Review Article

Creativity in the Language Classroom: Transforming Speaking Skill Development

Md. Absar Uddin

Assistant Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, International Islamic University Chittagong, Bangladesh

Abstract: Speaking is a central part of language learning, yet many students feel shy, anxious, or unsure when they need to talk. In many classrooms, instruction still relies on memorization and repetition. These methods may improve accuracy, but they give few chances for free, spontaneous speech. Creative activities—such as role-play, storytelling, games, songs, and drama—offer a helpful alternative. They make lessons lively and welcoming. Students can share ideas in their own words, test new expressions, and feel less afraid of mistakes. In this kind of work, the classroom becomes a supportive space where learners talk together, cooperate, and enjoy using the language. With clear goals and simple routines, teachers can design lessons that are more student-centred and meaningful. This review draws on re-search and classroom reports to show how creative activities help speaking develop over time. The evidence indicates real benefits: greater fluency, stronger motivation, and clearer communication. It also recognizes familiar challenges, including limited time, large classes, and testing pressures. Over-all, the message is practical and positive: adding creativity to everyday lessons is an effective way to build students' speaking skills. The review also offers concrete guidance to help teachers plan and manage these tasks well.

Keywords: creative activities, speaking skills, language learning, classroom interaction, student motivation, oral communication fluency development

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is often the most personal part of learning a new language. When we speak, our ideas come out in real time, and that can feel risky. Many learners therefore stay quiet, use short, safe phrases, or rely on lines they have practiced many times. In many classrooms, traditional methods still focus on repeating and memorizing. These methods can help with accuracy, but they can also keep students from expressing their own thoughts and feelings in the moment (Becker & Roos, 2016). If we want learners to build real communicative competence, they need practice that is open, meaningful, and a little bit playful—practice that lets them use language in their own way rather than only producing fixed responses.

Creative activities give this kind of space. In creative drama, for example, learners step into roles, improvise short scenes, and act out everyday situations. These activities turn speaking into a shared, low-risk performance, where mistakes become part of the story instead of something to fear. Research shows that such drama tasks can improve speaking skills and raise motivation, especially for young learners who benefit from movement, imagination, and teamwork (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020). When students act, they are not simply repeating sentences; they are making choices about words, tone, and gesture to fit a social context, which is exactly how real communication works.

Play-based or "ludic" activities add another route to confident speaking. Games, creative play, and simple competitions invite learners to talk because they want to reach a goal, solve a problem, or help a teammate. One study even found that students' speaking scores nearly doubled after taking part in these playful tasks (Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023). The finding is important for busy classes: short, joyful tasks can still be serious learning. They make practice frequent, reduce fear, and let students try language more freely and fluently.

Interactive techniques such as communicative games also support steady progress. In an Indonesian junior high school study, teachers used games to structure small bursts of purposeful talk—asking for information, negotiating rules, or reporting results. Students not only spoke more, but they also felt more positive about speaking English in class (Dewi *et al.*, 2017) This kind of activity sits well within communicative language teaching: learners use language to do things, not just to display what they remember. Over time, these meaningful exchanges help learners connect vocabulary and grammar to real intentions, audiences, and contexts.

Together, creative drama, games, storytelling, and other interactive tasks can change the feel of a language classroom. Instead of a place where students wait for a turn to repeat, it becomes a space where they experiment, take small risks, and express themselves with growing independence. In such lessons, teachers act

less like examiners and more like facilitators: they set up situations, guide interaction, and help students reflect on what worked and why (Becker & Roos, 2016; Göktürk *et al.*, 2020). Of course, creative teaching still needs planning. Activities must fit the time, class size, and resources available, and teachers should watch participation so everyone has a voice (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020). But the overall direction is clear: when learners have meaningful, creative chances to speak, they build the confidence and flexibility that real communication demands.

Speaking in a second language happens live. Unlike reading or writing, we cannot press "pause," edit our words, and try again. Because speech unfolds moment by moment, learners must plan ideas, choose vocabulary, and manage social signals all at once. This pressure can make speaking difficult, but it also shows why the classroom must offer safe, meaningful chances to practice. In this section, I explain why creative classroom work—such as drama, storytelling, games, and task-based activities—supports speaking development. I draw on well-known ideas from communicative competence, constructivism, sociocultural theory, creativity in education, and task-based language teaching (TBLT). Together, these ideas show what learners need to learn, how learning happens, and why creative methods are effective in real classrooms.

