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ABSTRACT

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SYNTACTIC PROCESSES AND INTERFACE PHENOMENA
IN COMPARATIVES

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1   Introduction: degree expressions

The main goal of this research is to provide an alternative structural analysis of comparatives, which is capable of explaining more empirical data than its predecessors and can also be extended to Hungarian. The theoretical framework forming the background of this research will be a version of Chomskyan minimalist syntax including Phase Theory (see, e.g., Chomsky 1993, 1995, 2001, 2004, 2005).

To start with, the reason why the structure of degree expressions in general falls under the scope of the present research, which primarily targets comparatives, is that – in line with Neeleman *et al.* (2004) – there is an underlying structural parallelism among different types of degree expressions. Since comparatives constitute a subcategory of degree expressions, it sounds reasonable to highlight the similarities and differences between, for example, absolute constructions and their comparative counterparts.

First of all, the structural representation that I am proposing for degree expressions can be seen below:

(1) $[_{FP} [_{F'} \text{DDI} [_{QP} \text{ADM} [_{Q'} Q^0 [_{DegP} [_{AP} \dots][_{Deg'} \text{Deg}^0 [d_{sta}]]]]]]]$

As can be seen, it is argued that the core of the degree expression is a degree morpheme, base-generated as Deg^0. Following Keenan (1987) and Izvorski (1995), Deg^0 has two arguments: a standard value (d_{sta}) and a lexical gradable predicate (e.g., a gradable adjective, marked as AP above). In fact, d_{sta} determines the maximal degree that the reference value is associated with in a degree expression. For example, in *'Peter is tall'*, the gradable predicate (*tall*) determines a common dimensional scale (Stassen 1985, Kennedy 1997), onto which different degrees related to different entities can be mapped, while the standard value is represented by a degree variable (Bierwisch 1989), whose degree is contextually determined (Lechner 2004); Peter's height, the reference value is computed on the basis of the standard value, since the phonologically null absolute degree morpheme establishes a relation between the reference value and the standard value in such a way that the latter cannot be greater than the former. In other words, Peter's height is at least as great on the scale as the contextually determined standard degree of 'tallness'. Still, the standard value can also be manifested explicitly: adopting Corver's (2000, 2009) analysis, a measure phrase can be generated low in absolute degree expressions (i.e., in the complement position of Deg^0 in the present research) and then subsequently moved to specFP via Predicate Inversion (e.g., *'Peter is **6 feet** tall'*).

Moving on to the remaining constituents of degree expressions, adjectival degree modifiers (ADMs; e.g., *extremely, totally*) are optional degree modifiers, which may modify the difference between the reference value and the standard

value on the scale. Determiner-like degree items (DDIs; e.g., *that, this, how*) have a similar role to that of ADMs; still the difference between them is that ADMs are maximal projections, while DDIs are atomic constituents in a head position (cf. Neeleman *et al.* 2004). The existence of Q^0 has been proven by Bresnan (1973) and Corver (1997a), and it can serve as the position of the dummy auxiliary quantifier *much*, which may be manifested overtly under certain circumstances (e.g., *'Peter is nice, but Joe is not that **much** so'*).

As far as Hungarian and a number of Indo-European languages are concerned, the degree morpheme is covert is absolute constructions and overt in comparatives (e.g., *–bb* in Hungarian and *–er* in English). On the other hand, it is the other way round in Chinese (cf. Sybesma 1999, Grano 2010), which supports the idea that it is present in degree expressions cross-linguistically, regardless of being covert; in fact, this is confirmed by semantic expectations as well (cf. Kennedy 1997, de Vries 2010). The other reason why Deg^0 is thought to be independent of typical lexical gradable predicates (e.g., gradable adjectives and adverbs) is that degree expressions do not necessarily involve APs or AdvPs, as can be seen below:

(2)   I am not that much [$_{PP}$ into economics].

Even if certain PPs can be considered gradable, this does not mean that any of their internal constituents lexically encodes a potential degree variable. On the other hand, (1) explains that the degree variable can represent the standard value in these cases as well.

