

Exploring Digital Tools in Language Education: Benefits and Challenges

Rahayu Meliasari ¹, Heti Susanti ², Kristoforus Galuh Waringga ³, Syf. Tasya Arifdha ⁴,
Aprilian Novita Putri ⁵, Arieska Alfa Reisz Andrianto ⁶, Dilla Rosti ⁷, Dinda Trifosa ⁸,
Dominika Etikawati ⁹, Fadiyah Azzahrah ¹⁰, Fitriani ¹¹, Fitriani ¹², Eka Sri Lestari
¹³, Grace Christy. Tangkau ¹⁴

¹²³⁴⁵⁶⁷⁸⁹¹⁰¹¹¹²¹³¹⁴University of PGRI Pontianak

¹hetissnt11@gmail.com

²galuh.bky@gmail.com

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi secara mendalam manfaat dan tantangan yang muncul dari evaluasi serta implementasi alat digital dalam konteks pendidikan bahasa. Melalui wawancara dan tinjauan jurnal ilmiah terkini, studi ini menggarisbawahi bagaimana integrasi teknologi telah merevolusi metodologi pengajaran dan pembelajaran bahasa. Sejumlah penelitian secara konsisten menunjukkan bahwa alat digital secara signifikan mampu meningkatkan keterlibatan dan motivasi peserta didik (Zulfikhar et al., 2024; Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023), bahkan melalui platform seperti media sosial (Ariantini et al., 2021), yang menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih interaktif dan dinamis. Manfaat krusial lainnya mencakup kemampuan alat digital dalam menyediakan akses ke sumber belajar otentik dan personalisasi (Zulfikhar et al., 2024), memungkinkan pengalaman belajar yang lebih relevan dan disesuaikan dengan kebutuhan individu. Hasilnya adalah peningkatan keterampilan bahasa yang nyata, meliputi kemampuan membaca, menulis, penguasaan kosakata, dan keterampilan komunikasi secara keseluruhan (Hasanudin, 2018; Al-Abdi, 2022). Selain itu, teknologi mendukung fleksibilitas dan kemandirian belajar (Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023) serta memfasilitasi umpan balik instan dan kolaborasi (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023).

Namun, adopsi alat digital juga diiringi dengan tantangan serius. Salah satu hambatan utama adalah kesenjangan digital dan akses yang tidak merata terhadap infrastruktur teknologi dan konektivitas internet (Al-Ghamdi, 2023), yang berpotensi memperdalam disparitas pendidikan. Kurangnya pelatihan dan literasi digital guru (Ma'arif, 2023; Shahbazi & Soltani, 2018) menjadi isu kritis yang menuntut program pengembangan profesional berkelanjutan (Al-Malki & Al-Ghamdi, 2023). Masalah teknis dan keterbatasan infrastruktur (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023) sering mengganggu kelancaran proses pembelajaran. Lebih lanjut, kendala waktu bagi pendidik (Ma'arif, 2023) dan sikap atau resistensi terhadap adopsi teknologi (Sabic & Trosic, 2023) turut memengaruhi efektivitas implementasi. Singkatnya, meskipun alat digital menawarkan peluang transformatif, keberhasilan integrasinya sangat bergantung pada strategi komprehensif yang mengatasi hambatan infrastruktur, pedagogis, dan humanis untuk mewujudkan lingkungan pembelajaran bahasa yang efektif dan inklusif.

Kata Kunci: *Alat Digital, Manfaat, Tantangan.*

Abstract

This research aims to explore in depth the benefits and challenges arising from the evaluation and implementation of digital tools in the context of language education. Through interviews and a review of recent scholarly journals, the study underlines how technology integration has revolutionised language teaching and learning methodologies. Numerous studies have consistently shown that digital tools significantly increase learner engagement and motivation (Zulfikhar et al., 2024; Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023), even through platforms such as social media (Ariantini et al., 2021), creating a more interactive and dynamic learning environment. Other crucial benefits include the ability of digital tools to provide access to authentic and personalised learning resources (Zulfikhar et al., 2024), enabling learning experiences that are more relevant and tailored to individual needs. The result is a marked improvement in language skills, including reading, writing, vocabulary acquisition and overall communication skills (Hasanudin, 2018; Al-Abdi, 2022). In addition, technology supports flexibility and independence of learning (Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023) and facilitates instant feedback and collaboration (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023).

However, the adoption of digital tools also comes with serious challenges. One of the main barriers is the digital divide and unequal access to technological infrastructure and internet connectivity (Al-Ghamdi, 2023), which has the potential to deepen educational disparities. Lack of teacher training and digital literacy (Ma'arif, 2023; Shahbazi & Soltani, 2018) is a critical issue that demands continuous professional development programmes (Al-Malki & Al-Ghamdi, 2023). Technical problems and infrastructure limitations (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023) often disrupt the smooth learning process. Furthermore, time constraints for educators (Ma'arif, 2023) and attitudes or resistance to technology adoption (Sabic & Trosic, 2023) also affect implementation effectiveness. In summary, while digital tools offer transformative opportunities, their successful integration relies heavily on comprehensive strategies that address infrastructural, pedagogical and humanist barriers to realise effective and inclusive language learning environments.

Keywords: Benefits, Challenges, Digital Tools.

