

Integrating Islamic Values into English Curriculum Development: A Descriptive Qualitative Literature Review in State Islamic Higher Education

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Abstract: This systematic literature review explores the integration of Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT) at Islamic Higher Education Institutions (SIHE) in Indonesia. The study synthesizes findings from various academic sources to understand how Islamic principles such as trustworthiness, compassion, justice, and the oneness of God—are embedded into ELT curricula. Results indicate that while some SIHE have successfully implemented value-based language instruction through culturally relevant materials, classroom strategies, and teacher efforts, the overall integration remains inconsistent due to challenges such as limited teacher training, lack of instructional resources, and inadequate policy frameworks. The review concludes that a structured, collaborative approach is required to strengthen the integration process and recommends further empirical research to develop effective pedagogical models.

Keywords: Islamic values, English Language Teaching, Higher Education, Curriculum Integration, Teacher Training, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

English has become a dominant global language, functioning as a critical medium for communication, education, diplomacy, and scientific exchange across the world. Its role as a lingua franca means that people from diverse linguistic backgrounds often rely on English to bridge communication gaps in various international domains. For instance, global conferences, academic publications, multinational business transactions, and diplomatic dialogues frequently use English as their primary language. As of the 21st century, English is not only a language of international discourse but also a significant tool for social mobility, academic excellence, and career advancement (Baker, 2021; Crystal, 2012). Students and professionals who possess strong English proficiency often gain access to prestigious scholarships, research collaborations, and international job opportunities. In developing countries, including Indonesia, mastery of English is increasingly viewed as a gateway to personal and national development, as it connects individuals with global knowledge, technology, and innovation.

In the context of Indonesia, a multilingual and multicultural nation with the largest Muslim population, English education is seen as essential for equipping students with the skills to compete in the global arena (Kirkpatrick, 2020; Maulida & Cahyono, 2023). Indonesia's rich linguistic diversity, which includes hundreds of local languages, necessitates a unifying educational strategy that prepares its youth to engage with global challenges without losing touch with their cultural and religious identities. English, as a foreign language, is taught from an early stage and continues to be emphasized throughout higher education. Within this context, State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) institutions serve a dual purpose: they aim to provide students with access to global knowledge while also nurturing Islamic values. These institutions face the additional responsibility of balancing national goals with the aspirations of Muslim students who wish to maintain their religious and cultural roots in the process of academic advancement.

However, within State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) institutions in Indonesia, a unique challenge arises: how to integrate Islamic values into the English curriculum without compromising linguistic standards or global relevance. This issue is increasingly urgent as SIHE institutions seek to balance religious identity with academic modernization

and internationalization (Azra, 2019; Hasanah & Mansur, 2022). English language teaching (ELT), historically rooted in secular and Western traditions, often lacks cultural and spiritual alignment with Islamic pedagogical values. For example, English textbooks commonly used in these institutions may present cultural references, narratives, and moral perspectives that conflict with Islamic worldviews or do not represent Muslim experiences. This misalignment has prompted educators and scholars to rethink the structure of English language education in SIHE institutions. They call for a transformation that maintains academic rigor while being sensitive to the religious values and aspirations of Muslim learners.

Integrating Islamic values into the English curriculum is not merely a superficial inclusion of Islamic content but a deeper philosophical endeavor. It aims to reshape language education by embedding ethical, moral, and spiritual dimensions grounded in Islamic teachings such as *akhlaq* (ethics), *tauhid* (monotheism), and *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to all creation). These principles are not only theological but also form the foundation for a values-based educational model that promotes integrity, compassion, and social justice. This approach supports the vision of *insan kamil*—a holistic human being who is intellectually competent and morally upright (Abdullah, 2021; Syafi'i et al., 2023). In practice, this means that English education becomes a tool not just for acquiring language proficiency, but also for cultivating students' spiritual and moral character. Moreover, such integration aligns with the Indonesian national education goals that emphasize religious values and character development (Ministry of Religious Affairs [MORA], 2023), thus reinforcing the state's broader vision for education that contributes to both human and spiritual development.