Turning to comparatives, the question is what the advantages of (1) are. It is assumed that, in line with (1), the standard value (represented by what is typically referred to as *than*-XP) is base-generated in the complement position of Deg^0 and the gradable predicate (AP) is likewise in specDegP. The role of the Q^0 position is very important in periphrastic comparatives, as will be argued, while degree modifiers are placed in specQP, as can be seen below:

(3)   Mary is [$_{FP}$ [$_{QP}$ much [$_{Q'}$ more [$_{DegP}$ intelligent [$_{Deg'}$ $\varnothing_{ABS}$ [than Peter]]]]]].

The topics discussed in this dissertation can be divided into four major categories: degree modification, the structure of comparative complements (*than*-XPs), rightward movement in attributive comparatives and comparative correlatives in Hungarian.

2 Degree modification

To start with, the proposed structural representation explains some of the properties of *much*-support that are not yet fully understood. Although our primary concern is the structure of comparatives, since the structure of degree expressions is thought be parallel, as periphrastic comparatives involve *much*-support, this phenomenon cannot be disregarded in this research, even if it is not restrained to comparatives:

(4)   a. Mary is [DegP tall [Deg' –er [than John]]].
        b. Mary is [QP much + –er$_i$ [DegP intelligent [Deg' t$_i$ [than John]]]].

As can be seen it is argued that the degree morpheme moves to Q^0 via head movement and is morphologically merged with the dummy quantifier in (4b). That is, dummy *much* is inserted into Q^0, if the bound degree morpheme needs an appropriate host and cannot find one. That is why I intend to propose a novel analysis of *much*-support, which could cover comparatives as well.

First, Corver (1997a) suggested that degree operators must theta-bind the **G**(rade) argument of a gradable Adjective; in fact, this **G** argument is equivalent to d_{sta} in (1) above. Corver also hypothesized that theta-binding is a local relationship (*ibid.*); that is why the A^0 moves closer to the degree operator:

(5)   [*so/how/too/as/this/that*$_i$ [QP *extremely*$_j$ [Q' Q^0+*tall*$_{\langle 1,G_{i,j}\rangle k}$ [AP t$_k$]]]]
        (Corver 1997a)

As can be seen, Corver (1990, 1997a) purports that QP is generated on the top of the lexical AP, not DegP. Corver's (1997a) approach to *much*-support is based on the following: the AP can be replaced by the pro-form *so*, whose **G** argument is copied onto *much* in Q^0 (*ibid*):

(6)   a. John is tall$_{\langle 1,G\rangle}$.
        b. Bill is extremely$_i$ so$_{\langle 1,G_i\rangle}$, too.
        c. Bill is this$_i$ *(much$_{\langle G_i\rangle}$) so$_{\langle 1,G_i\rangle}$.

So cannot move; *extremely* in specQP is local enough to **G**, but *this* in Deg^0 is not; i.e., *much* is inserted for semantic reasons in (6c), so that *this* could theta-bind **G** of *so* via *much* (*ibid*).

However, there a number of problems emerging in connection with this approach. First, support mechanisms are usually not semantically motivated: see *do*-support (Embick&Noyer 2001). Also, *so* can replace a number of predicates

without encoding **G** (see 7; den Dikken 2008), whereas it is barred from attributive degree expressions including **G** (see 8).

(7)   a. I danced and she [$_T$ did [$_{vP}$ **so**]]], too.
        b. It is important so$_i$ [$_{TP}$ to do t$_i$].

(8)   a. *Joe is a cool guy, and John is a (very much) so man.
        b. *This car is big; I want a so car.

That is, it is arbitrary to assume that *so* inherently includes **G** when it replaces the lexical element in degree expressions. What's more, it is not obvious why *so* is incompatible with measure phrases, regardless of the presence or absence of *much*-support, as can be seen below:

(9)   a. *Joe is 5 feet tall, while Bill is 6 feet so.
        b. *Joe is 5 feet tall, while Bill is 6 feet much so.

Furthermore, Corver (1997a) argues that the following examples are filtered out by the ban on vacuous quantification, with *more* and *less* base-generated in Q^0:

(10)   a. *Bill is [$_{DegP}$ too$_j$ [$_{QP}$ more$_j$ [$_{AP}$ famous$_{\langle 1,G_j \rangle}$]]].
        b. *Bill is [$_{DegP}$ how$_j$ [$_{QP}$ less$_j$ [$_{AP}$ tall$_{\langle 1,G_j \rangle}$]]].