Modern language teaching is built on the idea of communicative competence, first proposed by Hymes (1972) and later extended by Canale (1983). The key message is simple but powerful: knowing a language is more than knowing grammar. Learners must also use language appropriately in social contexts, link sentences into coherent discourse, and keep a conversation going even when there are gaps or problems. Canale's model describes four parts—grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence—reminding us that real communication depends on more than correct forms (Canale, 1983). Traditional drill-and-repeat lessons often train only grammar and vocabulary, leaving the other parts underdeveloped (Hymes, 1972; Canale, 1983). Creative classroom work answers this gap. When students role-play, improvise, or tell stories, they must choose words that fit the situation, adjust tone and register, and repair misunderstandings. For example, in role-play learners naturally practice sociolinguistic choices, and in improvisation they practice strategic moves such as asking for clarification or paraphrasing (Littlewood, 2004). Put simply, creative activities are not extra "fun" after the real lesson; they are the most direct route to the full set of speaking skills that communicative competence requires (Hymes, 1972; Canale, 1983; Littlewood, 2004).

Constructivist theory, associated with Piaget (1970), views learning as active construction, not passive reception. Students make meaning by exploring, solving problems, and testing ideas in context. Speaking develops best when learners are asked to use language for real purposes and connect new forms to what they already know. Creative activities embody this approach. In storytelling, learners draw on personal experiences and shape them into narratives, which helps them store and retrieve language more effectively. In drama and games, students explore new expressions and patterns through experimentation rather than simply repeating a model. Research suggests that such learner-centered work increases memory, motivation, and communicative ability compared to teacher-dominated lessons (Becker & Roos, 2016). In this way, constructivism gives a strong theoretical base for using creative tasks to grow speaking skills: students learn by doing, reflecting, and trying again, not by copying alone (Piaget, 1970; Becker & Roos, 2016).

Vygotsky (1978) adds a social lens. He argues that learning is shaped by interaction and cultural tools, and that the most powerful learning happens in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)—the space where a learner can succeed with guidance. Creative tasks are social by design: in a scene, a pair story, or a team game, learners negotiate meaning, share ideas, and co-create talk. More proficient speakers help others by modeling language, asking guiding questions, or offering prompts; this is natural scaffolding inside the ZPD. Studies of drama, for instance, show that collaboration lowers risk and encourages students to speak longer turns with greater confidence (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020). In this view, the "engine" of progress is not only input from the teacher, but joint activity that makes language necessary and meaningful (Vygotsky, 1978; Göktürk *et al.*, 2020).

Educational creativity is commonly defined as producing ideas that are both new and useful (Craft, 2005). In language learning, creativity means using the words and structures we know in flexible, original ways to express meaning. Maley (2015) argues that creative tasks develop exactly the abilities speaking requires: fluency, problem-solving, and adaptability. Cognitive research by Guilford (1967) adds that "divergent thinking"—generating many possible ideas or phrasings—builds flexibility. When learners improvise a dialogue or invent a story ending, they practice finding multiple ways to say what they mean. This practice feeds fluency in real time. There is also an affective benefit: playful creativity lowers anxiety. Games and drama shift attention from "getting it perfect" to "making meaning together," which helps reluctant speakers take part (Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023). In short, creativity supports both the thinking side (flexibility, idea generation) and the feeling side (lower fear, higher willingness), which together drive better speaking. (Craft, 2005; Maley, 2015; Guilford, 1967; Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023).

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) focuses on meaningful tasks that mirror real-life communication: solving a problem, planning an event,

interviewing a guest, or creating a short performance. In this approach, speaking grows through doing the task, not through isolated drills. Creative activities fit TBLT naturally: designing a skit, running a class podcast, or conducting a simulated interview requires planning, negotiation, and performance—exactly the moves that support fluency and interactional competence (Ellis, 2003). Because tasks have clear goals and audiences, students are motivated to make themselves understood, and language forms are learned in service of communication. TBLT therefore provides a practical method for bringing communicative competence, constructivism, sociocultural theory, and creativity together in the daily lesson. (Ellis, 2003).