Curriculum developers in SIHE institutions must therefore consider frameworks that promote not only communicative competence but also character building rooted in Islamic principles. This involves a meticulous process of curriculum design, where each component—ranging from vocabulary lists to reading passages—is selected or adapted to reflect Islamic teachings and moral values. For example, English reading texts can include stories of Islamic scholars, moral dilemmas with Islamic solutions, or examples from Islamic history that encourage critical thinking and ethical reflection. This process must also align with international language standards such as the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference), ensuring that learners gain globally recognized competencies (Sari & Wulandari, 2022). Furthermore, effective implementation requires training English lecturers to deliver content using culturally responsive pedagogy. This includes lesson planning that embeds Islamic themes, classroom discussions that connect language skills to faith-based concepts, and assessments that evaluate both linguistic proficiency and ethical understanding (Rokhayati & Hasan, 2023).

Despite increasing interest, the integration of Islamic values into English curriculum development remains underexplored in terms of both theory and practice. Existing research is often fragmented, lacking comprehensive models and guidelines that institutions can adopt. Some studies focus narrowly on textbook content analysis or classroom activities without offering a holistic framework that guides curriculum development from start to finish. Moreover, there is limited empirical evidence on the long-term impact of value-based English instruction on student performance or character development. Therefore, this literature review aims to explore how Islamic values have been embedded in English curriculum development within SIHE institutions in Indonesia. It identifies current trends, theoretical foundations, pedagogical strategies, and implementation challenges. By synthesizing previous studies, this research seeks to fill the gap between secular English instruction and value-based Islamic education, offering practical insights for curriculum designers, lecturers, and policy-makers in Islamic higher education who wish to create spiritually grounded yet globally competitive English programs.

Ultimately, this review contributes to the broader discourse on indigenizing ELT in Muslim-majority contexts, advocating for a paradigm that integrates global language

demands with local spiritual identity in a coherent and meaningful manner (Rahmah et al., 2024; Yaqin, 2017). Indigenization in this context does not mean rejecting global standards or isolating learners from the wider world. Rather, it emphasizes a localized approach that respects cultural and religious particularities while embracing the benefits of global communication. It encourages educators to reclaim ELT from a one-size-fits-all Western framework and adapt it to reflect the values, histories, and aspirations of Muslim learners. This contributes not only to educational relevance but also to the empowerment of Muslim students, allowing them to navigate global landscapes with confidence in both their linguistic ability and religious identity. As such, this literature review plays a vital role in shaping future directions for English language education in Islamic higher education in Indonesia and similar contexts around the world.

Research Aim

This study aims to examine and synthesize existing literature on the integration of Islamic values into the English curriculum at State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) institutions in Indonesia. It seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these values are conceptualized, implemented, and experienced within ELT practices, offering insights into both the pedagogical approaches and institutional frameworks that support this integration.

Literature Review

The incorporation of Islamic values into the English language curriculum at State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) Institutions or (Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri ; SIHE) signifies a deliberate attempt to fuse linguistic proficiency with spiritual and ethical growth. This integration is rooted in the broader Islamic philosophy of education, which seeks to produce well-rounded individuals (*insan kamil*) who exhibit both intellectual competence and moral uprightness. Core Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *tauhid* (oneness of God) serve as foundational principles meant to permeate all fields of study, including language education (Abdullah, 2021; Syafi'i et al., 2023).

English, being a global language with substantial influence, is often seen as ideologically neutral or even secular. However, within the SIHE institutions context, there is an increasing awareness of the need to infuse moral and spiritual dimensions into English language teaching (ELT) so that students not only learn how to communicate globally but also remain anchored in their religious and cultural identity. This reflects the larger agenda of Islamization of knowledge, where modern disciplines are aligned with Islamic epistemology (Yaqin, 2017). Thus, English language education is not merely a technical skill but becomes a medium for shaping ethically conscious communicators.

The theoretical underpinning of integrating Islamic values into ELT is largely derived from several key educational models. One widely referenced model is Al-Attas's Integrated Curriculum Framework, which emphasizes the integration of secular sciences with Islamic ethics, advocating a holistic approach to knowledge (Al-Attas, 1993). Similarly, the Islamization of Knowledge paradigm, as developed by scholars such as Al-Faruqi (1982) and Nasr (1984), stresses the need to reinterpret modern knowledge systems through an Islamic worldview to maintain ideological congruence between faith and reason.