Still, in Corver's (1997a) approach, simultaneous theta-binding is not problematic in (5), contradicting the basis of the analysis.
     I claim that these problems can be eliminated by adopting the proposal in (1). Let us start with following examples:

(11)   a. [$_{FP}$ *so*$_i$ [$_{QP}$[$_{DegP}$[$_{AP}$ tall][Deg^0 **G**$_i$]]]]
        b. [$_{FP}$[$_{QP}$ extremely$_i$ [$_{Q'}$ Q^0[$_{DegP}$[$_{AP}$ tall][$_{Deg'}$ Deg^0 **G**$_i$]]]]]

In fact, degree morphemes are affixes; this is so even if they are phonologically null. According to Ackema & Neeleman (2000), affixal properties are distributed to morphosyntactic AFFIX features and morphophonological /affix/ features; AFFIX finds an appropriate overt host before Spell-Out, whereas /affix/ requires the affix and the host to be morphologically merged at PF; phonologically null affixes lack /affix/, as can be seen below:

(12)   a. [[[push up]$_V$ NOM]$_N$ PLUR]
        b. [[$_\omega$ push] [$_\omega$ up s]]

As can be seen, the nominalizing affix has an AFFIX feature, but lacks /affix/, unlike plural *–s*; Ackema and Neeleman (2000) argue that split affix features can explain bracketing paradoxes, such as the difference between (12a) and (12b). The same can be seen in the case of absolute degree morphemes: its AFFIX feature can be checked by a gradable element (e.g., A, Adv, Q). If an AP is in specDegP, AFFIX is checked by that via spec-head agreement. Also, it seems reasonable to assume that quantifiers in degree expressions must agree with the degree head whether it is absolute, comparative or superlative, as Q^0 is responsible for merging adjectival degree modifiers in specQP, which are sensitive to this property (compare: *he is an extremely tall guy* and **he is an extremely taller guy*); I assume that this is done via Deg-to-Q head movement triggered by an uninterpretable feature [DEG] of Q:

(13) $[_{FP} [_{QP} [_{Q'} Q^0_{[DEG]}+\varnothing_{AFF;i} [_{DegP} [_{AP} tall] [_{Deg'} t_i \textbf{G}]]]]]$

However, if there is a degree operator in the highest functional head (e.g., *too* in F^0) and the pro-form *so* substitutes the AP, as *so* is a default predicate without gradable properties (see 7), the AFFIX feature of Deg is not checked before it moves to Q. In order to obviate this problem, *much* is inserted into Q^0 as a dummy gradable quantifier, and AFFIX is checked then:

(14) $[_{FP} too_x [_{QP} [_{Q'} much_{[DEG]}+\varnothing_{AFF;i} [_{DegP} [_{AP} so] [_{Deg'} t_i \textbf{G}_x]]]]]$

Still, an *extremely*-type degree modifier in specQP – as an overt gradable constituent (e.g., *he is [more extremely] talented*) – can also check the affix feature of Deg^0, once it has moved to Q^0:

(15) $[_{FP} [_{QP} extremely_x [_{Q'} Q^0_{[DEG]}+\varnothing_{AFF;i} [_{DegP} [_{AP} so] [_{Deg'} t_i \textbf{G}_x]]]]]$

Still, there is no *much*-support in the absence of degree modification: as mentioned, *so* can replace predicates, such as whole predicative degree expressions containing QP and FP:

(16)   Joe is $[_{FP}$ this tall] and **so** is Bill, too.   *so* = $[_{FP}$ this tall]

As *so* replaces the whole FP, there is no *much*-support, since Q^0 is also contained within FP.

As for measure phrases (MPs), it has been mentioned that in Corver's (2009) system they undergo Predicate Inversion and move to the specifier of an empty functional F^0 head. It is clear that MPs and degree variables are in

complementary distribution, as only one of them can represent **G** at a time. The question is why MPs are incompatible with *so*-pronominalization:

(17) a. [FP 6 feet$_x$ [QP[DegP [AP tall] [Deg' $\varnothing$AFF t$_x$]]]]
      b. *[FP 6 feet$_x$ [QP[DegP [AP so] [Deg' $\varnothing$AFF t$_x$]]]]

The explanation can be as follows: (i) MPs can never be modified by any type of degree modifiers; (ii) Q^0 – as a null bundle of features – is generally responsible for merging *extremely*-type modifiers; however, (iii) degree modification cannot take place whenever **G** is explicitly manifested by an MP; therefore (iv) Q^0 has a feature deficit, as it does not even need to enter into a feature-based relationship with Deg^0, as no modifier may appear in its spec. That is, the AFFIX feature of the degree head remains unvalued when it is transferred to the interfaces.

