) examined editorials of major newspapers published in USA and Japan: the New York Times and *Asahi Shimbun* respectively, from the period of June to December 2008. The two newspapers have been selected on the basis of their similarity in editorial length as well as their established reputation for information reliability. As editorials which reflect the official position of the newspaper, it is assumed that they were written by professional journalists, presumably the chief editors of the respective newspapers. The following tables present the results of identifying instances of stance and engagement expressions in editorials, 30 from The New York Times and 30 from *Asahi Shimbun*.

Table 1. Frequency of stance expressions

	The New York Times	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>
Hedges	32	43
Boosters	31	2
Attitude markers	207	158
Self-mention	0	0
Total	270	203

Table 2. Frequency of engagement expressions

	The New York Times	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>
Reader pronouns	30	1
Directives	7	0
Questions	14	27
Shared knowledge	1	1
Personal asides	20	0
Total	72	29

Contrastive characteristics of editorials written in English and Japanese have been identified from the data as follows:

- i. Editorials written in English use more engagement expressions than those written in Japanese. As shown in Table 2, the total number of engagement expressions found in the editorials written in English is 72, while only 29 instances of engagement expressions appeared in the editorials written in Japanese.
- ii. Editorials written in Japanese use more ‘questions’ than those written in English. 27 questions appeared in the Japanese editorials while 14 appeared in the English editorials as shown in Table 2.
- iii. Editorials written in Japanese rarely use ‘boosters’. Only 2 instances of ‘boosters’ were found in the editorials written in Japanese, in contrast to 31 in the English equivalents as shown in Table 1.

The paucity of ‘boosters’ in Japanese writing was also found in Lee (2006), which examined research articles. Therefore, this may be a Japanese characteristic in both journalistic and academic genres; however, it must be noted that Lee (2006) did not use Hyland’s model of analysis. In order to verify whether these characteristics identified above are due to the journalistic nature of the data, or linguistic and rhetorical differences between the English and Japanese writing, a comparison is required to be made between editorials and research articles using the same model of analysis. Section 4 provides details of the study to address this research question.

4. The Study

4.1. Data

The data of this study have been collected from research articles published in two major applied linguistics journals written in English and Japanese respectively:

- i. 30 articles from TESOL Quarterly.
- ii. 30 articles from *Nihongo Kyoiku* (Journal of Japanese Language Teaching)

The samples collected from the journals were published during the period 2007 to 2011. The main criterion underlying the sample selection was the presence of a “discussion” section. Unlike the previous study on research articles by Lee

(2006) where the data were only extracted from the “discussion” sections, the current study examines all the sections of research articles because a close observation has proven that expressions of stance and engagement are not restricted to the “discussion” sections of research articles.

Articles were either written by a single author or the products of joint authorship. A basic assumption is made here that the authors are established scholars of the applied linguistics field who are proficient in the language used to write the articles.

The length of each article was measured by the number of T-units³ because a Japanese text was difficult to measure by the number of words. The average T-units per research article of TESOL Quarterly was 358 while that of *Nihongo Kyoiku* was 143, suggesting that the two groups of data are not comparable, unlike the case of journalistic data of Lee (2009) in which the average T-unit for the New York Times was 30.8 and that of *Asahi Shimbun* was 31.1. Thus, the frequency of stance and engagement expressions found in TESOL Quarterly was adjusted according to the ratio of the length of a research article. For instance, the average T-units per article in TESOL Quarterly was 358 and that of *Nihongo Kyoiku* was 143, hence the ratio between the two was 2.5 to 1.0, namely, the former was considered 2.5 times longer than the latter. This relative ratio was used to adjust the number of each expression of stance and engagement found in TESOL Quarterly. For instance, the raw (pre-adjusted) number of ‘hedges’ in TESOL Quarterly was 1122, so the number was divided by 2.5 to get its adjusted number, 448.8 as shown in Table 3 below.

4.2. Results and Discussion: Stance Expressions

The following table presents the frequency of stance expressions in the two journals, with both raw (pre-adjusted) and adjusted numbers for TESOL Quarterly articles.