Pedagogically, these theoretical frameworks have been operationalized in various ways. Educators adapt instructional content to include Islamic narratives, Qur'anic verses, and prophetic traditions (*hadith*) to reinforce linguistic skills while fostering spiritual values (Maulida & Cahyono, 2023). Contextual learning, character-based instruction, and faith-informed classroom discourse are becoming common practices. Reflective teaching approaches also encourage students to critically engage with both language and faith, prompting moral introspection along with communicative competence (Rokhayati &

Hasan, 2023). These strategies reflect a shift from purely secular communicative models toward a more value-based pedagogy that aligns with the Islamic educational ethos. Implementation strategies vary widely across SIHE institutions but generally aim to integrate values through curriculum content, instructional methodology, and classroom interaction. For example, Islamic-themed texts are selected or developed to serve as reading materials, grammar exercises are crafted around moral lessons or stories from the Qur'an, and writing assignments often ask students to reflect on ethical scenarios relevant to Islamic teachings (Sari & Wulandari, 2022; Rahmah et al., 2024).

Teachers also employ code-switching as a pedagogical tool, using Arabic or Indonesian Islamic terminology to explain complex English concepts, thereby fostering both linguistic and spiritual resonance. Other approaches include designing task-based learning activities that emphasize cooperation, honesty, and other Islamic values, and encouraging discussions that stimulate ethical reasoning from an Islamic perspective.

Despite these innovations, the literature highlights a lack of consistency in the application of such strategies due to institutional autonomy, varying levels of teacher preparedness, and the absence of centralized curriculum guidelines. Additionally, disparities in resource availability and teacher competence have resulted in fragmented and uneven implementation across institutions (Syafi'i et al., 2023).

While the integration of Islamic values into ELT has gained traction, it is not without challenges. One of the most pressing issues is the lack of standardized and systematic curricular frameworks to guide this integration effectively. Many curriculum designers are unsure how to balance Islamic values with the learning outcomes demanded by international English language proficiency standards (Hasanah & Mansur, 2022). This tension raises concerns about the academic neutrality and objectivity of the English curriculum when religious elements are emphasized.

Additionally, most ELT textbooks used in SIHE institutions are imported from Western publishers and are culturally and ideologically secular, leading to content dissonance between the instructional materials and the values of the student body (Kirkpatrick, 2020). This situation places an additional burden on instructors, who often lack the pedagogical training and theological literacy needed to contextualize these materials effectively within an Islamic framework (Rokhayati & Hasan, 2023).

Other challenges include institutional resistance, a lack of incentives for innovation, and an overarching perception that value-based education is secondary to technical language acquisition. These issues suggest the need for a multi-stakeholder approach to reform that includes teacher training, curriculum redesign, and administrative support.

The integration of Islamic values into English education carries significant implications for learners. On the positive side, it supports moral and character education, reinforcing virtues such as honesty, respect, and empathy within the language learning process (Azra, 2019; MORA, 2023). This alignment between cognitive and affective domains can foster students' identity formation, self-confidence, and faith-based ethical awareness, especially in an era where globalization often challenges traditional values. However, scholars caution against over-integration that might obscure linguistic objectives or reduce learner engagement by introducing overtly didactic content. Concerns about curriculum neutrality, academic freedom, and learner autonomy are frequently cited, particularly in multicultural or pluralistic learning environments where students may hold diverse interpretations of religious values (Abdullah, 2021).

Despite these concerns, evidence from empirical studies suggests that a well-balanced and culturally responsive curriculum, one that respects both linguistic goals and spiritual values—can enhance learner motivation, critical thinking, and academic achievement (Syafi'i et al., 2023). Thus, a careful and inclusive approach is essential to ensure that both language proficiency and value formation are simultaneously cultivated. While numerous studies have addressed aspects of value-based curriculum design, the literature reveals several key research gaps. Most studies are either conceptual in nature

or based on single-institution case studies, lacking a comprehensive, system-wide analysis of integration practices across SIHE institutions. Moreover, there is limited research that provides longitudinal data on the impact of such curricula on student learning outcomes, both academic and moral (Rahmah et al., 2024).