In order to see how degree modification and *much*-support are connected to comparatives, the proposal just outlined also provides an approach to the formation of synthetic and periphrastic comparative adjective forms. If the *than*-constituent is the complement of Deg^0 in comparatives, whenever the gradable AP is lexically incapable of checking AFFIX (e.g., *famous*), after the comparative degree morpheme has moved to Q^0, AFFIX is checked by dummy *much*, and after Spell-Out, *much* and *–er* are morphologically merged; this can also happen when *so* or a gradable PP is in specDegP (see 18). On the other hand, when the AP can check AFFIX (e.g., *tall*), after *–er* has moved to Q^0, *–er* and the A^0 are morphologically merged at PF (see 19).

(18) a. Joe is [more {famous/into syntax/so} than Bill].
      b. [QP [Q' much$_{[deg]}$–er$_{aff;i}$ [DegP [famous/into syntax/so] [Deg' t$_i$ [than Bill]]]]]

(19) a. Joe is [taller than Bill].
      b. [QP [Q' $Q^0_{[deg]}$–er$_i$ [DegP [AP tall] [Deg' ~~–er~~$_{aff;i}$ [than Bill]]]]]

One of the achievements of the present research is that *much*-support and the formation of periphrastic comparatives works on the same basis, unlike in earlier approaches.

In fact, the proposal in (1) provides a novel approach to multiple degree modification as well:

(20) Butch is so totally much more awesome than Fluffy.

I argue, partly on the basis of Zwarts (1992), that degree modifiers are logical predicates predicating over degrees. Therefore, it sounds reasonable to assume that a constituent representing a degree may be predicated over by only one

degree modifier in order to satisfy the Theta Criterion. That is why it is straightforward that multiple degree modification consists of degree modifiers multiply embedded within each other's functionally extended maximal projections. This is supported by the fact that they can be considered full-fledged degree expressions as well.

3   Comparative complements

One of the most intriguing issues in comparative complements is comparative operator movement (cf. Chomsky 1977), which is responsible for representing the standard value, thus it is an indispensable constituent in comparatives. Hungarian examples are particularly helpful, since comparative operators in Hungarian can always be overt, and Hungarian clausal comparative complements never involve obligatory deletion; that is, the processes and mechanisms that are typical of this construction can easily be detected, as can be seen below:

(21)   Fickó magasabb volt, mint amilyen magas Pihe   volt.
        Butch taller   was than REL-how tall   Fluffy   was
        'Butch was taller than Fluffy was.'

As can be seen, *amilyen* functions as the comparative operator here.

In fact, Hungarian comparative operators are relative operators morphologically; however, there has not yet been an extensive analysis of Hungarian relative operator movement. In order to fully understood how comparative subclauses work, I attempt to provide a novel analysis of the A'-movement of Hungarian relative operators. A split CP analysis (cf. Rizzi 2004) is adopted for Hungarian; that is, the left periphery of a clause is split into multiple functional phrases:

(22) $[C_{Force}P \ldots [TopP^* \ldots [C_{Fin}P \ldots]]]$

New evidence based on quantifier scope relations clearly show that relative operators undergo obligatory overt movement to the specifier position of a lower functional phrase in the left periphery instead of optional topicalization, as was argued before.

(23) a. Amilyen sok embert Ede minden tortával megkínált, az vicces.
       how   many people-ACC Ede every   tart-INS VM.offered that funny
     b. Amilyen sok embert Ede megkínált 'minden tortával, az vicces.
       how   many people-ACC Ede VM.offered every   tart-INS that funny
     'It is funny that for how many people it is true that John offered every tart to them.'