Table 3. Stance expressions in English and Japanese research articles

	TESOL Quarterly (Raw number)	TESOL Quarterly (Adjusted number)	<i>Nihongo Kyoiku</i>
Hedges	1122	448.8	313
Boosters	254	101.6	17
Attitude markers	307	122.8	51
Self-mention	120	48.0	37
Total	1803	721.2	418

The total number of stance expressions in Japanese research articles (*Nihongo Kyoiku*) is lower than that of English research articles (TESOL Quarterly) due to the fewer instances of all the tokens present: ‘hedges’, ‘boosters’, ‘attitude markers’, and ‘self-mention’. The low number of ‘boosters’ should be noted

³ T-unit is defined by Hunt (1965) as the shortest grammatically allowable sentence in to which writing can be split. More technically, a T-unit consists of a dominant clause and its dependent clauses. T-units are often used in the analysis of written and spoken discourse, such as in studies of L2 writing development.

here as this phenomenon has been repeatedly observed in previous studies both on research articles (Lee, 2006) and newspaper editorials (Lee, 2009). The following are abbreviated examples of stance expressions found in TESOL Quarterly.

Hedges: One conclusion that may be drawn from these results is ...
 Boosters: Certainly, this notion requires a more thorough
 investigation: ...Attitude markers: This is unfortunate, because ...
 Self-mention: I acknowledge that ...

Examples of stance expression found in *Nihongo Kyouku* follow:

Hedges: ... *to toraeta yoo de aru.*
 ‘It seems that ... thought ...’
 Boosters: *tashikani, joojutsu no hoohoo wa...*
 ‘The above-mentioned method is surely ...’
 Attitude markers: *sono ten de mo juuyoo de aru.*
 ‘... is important in that aspect as well.’
 Self-mention: ...*juubun-jooken de wa nai kangaeru*⁴.
 ‘(I) consider... not to be a sufficient condition.’

4.3. Results and Discussion: Engagement Expressions

The following table presents the frequency of engagement expressions, with both raw and adjusted numbers for TESOL Quarterly articles:

Table 4. Engagement expressions in English and Japanese research articles

	TESOL Quarterly (Raw number)	TESOL Quarterly (Adjusted number)	<i>Nihongo Kyoiku</i>
Reader pronouns	12	4.8	1
Directives	4	1.6	1
Questions	81	32.4	59
Shared knowledge	11	4.4	2
Personal asides	12	4.8	0
Total	120	48.0	63

Very few or zero occurrences were found in Japanese research articles for ‘reader pronouns’, ‘directives’, ‘shared knowledge’ and ‘personal asides’. In contrast, the number of ‘questions’ is notably larger in Japanese research articles than those written in English. This phenomenon has also been repeatedly noted in previous studies both on Japanese research articles (Lee, 2006) and Japanese

⁴ No overt marking of the 1st person pronoun appears in the Japanese example sentence but the form, “*kangaeru*”, instead of “*kangaete iru*”, implies its subject to be ‘I’, according to the Japanese grammar.

newspaper editorials (Lee, 2009). Abbreviated examples of engagement expressions from TESOL Quarterly follow:

- Reader pronouns: As teachers, we are asking students to read ...
 Directives: Note that what is in question is ...
 Questions: What does this imply?
 Shared knowledge: in the case of L2 reader, of course, the process will be ...
 Personal asides: interculturality (to the extent I can accomplish it) to be a significant resource ...

Examples of engagement expressions from *Nihongo Kyoiku* follow:

- Reader pronouns: *Wareware wa kono yoo na samazama na kinoo wo ...*
 ‘We ... various functions such as this ...’
 Directives: *... koto ni ryuui sare-tai*⁵.
 ‘(I) would like you to note that ...’
 Questions: *Dono yoo ni torae-rare-te- iru no ka.*
 ‘How is ... considered?’
 Shared knowledge: *Mochiron, aidea-shiito wa ...*
 ‘Of course, an idea sheet is ...’

5. Newspaper Editorials vs. Research Articles

In taking a step toward answering the research question of this study; whether the contrastive characteristics of English and Japanese identified in Lee (2009) are due to the journalistic nature of the data, or the linguistic and rhetorical differences between the two languages, let us compare the findings from newspaper editorials and those from the current study on research articles. Table 5 presents the total numbers and ratio of stance and engagement expressions found in newspaper editorials and research articles.