Another gap lies in the absence of a cohesive theoretical model that synthesizes the various pedagogical strategies, curricular adjustments, and institutional policies required for successful integration. There is also a pressing need for cross-disciplinary collaboration involving curriculum developers, Islamic scholars, applied linguists, and educational psychologists to build a holistic and evidence-based ELT framework for Islamic higher education.

Future research should focus on developing scalable models, conducting impact assessments, and creating guidelines for teacher training and material development. Comparative studies between SIHE institutions and other Islamic educational contexts globally could also yield insights for best practices and policy development.

In summary, the literature strongly supports the integration of Islamic values into English language teaching within the context of State Islamic Higher Education. This integrative approach is both pedagogically sound and theologically grounded, provided that it is executed through coherent theoretical frameworks, culturally responsive teaching strategies, and institutional support mechanisms.

While challenges remain particularly in standardization, teacher preparedness, and material development the potential benefits in terms of learner development and identity formation are substantial. This review consolidates existing knowledge on the conceptual, pedagogical, and institutional aspects of such integration and sets the foundation for future innovations in curriculum design and educational policy. Through this descriptive qualitative literature review, the study offers a synthesized understanding and actionable insights for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers seeking to embed Islamic values into ELT practices within Islamic higher education systems.

METHODS

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative systematic literature review (SLR) approach to investigate the integration of Islamic values into English curriculum development at State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) institutions in Indonesia. The qualitative orientation of this research enables a thorough and contextualized examination of relevant texts, allowing the researcher to identify, interpret, and synthesize key themes, conceptual frameworks, and pedagogical strategies reported in existing literature. This method is particularly suited for exploring complex educational issues where context and interpretation are critical, as it facilitates a comprehensive understanding of both theoretical and practical dimensions (Snyder, 2019). The goal of this review is not limited to mapping existing efforts; rather, it aims to critically evaluate the philosophical foundations and curriculum models that underpin English language teaching (ELT) in Islamic academic environments. Ultimately, this study contributes to a more holistic view of how religious values are embedded in language education to promote ethical, spiritual, and linguistic competencies in higher education settings.

By reviewing and synthesizing literature from multiple scholarly sources, this research seeks to answer how Islamic principles are embedded into ELT curriculum models, what pedagogical strategies are employed, and what challenges or successes have been reported. This design is appropriate for capturing complex, value-laden educational phenomena, especially in contexts where religion, language, and identity intersect (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015).

The literature for this study was sourced from diverse materials, including peer-reviewed journal articles, doctoral dissertations, master's theses, conference papers, and official curriculum frameworks related to English instruction in Islamic higher education.

Searches were conducted using reputable academic databases like Google Scholar, Scopus, ScienceDirect, and institutional repositories of Islamic universities in Indonesia, ensuring comprehensive and relevant coverage of the topic.

To ensure academic rigor and contextual relevance, a carefully defined set of inclusion criteria was employed to guide the selection of literature in this systematic review. First, relevance was prioritized by selecting only studies that explicitly addressed the integration of Islamic values, Islamic perspectives, or religious contextualization within English Language Teaching (ELT). These studies were considered crucial for understanding how moral and spiritual principles are embedded into language pedagogy. Second, recency was emphasized by focusing on literature published between 2015 and 2024. This time frame reflects current trends, scholarly discussions, and emerging models that inform religiously-grounded curriculum development in higher education (Fatimah & Yusuf, 2021; Nurhayati & Hasanah, 2023). Third, contextual specificity was ensured by selecting research conducted in Indonesia or comparable Islamic-majority countries such as Malaysia, Pakistan, or Brunei, which share similar socio-cultural and educational dynamics (Huda et al., 2020). Finally, methodological quality was assessed, with a preference for qualitative, descriptive, or mixed-methods studies that provide in-depth empirical evidence and nuanced interpretation (Bearman & Dawson, 2013).