As can be seen, the quantifier that is moved along to the lower specCP (*sok*) has wide scope, even if the postverbal universal quantifier is stressed, which would otherwise mean that the clause is be ambiguous (cf. É. Kiss 2002: 119). In other words, Hungarian comparative complement clauses are also thought to have a split left periphery, whose lower specCP may serve as a landing site for comparative operator movement.

     Furthermore, the proposed structural representation in (1) suggests that elliptical comparatives do not involve coordination, contrary to what is generally assumed (cf. Lechner 2004, Corver 2005). Based on Hungarian data, it can be claimed that these constructions do not need coordination to account for deletion, since the primary mechanism that elides contextually given material in Hungarian comparatives is sluicing, and it is known that sluicing is operative in subordinate constructions as well (Craenenbroeck and Lipták 2006).

     Finally, I provide an explanation of a phenomenon that, to my knowledge, has not been dealt with before. If the comparative operator – which generally moves to the specifier position of the lower CP in the left periphery – is covert in Hungarian and Bulgarian, the finite verb and the rest of the constituents following it tend to be deleted obligatorily in Hungarian, (cf. Kántor and Bácskai-Atkári 2010), as can be seen below:

(24) a. Magasabb voltam, mint amilyen magas 'Péter volt.   (*Hungarian*)
      taller   I.was   than x-much tall   Peter was
      'I was taller than Peter.'
     b. Magasabb voltam, mint __E Péter (*volt).   (__E=amilyen magas)

The analysis is based on the fact that the primary mechanism eliminating contextually given material in Hungarian comparatives is sluicing, which targets Foc', a constituent that contains practically everything that follows the contrastively focussed element, which is *Péter* in the example above.

4   Rightward movement in comparatives

In this chapter, I provide a phase-based explanation of extraposition phenomena in attributive comparatives, exemplified below:

(25)   a.*I met a [taller <u>than John is</u>] man.
        b.I met a [$_{\text{DegP}}$ [$_{\text{AP}}$ taller] [$_{\text{Deg'}}$ Deg^0 t$_i$]] man [<u>than John is</u>]$_i$.

As has been mentioned, conforming to a semantic requirement, the *than*-expression (providing the standard value of comparison, underlined) is an obligatory complement of the Degree head (Lechner 2004), while the AP/AdvP determines the dimension of comparison (Kennedy 1997). However, there is need for an adequate explanation of extraposition, if it involves syntactically unmotivated movement to the right. Furthermore, in certain head-final structures (e.g., in Dutch, German) this rightward movement is not even obligatory, as can be seen in the example below:

(26)   Er hat [viel   weniger oft   als ich (dachte)] das Stück geprobt. (*German*)
        he has much less   often than I   thought the play   rehearsed
        'He rehearsed the play much less often than I thought.'

First of all, my solution makes use of the fact that comparative complements (i.e., *than*-expressions) are considered clausal, which was proved by Lechner (2004). Accordingly, I claim that they are full CPs, except when an inherently case-marked DP represents the standard value (e.g., in Russian, Hungarian). According to Chomsky (2005), CPs, vPs and DPs are phases, and once a phase is fully built, it is spelt out and transferred to PF. If structure is built in a bottom-up fashion, once a constituent is spelt out, it is expected to follow constituents spelt out later in the final word order (Svenonius 2004, Chomsky 2005, Hiraiwa 2005). This may be changed by feature-driven movements later in the derivation, when the whole DP/CP constituent – which, being a phase, has been spelt out – is moved into another position and spelt out again within a higher phase. I assume that the cyclic nature of Spell-Out mechanisms, as well as the copy-and-delete nature of movement clearly and predictably define the final word order in attributive comparatives, as can be noticed below:

(27) a. syntax: [NP [DegP taller   [CP than John]] [NP person]] *transfer of CP*
      PF: **than John**

     b. syntax: [DP a [NP [DegP taller [CP ***opaque***]] [NP person]]] *transfer of DP*
      PF: **a taller person   than John**

     c. syntax: [IP   [v*P I [VP met [DP ***opaque***   ]]]] *transfer of v*P*
      PF: **I met   a taller person   than John**

     d. syntax: [CP [TP I_i [v*P (t_i) ***opaque***   ]]] *transfer of CP*
      PF: **I I met   a taller person   than John**

     e. PF: **I ~~I~~ met   a taller person   than John** *copy-and-delete*

     f.   I met a taller person than John   *final word order*

Finally, as for the lack of extraposition in head-final constructions, note that there is agreement between attributive modifiers and modified heads in Dutch and German (e.g., attributive adjectives and nouns). This triggers the movement of the whole comparative DegP (satisfying CED) into the specifier position of an AgrP (Corver 1997b). This movement ensures agreement between the modifier and the modified head, hence creating a higher copy of the phase to be spelt out again; on the contrary, there is no such agreement in English.