Each theory explains a different part of how speaking develops. Communicative competence sets the goal: learners need more than grammar—they need accuracy, an appropriate tone for each context, clear organization of ideas, and strategies to repair misunderstandings. Constructivism describes the pathway: students build knowledge by doing things, exploring options, and reflecting on what works in meaningful situations. Sociocultural theory adds the social engine: interaction and scaffolding within the ZPD help learners move forward as peers and teachers offer timely support. Creativity adds the spark to speaking lessons. When students think flexibly and feel less anxious, they are more willing to take small risks and try new language. Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) links this idea to daily practice by organizing lessons around real, purposeful tasks that invite creativity and require genuine communication. Taken together, these perspectives show that creativity is not an optional extra. If we want learners to meet the full demands of real speaking, we need to give them creative tasks where they can build knowledge, interact with others, and practice language in authentic and emotionally safe situations. In such classrooms, speaking is not only practiced—it is lived.

These theories lead to clear principles for everyday lessons. Activities should ask students to use language to do things—plan, persuade, narrate, and solve problems—rather than only repeat set forms. Tasks should include simple structures that promote interaction so learners can support one another and benefit from scaffolding. When lessons follow these ideas, creative work becomes a steady route to stronger, more confident speaking. Lessons should value originality and personal voice by using open-ended prompts that invite divergent thinking. Assessment should reflect communicative competence by looking beyond accuracy to include sociolinguistic choices, discourse organization, intelligibility, and strategic repair. When teaching follows these principles, creative work becomes a dependable route to stronger speaking, helping learners talk for longer, with greater confidence, clarity, and purpose.

So, communicative competence (Hymes, 1972; Canale, 1983), constructivism (Piaget, 1970), sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978), creativity in education (Craft, 2005; Maley, 2015; Guilford, 1967; Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023), and TBLT (Ellis, 2003) point in the same direction: learners need creative, social, and purposeful speaking opportunities. These frameworks justify using role-play, improvisation, storytelling, and other creative tasks not as add-ons but as central methods for building fluent, confident, and context-sensitive speakers.

METHODOLOGY

This paper looks only at published sources instead of collecting new classroom data. A central question guides the work: *How do creative activities help second-language speaking?* The search covered journal articles, books, and conference papers about creativity in education, learning to speak a second language, and classroom activities such as drama, storytelling, games, music, and task-based work.

Each source was read carefully to note its aim, what was tried, who took part, where it happened, and what was found. Preference was given to sources from well-known publishers and journals. After reading, the sources were compared to spot shared benefits for speaking, common problems, and classroom conditions that help creative work succeed. Together, these steps build a clear picture of what "creativity" means here, why it matters for speaking, and how teachers have used it in everyday lessons.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Across the reviewed studies, one message is consistent: creative activities help learners speak more easily, more confidently, and with clearer purpose. Drama and role-play are strong examples. When students take on roles or improvise scenes, they speak for longer, take safe risks, and interact more naturally. Studies show clear gains in fluency and a higher willingness to speak, and these effects appear across different age groups (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020; Lee & Liu, 2022).

Project-based learning (PBL) provides another effective route. In PBL, students prepare products or performances for real audiences. This pushes them to plan what they want to say, rehearse their messages, and improve their delivery. Research reports better fluency and stronger engagement with listeners, along with higher confidence and motivation when presentations are built into the project cycle (Shi et al., 2024; Sirisrimangkorn, 2021).

Storytelling—both traditional and digital—is also highly effective. Stories give a meaningful structure for extended speaking: learners set the scene, develop events, and create endings. Studies show that these tasks improve narrative language and encourage more

accurate, fluent speech. Digital storytelling adds pictures, sound, or video, which attracts attention and supports clearer expression. Research notes gains in fluency, accuracy, and motivation (Ibrahim, 2022; Sulastri *et al.*, 2022; Tareq *et al.*, 2023; Fu *et al.*, 2022; Usmani *et al.*, 2025).