This rigorous selection strategy ensured that the reviewed literature provided a well-rounded understanding of both theoretical frameworks and practical applications involved in integrating Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT) within Islamic higher education institutions, enabling deeper insights into pedagogical models, curriculum design, and culturally relevant teaching practices aligned with Islamic educational principles and contexts.

The data collection process followed a structured and iterative search strategy, utilizing thematic keywords that captured the intersection of religion, curriculum development, and English language teaching. Keywords and search strings were carefully formulated to ensure relevance and comprehensiveness. These included, but were not limited to: "Islamic values in English curriculum," "English language teaching in Islamic higher education," "integrating religion in ELT," and "curriculum development in Indonesian Islamic universities." This approach ensured the inclusion of diverse and contextually grounded sources.

The data analysis and extraction process in this study followed a systematic and multi-step procedure to ensure the inclusion of only the most relevant and high-quality sources. First, an initial screening was conducted by reviewing the titles and abstracts of identified studies to determine their relevance to the research questions. Studies that did not explicitly address the integration of Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT) were excluded at this stage. Next, a full-text review was carried out on the selected papers to confirm their alignment with the study's aims and to assess the depth of information presented. Finally, data extraction was performed using a structured data extraction form, adapted from Kitchenham and Charters (2007), to systematically capture critical elements across the literature. Key information extracted from each article included: the conceptual frameworks or Islamic epistemologies informing curriculum development; curriculum models or syllabus design strategies; instructional practices such as the integration of Islamic texts or themes; institutional or policy-level barriers faced during implementation; and recommendations provided for educators, curriculum developers, and policymakers. This rigorous process ensured a coherent synthesis of theoretical and practical insights, offering a comprehensive overview of Islamic value integration in ELT within Islamic higher education contexts.

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This methodological approach ensures a transparent, repeatable, and systematic process of synthesizing existing knowledge. By doing so, it allows the researcher to identify patterns, highlight both converging and diverging scholarly perspectives, and offer a balanced analysis. This contributes not only to the advancement of theoretical understanding but also provides practical insights that can inform curriculum development and instructional practices in Islamic higher education (Flemming & Noyes, 2021).

Since this study relies solely on secondary data and involves no direct interaction with human subjects or interventions, institutional ethical clearance was not required. However, the researcher has taken careful steps to uphold ethical academic standards throughout the study. First, academic integrity was maintained by meticulously citing all sources using the APA 7th edition guidelines, ensuring proper attribution and preventing plagiarism. This practice supports transparency and trustworthiness in the research process. Second, respect for the original authors was prioritized by presenting interpretations of prior studies accurately and objectively. The researcher paid close attention to preserving the original context and intent of the authors' work, avoiding misrepresentation or distortion of their findings. Lastly, considering the sensitive and religious nature of the topic, the researcher demonstrated cultural sensitivity and ethical awareness when interpreting and synthesizing texts. Special care was taken to represent diverse Islamic perspectives respectfully and thoughtfully, as highlighted by Suri (2020). These measures collectively contribute to the study's ethical rigor, fostering a respectful and responsible approach to academic research despite the absence of direct human involvement.

RESULTS

The integration of Islamic values within the English curriculum at State Islamic Higher Education Institutions is a deliberate effort to develop graduates who possess both linguistic proficiency and strong moral character. This dual focus reflects the Islamic educational philosophy that knowledge should be coupled with ethical and spiritual growth. The review revealed that many State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) Institutions have incorporated core Islamic values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *rahmah* (compassion), *'adl* (justice), and *tauhid* (the oneness of God) into their ELT curriculum frameworks. These values are embedded in various ways, including selecting lesson content that reflects Islamic teachings, designing exercises that encourage ethical reflection, and using culturally relevant examples that resonate with Muslim students. This integration aims to make language learning meaningful, fostering not only communication skills but also an Islamic worldview.