5   Comparative correlatives in Hungarian

Hungarian comparative correlatives have two main types: symmetric and asymmetric, similarly to their French, Italian and Spanish counterparts (cf. Abeillé *et al.* 2006). Symmetric comparative correlatives are introduced by *minél* (subordinate clause) and *annál* (matrix clause), whereas asymmetric comparative correlatives by *amennyivel* (subordinate clause) and *annyival* (matrix clause):

(28) a. Minél   gyorsabban hajtok,   *symmetric*
        whatWH-ADE faster   I.drive
        annál   korábban érek   le Szegedre.
        thatDEM-ADE earlier   I.arrive VM Szeged-SUBL
        'The faster I drive, the earlier I arrive in Szeged.'

     b. Amennyivel   gyorsabb   a Suzuki,   *asymmetric*
        REL-how.much-INS faster   the Suzuki
        annyival   több benzint   eszik.
        REL-that.much-INS more gasoline-ACC it.eats
        'The faster the Suzuki is, the more gasoline it consumes.'

The reason why an analysis of comparative correlatives is included in the dissertation is that they are heavily dependent on what the structure of comparatives looks like, since each comparative correlative clause, regardless of

being matrix or subordinate, contains a comparative degree expression, within which the correlative pronoun is base-generated. A number of properties of comparative correlatives can be explained on the basis of the proposed structural representation in (1). For example, the correlative pronouns can be extracted out the degree expressions in the case of asymmetric comparative correlatives, unlike in symmetric ones:

(29) a. Amennyivel   én gyorsabb vagyok Péternél,
         REL-how.much-INS I   faster   am   Peter-ADE
         annyival   Mari is   gyorsabb nála.
         REL-that.much-INS Mary also faster   he-ADE
         'The degree d by which I am faster than Peter is the same as the degree
         d' by which Mary is faster than him, too.'
      b. Minél   gyorsabb vagyok   Péternél   a   versenyen
         whatWH-ADE faster   am   Peter-ADE the race-SUP
         annál   fáradtabb   leszek.
         thatDEM-ADE tired   I.will.be
         'The greater the degree d is by which I am faster than Peter, the more
         tired I will be.'
      c. *Minél vagyok gyorsabb Péternél a versenyen, annál fáradtabb leszek.

The solution to this problem lies in the fact that *amennyivel* and *annyival* are base-generated as degree modifiers in the specQP position in the predicative degree expressions in the subordinate and matrix comparative correlative clauses respectively, which is supported by inherent Case assignment as well (degree modifiers in comparatives are assigned instrumental Case in Hungarian); in this way, *amennyivel* and *annyival* – as pronouns – substitute the whole degree expression that could function as a degree modifier in specQP. Accordingly, there is nothing that could block the movement of the pronoun out of the predicative degree expressions in (29a).

On the contrary, this is not so in the case of symmetric comparative correlatives. It is argued that *minél* and *annál* are base-generated within the functionally extended degree expression, which functions as a degree modifier and is in specQP. As has already been mentioned in connection with multiple degree modification, (adjectival) degree modifiers are considered to be full-fledged degree expressions themselves. The correlative pronouns in symmetric comparative correlatives are assigned adessive Case. In fact, adessive Case is the inherent Case that is assigned to DPs representing the standard value in genuine phrasal comparatives:

(30)   Mari   magasabb   Jánosnál.
       Mary   taller   John-ADE
       'Mary is taller than John.'

Hungarian data show that the only adessive Case position available in symmetric comparative correlatives is inside the degree expression that functions as a degree modifier in specQP. However, since a degree modifier is a left-branch constituent, no movement out of it can be considered legitimate (Corver 1990), as could be seen in (29c).

      In sum, comparative correlatives also support the proposed structural representation in (1).

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