Table 5. Ratio of stance and engagement expressions in editorials and research articles

	Newspaper Editorials (N=30 each)		Research Articles (N=30 each)	
	The New York Times	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	TESOL Quarterly	<i>Nihongo Kyoiku</i>
Stance	270 (79%)	203 (87.5%)	721 (94%)	418 (87%)
Engagement	72 (21%)	29 (12.5%)	48 (6%)	63 (13%)
Total	342 (100%)	232 (100%)	769 (100%)	481 (100%)

As is evident from Table 5, editorials written in English use more engagement expressions than those written in Japanese. In contrast, research articles written in English use less engagement expressions than those written in Japanese. In

⁵ “*ryuui sare-tai*” is to be translated as “I would like you to note...”. This is the only occurrence of ‘Directives’ found in the Japanese data of research articles. More direct form of ‘Directives’ such as “*ryuui shiro*” (Note ...) sounds extremely rude to the reader in Japanese academic writing.

terms of the ratio of stance and engagement expressions in two different types of data, Japanese texts remain constant; 12.5% for engagement expressions in editorials and 13% in research articles, whereas English texts fluctuate; 21% for engagement expressions in editorials but 6% in research articles. From this data, we can presume that English writers are more conscious of the genre difference than Japanese writers. We should, of course, examine a larger volume and a wider variety of data in order to make any generalisations.

Let us now focus on the comparison of stance expressions found in journalistic and academic writing.

Table 6. Stance expressions in newspaper editorials and research articles

	Newspaper Editorials (N=30 each)		Research Articles (N=30 each)	
	New York Times	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	TESOLQuarterly (Adjusted number)	<i>Nihongo Kyoiku</i>
Hedges	32	43	448.8	313
Boosters	31	2	101.6	17
Attitude markers	207	158	122.8	51
Self-mention	0	0	48	37
Total	270	203	721.2	418

‘Self-mention’ was found in neither English nor Japanese newspaper editorials, while this is not the case with research articles, suggesting that the use of ‘self-mention’ may be a characteristic of academic writing. Using the ‘self-mention’ device, such as “I argue ...” would not be appropriate in newspaper editorials as they are meant to express the official positions of the newspaper rather than opinions of an individual writer. However, a comparison of editorials where the author is not identified and opinion articles where the author is credited in a newspaper needs to be carried out to confirm the possible explanation.

Only 2 instances of ‘boosters’ were found in Japanese newspaper editorials and 17 in Japanese research articles. Since the paucity of ‘boosters’ has been confirmed in another study on research articles (Lee, 1996), it would be possible to conclude that it is a characteristic of Japanese text, both journalistic and academic.

The following table presents a comparison of engagement expressions found in journalistic and academic writing.

Table 7. Engagement expressions in newspaper editorials and research articles

	Newspaper Editorials (N=30 each)		Research Articles (N=30 each)	
	New York Times	<i>Asahi Shimbun</i>	TESOL Quarterly (Adjusted number)	<i>Nihongo Kyoiku</i>
Reader pronouns	30	1	4.8	1
Directives	7+1	0+6 ⁶	1.6	1
Questions	14	27	32.4	59
Shared knowledge	1	1	4.4	2
Personals asides	20	0	4.8	0
Total	72	29	48	63

A paucity of ‘reader pronouns’ should be noted here in both editorials and research articles written in Japanese as well as research articles in English. This presents a sharp contrast to editorials written in English. The paucity of this engagement device in Japanese is explained in Lee (2009) by a linguistic characteristic of the language in which a covert pronoun is a norm. The sharp contrast found in the use of ‘reader pronouns’ between editorials and research articles written in English suggests that it is an engagement device prominent in English journalistic writing, as opposed to English academic writing.

‘Directives’ are another form of engagement device, which seems to be more frequently used in editorials than research articles both in English and Japanese. It is a form frequently found in the headlines of Japanese editorials.