Games and gamified activities reduce anxiety and invite spontaneous talk. Because learners are focused on goals—solving a puzzle, winning points, or helping teammates—they speak more and worry less about mistakes. Findings show increases in participation and more accurate speech, and a recent review concludes that gamification sustains engagement and supports oral competence (Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023; León *et al.*, 2020; Chan & Lo, 2024).

Several studies with younger learners highlight the value of music and routine. Regular use of songs in primary classrooms raises engagement and confidence, giving children safe, repeatable patterns for pronunciation and rhythm. Structured podcast projects also help older learners: planning, scripting, and recording episodes boost engagement, encourage out-of-class learning (IDLE), and lead to better speaking outcomes (Hasibuan *et al.*, 2023; Chaves-Yuste & de-la-Peña, 2023; Peng *et al.*, 2025).

New technologies extend these gains. Virtual reality (VR) offers lifelike practice without social pressure, which lowers anxiety and builds confidence. AI-assisted role-play gives learners an always-available partner for targeted speaking practice. Early studies report promising improvements in confidence and performance (Kaplan-Rakowski & Gruber, 2023; Qiu *et al.*, 2024; Chen *et al.*, 2024).

The message is consistent in all the studies I have come across. Creative approaches improve technical skills like fluency and accuracy while also strengthening motivation, confidence, and classroom interaction. They help learners move from short, memorized lines to extended, meaningful speech, and they do so in ways that are adaptable to different ages, cultures, and resource levels.

The evidence across studies points to one central message: creativity is not a decoration on language lessons; it is one of the main engines that moves speaking forward. Although the activities differ—drama, storytelling, games, songs, podcasts, and newer digital tools—they repeatedly lead to similar results. Learners speak for longer stretches, choose words more flexibly, and interact with more confidence. In this discussion, I explain why these results make sense in light of key learning theories, what they mean for classroom design, and what challenges teachers may face when they try to use creative methods. I then suggest practical ways to adapt these ideas across different learning contexts.

Creativity as a pathway to real-time fluency

Fluency grows when learners must speak "in the moment," manage meaning, and respond to partners. Creative drama and role-play give exactly this kind of pressure—but in a safe, guided space. Students move beyond memorized lines. They improvise, adjust tone to fit a role, and coordinate with peers. These actions mirror the demands of real communication, where ideas and words must be assembled in real time. This explains findings that drama and role-play increase willingness to speak and the length and quality of oral turns (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020; Lee & Liu, 2022). In storytelling and digital storytelling, a clear narrative frame also supports extended talk: learners set a scene, build events, and deliver conclusions. The structure holds the task steady while still allowing creativity, which keeps cognitive load manageable and supports fluency gains over time.

A second, repeated pattern is emotional: creative work lowers fear. Games shift attention from "perfect accuracy" to "winning the point" or "solving the puzzle." Drama lets learners speak "through" a character, which often reduces the personal risk of error. As a result, learners participate more and push themselves further. This matches well-known views on the role of affect in language learning: when anxiety drops, learning and performance improve. The same logic applies to digital tools. Virtual reality creates lifelike speaking situations without public pressure, and AI-assisted role-play offers a tireless practice partner. These environments combine authenticity with safety, which helps build confidence and makes practice more frequent (Saavedra Ortiz *et al.*, 2023; Chan & Lo, 2024; Göktürk *et al.*, 2020; Kaplan-Rakowski & Gruber, 2023; Qiu *et al.*, 2023; Chen *et al.*, 2024).

Creative tasks are also motivating because they give learners something worth saying to an audience that matters. In project-based learning, for example, students plan, rehearse, and present for real listeners. In podcasts, they publish episodes that classmates or communities can hear. In gamified activities, they care about outcomes because goals and feedback are clear. This sense of purpose explains why participation rises and why learners persist through difficulty: the activity itself supplies meaning, not just the teacher's instructions. Over weeks, these small increases in engagement accumulate into measurable gains in speaking (Chan & Lo, 2024; Chaves-Yuste, B., & de-la-Peña, C., 2023; Sulastri *et al.*, 2022).