The degree to which Islamic values are integrated, however, shows significant variation among institutions. Some SIHE have managed to systematically infuse these values into the entire teaching and learning process—from curriculum design, syllabus

content, to classroom activities and assessment methods. In contrast, other institutions face challenges in moving beyond mere rhetoric, with Islamic values often limited to statements in official documents like vision and mission statements or included superficially in lesson plans. These values frequently fail to manifest in actual teaching practices, possibly due to lack of teacher preparedness, insufficient resources, or unclear guidelines. This inconsistency highlights a need for stronger institutional commitment and capacity-building to ensure that Islamic values permeate all aspects of ELT instruction meaningfully.

Teachers in State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (SIHE) adopt a variety of pedagogical strategies to integrate Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT). These include contextualizing English language lessons with Islamic themes, such as using Qur'anic stories, moral parables, or discussions about Islamic ethics within writing and speaking tasks. Teachers often initiate classroom discussions that explore concepts like honesty, compassion, and justice in both Islamic and global contexts, thus connecting linguistic skills with ethical reasoning. Students are also encouraged to use common Islamic expressions in English, such as saying "peace be upon you" or "in the name of God," which helps maintain spiritual consciousness while learning a foreign language. Additionally, many teachers practice code-mixing and code-switching, blending Arabic, Indonesian, and English to emphasize religious relevance in language use.

DISCUSSION

This study concludes that while the integration of Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT) at State Islamic Higher Education (SIHE) Institutions in Indonesia is both relevant and necessary, its implementation remains inconsistent and fragmented. The integration of values such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *rahmah* (compassion), *adl* (justice), and *tauhid* (oneness of God) offers the potential to produce graduates who are not only linguistically proficient but also morally grounded. However, the practical application of these values in teaching varies widely. Some institutions successfully embed Islamic values throughout their curriculum and classroom practices, while others merely reflect them in institutional documents such as vision and mission statements. This inconsistency indicates the absence of a unified, structured approach to religious value integration in ELT pedagogy.

For the integration of Islamic values into ELT to become effective and sustainable, a more systematic and collaborative approach must be adopted. It is essential to engage not only English language educators but also curriculum developers, religious scholars, and education policymakers in the process of designing and implementing value-integrated curricula. Professional development programs tailored to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate Islamic teachings meaningfully should be prioritized. Additionally, there is an urgent need to develop standardized instructional materials and empirical frameworks that guide educators in both the content and methodology of teaching. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies and quantitative methods to assess the long-term impacts of this integration on student outcomes, both in terms of language proficiency and moral character development.

CONCLUSION

Despite these innovative efforts, several challenges hamper the systematic integration of Islamic values into English instruction. A major issue is the lack of targeted professional training for English lecturers on how to merge religious content with foreign language teaching. Many teachers, although religiously committed, feel unprepared to translate those values into practical lesson delivery due to limited pedagogical models or examples. Furthermore, there is a shortage of textbooks and instructional materials that are linguistically rich while also containing Islamic themes or values. Commercial English textbooks rarely reflect Islamic perspectives, forcing educators to adapt or supplement content creatively, which can be time-consuming and inconsistent. These challenges highlight the need for comprehensive training and resource development to support religiously contextualized ELT practices in SIHE.

The review revealed several systemic challenges that hinder the effective integration of Islamic values into English Language Teaching (ELT) within SIHE. First, there is a notable lack of professional development programs designed to equip English lecturers with the skills and strategies needed to embed Islamic values in their teaching practices. Many educators rely on personal initiative rather than structured training. Second, the absence of standardized guidelines or curriculum models results in inconsistent interpretation and application across institutions. Third, students often show low motivation in learning English, partly due to a perceived disconnect between the language content and their spiritual or religious aspirations. Lastly, there is a critical shortage of ELT materials that are both pedagogically sound and rich in Islamic content, limiting effective classroom implementation.

Additionally, the review reveals a significant gap in longitudinal and empirical research examining the long-term effects of integrating Islamic values into English language teaching. Most current studies are limited to short-term qualitative investigations, often lacking measurable outcomes related to students' language acquisition or moral and character development. This narrow scope restricts a comprehensive understanding of how sustained exposure to value-based ELT influences learners over time, underscoring the need for more rigorous, data-driven, and longitudinal research in future studies

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