‘Questions’, on the other hand, is an engagement expression frequently used in both editorials and research articles, especially in Japanese. As a matter of fact, the only engagement device where Japanese exceeds English in frequency for both journalistic and academic writing is ‘questions’. As Hyland (2002) points out, ‘questions’ are the strategy of dialogic involvement, inviting engagement and bringing the reader into an arena where they can be led to the writer’s viewpoint. Japanese tendency to use this strategy has been observed in spoken language as well. Beebe and Takahashi (1989) reported a case in which a Japanese speaker used a rhetorical question to correct an interlocutor’s error. Hajikano, Kumadoridani, and Fujimori (1996) studied complaint strategies used by native and nonnative speakers of Japanese and reported a case in which questions, whether rhetorical or not, were used more frequently by native speakers of Japanese than non-native speakers whose first language was English, Chinese, Indonesian, and Thai, among others. Lee (2002) has also found that Japanese adult speakers tend to use questions when refusing a request from someone of equal or higher status. Although the type of questions differ according to relative social status between the one refusing and the one being refused, Japanese, overall, use a question strategy in refusal much more frequently than native speakers of English, who displayed little or no use of questions in the same situations. It can be concluded here that the use of

⁶ The number after “+” indicates the occurrence found in the headlines of editorials. Thus, there was no occurrence of ‘Directives’ found in the main text, but 6 were found in the headlines of Japanese editorials.

question strategy is a characteristic of Japanese discourse. It is used not only to mitigate potential loss of face (Brown & Levinson, 1978) in face-threatening situations, but also to engage readers in writing.

Absence of ‘personal asides’ in Japanese editorials can be explained by a conventional usage of a parenthesis in Japanese text, being an equivalent to a dash in English. Using a parenthesis, however, is considered to be a rather informal manner of expression in Japanese, and hence should not be used in a newspaper editorial which is considered to be a formal channel of presenting opinions (Lee, 2009). Use of a parenthesis can be found in Japanese research articles, but marking personal asides with it would appear too subjective and should be avoided in Japanese academic writing.

Thus, the paucity or non-existence of engagement devices except for ‘questions’ was confirmed in Japanese text. In contrast, all the devices were found in research articles written in English, and all except for ‘self-mention’ were found in newspaper editorials in English. Hyland’s model, which is based on English academic interaction, obviously is suited to account for English texts, whether journalistic or academic.

6. Conclusion

The current study has been carried out to answer the following research question:

“Are the English-Japanese contrastive characteristics found in the study of newspaper editorials in Lee (2009), due to the journalistic nature of the data, or the linguistic and rhetorical differences between English and Japanese writing?”

I will answer the question by recapitulating the English-Japanese contrastive characteristics of editorials written in English and Japanese, which have been identified in Lee (2009).

- i. “Editorials written in English use more engagement expressions than those written in Japanese.”

This seems to be due to the journalistic nature of the data. In contrast to editorials, research articles written in English use less engagement expressions than those written in Japanese. The ratio between engagement and stance expressions fluctuates between journalistic and academic writing in English while remaining constant in Japanese. As pointed out in Section 5 of this paper, English writers seem to be more conscious of the genre difference than Japanese writers in the use of engagement expressions.

- ii. “Editorials written in Japanese use more ‘questions’ than those written in English.”

This seems to be due to the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of Japanese writing. More frequent use of ‘questions’, compared to English, was found both in newspaper editorials and research articles. It has been

also found in face-threatening speech acts of correction (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989), complaints (Hajikano, Kumadoridani, & Fujimori, 1996), and refusals (Lee, 2002). Therefore, it may be a characteristic of Japanese discourse in general; both in spoken and written interactions.

iii. “Editorials written in Japanese rarely use ‘boosters’.”

This seems to be due to the linguistic and rhetorical characteristics of Japanese writing. It has been found in “discussion” sections of research articles (Lee, 2006), newspaper editorials (Lee, 2009) and in the entirety of research articles examined in this study.

The answer to the research question has proven to be complex; some contrastive characteristics are due to the journalistic nature of the data, while others are due to the linguistic and rhetorical differences between English and Japanese writing. These findings, however, need to be reexamined with a larger volume of data so that a statistical analysis can be conducted. A wider variety of academic and journalistic writing should also be examined to make any generalizations about the genre differences.

Hyland’s model on stance and engagement, which was originally designed for presenting a taxonomy of academic interaction in English, has proven to be useful in contrastive rhetoric research as it allowed us to compare writing across languages, cultures, and genres.

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