Creative approaches do more than speed and confidence; they also build the broader set of skills needed for real communication. In debates, role-plays, and projects, learners practice sociolinguistic choices (how polite to be, how formal to sound), discourse skills (organizing ideas across turns), and strategic competence (repairing breakdowns, asking for clarification). Improvisation is especially useful here because it trains learners to handle the unexpected—an essential part of

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genuine interaction. Music and rhythm tasks support pronunciation and prosody, which in turn help listeners follow meaning. In short, creative methods develop the "whole speaker," not just isolated grammar points (Littlewood, 2004; Idham *et al.*, 2022; Zondag, 2021; Hasibuan *et al.*, 2023).

Constructivist and sociocultural perspectives help explain the mechanisms behind these gains. Constructivism says learning is active: students build knowledge by doing and reflecting. Sociocultural theory adds that learning is social: progress often happens within the Zone of Proximal Development as peers and teachers provide scaffolding. Creative tasks naturally satisfy both ideas. They require action (planning a story, rehearsing a scene) and interaction (negotiating roles, co-creating dialogue). As learners talk, they receive immediate feedback from audience reaction, peer prompts, and teacher guidance. This cycle—attempt, feedback, adjustment—drives the steady improvement seen across studies, and it shows why creative methods are not a "soft" option but a theoretically sound path to better speaking (Vygotsky, 1978; Göktürk *et al.*, 2020).

Practical challenges teachers report

At the same time, teachers face real constraints. Large classes make group management complex. Time limits and exam pressure can push lessons back toward drills and test-style speaking. Drama, podcasts, or VR require extra planning, resources, or technical set-up. Some teachers feel under-prepared to facilitate open-ended tasks or to assess creative outcomes fairly. In some cultural contexts, learners may resist unfamiliar methods at first, preferring quiet, accuracy-first routines. These barriers are not trivial, and they help explain why creative practices, even when supported by evidence, do not spread automatically (Göktürk *et al.*, 2020; Becker & Roos, 2016; Putri & Rojab, 2021).

Addressing barriers: design, training, and assessment

Several strategies can reduce these challenges. First, start small: use brief, well-structured creative routines that fit into tight schedules, such as two-minute role-plays or micro-storytelling. Second, plan for structure within freedom: give clear roles, time limits, and success criteria so tasks stay focused. Third, build teacher confidence through practical training that includes classroom management for active lessons and simple ways to assess fluency, interaction, and audience engagement alongside accuracy. Fourth, pace cultural change: introduce new methods gradually and connect them to familiar goals, so students and colleagues can see their value. Over time, these steps can help creative practices become normal rather than exceptional in the curriculum (and they map onto the theoretical logic discussed above).

A flexible toolkit for diverse classrooms

Creativity is powerful because it fits many classroom realities. In low-resource settings, teachers can run storytelling circles, quick interviews, and simple role-plays that need only paper prompts. In mid-resource settings, classes can add short podcasts or basic video stories so students speak for real audiences. Where resources are strong, teachers may try virtual-reality scenes or AI-supported speaking partners. The core idea is the same in every case: design meaningful, engaging tasks that ask learners to speak for real purposes and to take small, safe risks. Because this logic is flexible, activities can be adapted to learners' ages, proficiency levels, and cultural contexts while staying consistent with research-based practice.

Overall, the evidence shows that creative approaches reliably build fluency, confidence, motivation, and full communicative competence, and they match well with established learning theories. With thoughtful task design, practical teacher support, and sensitivity to local conditions, these methods work across many settings and can become a steady part of everyday teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Creative speaking does not have to be complex or expensive. What it needs is regular use, a clear purpose, and fairness for every learner. The recommendations that follow are written for busy teachers in diverse contexts. They balance meaning-focused talk with careful attention to accuracy, and they show how to make creativity a normal part of daily lessons rather than an occasional extra. Each recommendation includes practical steps you can apply immediately and then scale over time.

Build short, repeatable activities into every lesson: two-minute role-plays, micro-storytelling, quick "explain-and-ask" interviews, or improv prompts using picture cards. Keep instructions simple and the timing tight so transitions are smooth. Regular, low-stakes practice grows fluency and confidence, and it prevents creativity from being pushed aside when time is short. Rotate formats across the week to keep energy high while reinforcing familiar procedures.

Offer training that models activities exactly as students would do them, followed by quick debriefs on classroom management, differentiation, and assessment. Provide ready-to-use templates: role cards, language frames ("Could you clarify…?"), observation checklists, and concise rubrics for fluency, interaction, and intelligibility. Encourage peer coaching and short classroom trials so teachers can test one routine, refine it, and then share results and materials with colleagues.

Protect weekly time for meaning-focused speaking (e.g., "Creative Talk Friday") and name creativity as a learning outcome. Use assessment that looks beyond grammar—include criteria for discourse organization, strategic repair, audience engagement, and appropriate register. Combine teacher scoring with self-

*Corresponding Author:** Md. Absar Uddin

and peer-feedback to make progress visible and reduce anxiety. Show clear links from creative tasks to exam descriptors (fluency, coherence, interaction) so stakeholders see alignment, not competition.

Design tasks that allow success at different proficiency levels. Offer tiered prompts (basic, guided, open), sentence starters, and role supports. Use clear roles—speaker, questioner, summarizer—so everyone participates. In large classes, run "performers" and "observers" with checklists, then swap. Build quick feedback-and-retry cycles: short performance → one or two targeted comments → fast re-performance. This keeps cognitive load manageable and confidence high.

Start with low-cost tools that extend speaking beyond the classroom: phone audio for mini-podcasts, simple slides for digital stories, or classroom tablets for recording rehearsals. Where resources permit, add AI-assisted role-play partners or VR scenes to simulate real interactions in low-risk spaces. Keep the rule clear: technology should amplify talk, not replace it. Always offer a non-tech alternative so access does not depend on devices or bandwidth.

Give students genuine reasons to care about clarity and impact. Set up brief showcases, a class "radio news" slot, short debates, or quick recorded messages for families and the school community. Ask learners to use a simple cycle—plan, rehearse, perform or record, reflect, then revise—so that progress is visible. Praise the process as well as the product by naming strategies that work, such as paraphrasing, turn-taking, and signaling misunderstandings. These small public moments lift motivation, strengthen accountability, and help students feel proud of their growth.

Treat creativity as centrais to speaking development. Combine short daily routines with practical teacher training, assessment that reflects communicative aims, and scaffolds that include every level of learner. Use technology thoughtfully and provide authentic audiences so tasks feel meaningful. Taken together, these actions make creative speaking a stable, sustainable part of everyday practice and help learners move from memorized lines to purposeful, confident communication—across ages, proficiency levels, and resource settings.

CONCLUSION

Speaking is the most immediate—and often the hardest—part of learning a language. Learners must plan ideas, select words, and read social signals in real time. This review shows that creative classroom approaches give a dependable way to handle that challenge. Across levels and settings, activities such as drama, storytelling, games, songs, podcasts, and technology-supported simulations steadily build fluency, reduce anxiety, and raise motivation. Just as importantly, they strengthen the broader abilities real communication needs: organizing

talk, adjusting language to different situations, and repairing misunderstandings as they happen.

The theoretical foundation is strong. Communicative competence reminds us that success is more than grammar. Constructivist and sociocultural perspectives explain why learning improves when students co-create meaning, receive scaffolding, and reflect on their performance. Research on creativity shows how flexible thinking and emotional safety support risk-taking ideas into daily lessons with clear goals and real audiences. In short, creativity is not an add-on; it is a coherent, evidence-based route to fuller speaking competence.

At the same time, implementation must be realistic. Teachers work with limits of time, class size, assessment demands, and resources. The recommendations offered here respond to those realities: use short, repeatable routines; provide practical training and simple rubrics; align assessment with communicative aims; scaffold participation for different proficiency levels; use technology to amplify—never replace—talk; and give students authentic audiences that reward clarity and engagement. These steps make creative speaking sustainable rather than occasional.

The findings point to a practical vision for schools and programs: treat creativity as central, protect time for it, and support teachers to lead it with confidence. When learners receive regular, meaningful chances to speak—backed by fair assessment and inclusive design—they move beyond memorized lines toward purposeful, confident communication. That shift is the true sign of progress: not only more words, but better conversations in which learners think, feel, and act through the language they are learning.

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