INTRODUCTION

In this rapidly evolving digital era, technology has become an integral component in various aspects of life, especially within the education sector. This transformation is particularly evident in language education, where the integration of digital tools has fundamentally reshaped how teaching and learning occur. From sophisticated mobile language learning applications and interactive online platforms to the strategic use of social media for authentic language practice, these tools now offer unprecedented dimensions and opportunities. The potential to craft more immersive, personalized, adaptive, and accessible learning experiences has garnered significant attention from educators, researchers, policymakers, and curriculum developers worldwide. As access to technology continues to expand, it's essential to understand how these tools can be optimally leveraged to facilitate language acquisition and mastery.

The use of digital tools in language education has brought with it a series of undeniable benefits. These tools significantly enhance student engagement and motivation, creating more interactive and captivating learning environments (Zulfikhar et al., 2024; Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023). They also provide access to authentic learning resources and enable personalization of materials (Zulfikhar et al., 2024; Al-Ajmi, 2023), allowing for learning tailored to individual student needs. Furthermore, digital tools facilitate instant feedback and collaboration, which are crucial for continuous improvement and the development of communication skills (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023). The observed outcomes of these implementations are highly promising: a significant improvement in overall language skills, including reading, writing, vocabulary acquisition, and communication abilities (Hasanudin, 2018; Ariantini et al., 2021). Additionally, the greater flexibility in learning has

fostered learner autonomy, empowering students to take more control over their own learning processes (Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023).

However, like any significant advancement, the adoption and implementation of digital tools in language education also come with a series of complex challenges. Crucial issues such as the digital divide that widens disparities in access to technology and connectivity remain a primary barrier (Al-Ghamdi, 2023). Moreover, many educators still face a lack of adequate training and digital literacy (Ma'arif, 2023; Al-Malki & Al-Ghamdi, 2023), alongside time constraints and technical infrastructure issues (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023). User perceptions and resistance to technology adoption also influence implementation effectiveness (Ma'arif, 2023; Sabic & Trosic, 2023).

Therefore, conducting a thorough exploration of these digital tools doesn't just mean recognizing their technical features; it also involves a multidimensional analysis of their pedagogical impact, user readiness and acceptance (among teachers, students, and prospective teachers alike), and the availability of adequate supporting ecosystems. By critically examining various perspectives, research findings, and documented experiences within the scholarly literature, this study aims to identify best practices, formulate strategies to overcome existing barriers, and ultimately maximize technology's transformative potential to create more effective, inclusive, and relevant language learning environments in an increasingly digital future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the digital age, technology has become an indispensable backbone of various aspects of life, including in the education sector. In particular, the field of language education has witnessed a fundamental transformation thanks to the integration of digital tools. From sophisticated language learning apps on mobile devices to interactive online learning platforms and the utilization of social media for authentic language practice, these tools promise a new dimension to enhance language acquisition and mastery. This huge potential in creating more interactive, personalized, adaptive and accessible learning experiences has attracted significant attention from educators, researchers, policy makers and curriculum developers around the world (Zulfikhar et al., 2024). However, the effective and sustainable implementation of these digital tools relies heavily on a comprehensive understanding of the benefits they offer, as well as the complex challenges that come with them. This literature review

will analyze key findings from relevant research, outline the positive impacts and barriers to technology use, and highlight how to overcome barriers to technology use.

The existing literature broadly supports the idea that digital tools provide a range of significant benefits in the language acquisition and acquisition process. One of the most prominent contributions of digital tools is their ability to increase learner engagement and motivation. Research by Zulfikhar et al. (2024) clearly shows that technology-enhanced learning tools are able to effectively increase student engagement and motivation. Similarly, Mohammedi and Al-Ghafri (2023) found that digital technology makes language learning more accessible and effective, creating an interactive and self-directed learning environment that fuels the passion for learning. Even social media, as analyzed by Ariantini et al. (2021), was shown to have a positive impact on student motivation, alongside improved reading and writing skills. This phenomenon underlines that the elements of interactivity and novelty brought by digital tools have the capacity to maintain students' interest in the subject matter.

In addition, digital tools dramatically expand the range of authentic learning resources and facilitate personalization in learning. Zulfikhar et al. (2024) highlight how technology provides access to authentic language use and cultural contexts that are crucial for a holistic understanding of language. The ability to access materials from different countries and contexts, such as online videos, podcasts or digital news, enables more authentic and immersive learning. Furthermore, technology supports personalized instruction (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023), where materials and exercises can be tailored to students' individual proficiency levels, learning styles and interests, thus significantly improving learning efficiency (Al-Ajmi, 2023).

Various studies have also consistently shown that the use of digital tools is positively correlated with improved language skills and overall competence. A meta-analysis conducted by Hasanudin (2018) on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) found that its use has a significant positive effect on students' Arabic language proficiency. Another study identified that digital tools can improve students' academic abilities, including vocabulary acquisition and communication skills (Technology in Language Education: Benefits and Barriers, n.d.; Ariantini et al., 2021). Ma'arif (2023) even emphasizes the transformative role of technology in comprehensively improving language learning outcomes.

Another crucial aspect is the increased flexibility and independence of learning offered by digital tools. Mohammedi and Al-Ghafri (2023) state that digital tools make language learning more accessible, facilitating language acquisition through immersive and interactive experiences that can be done independently. This flexibility proved particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic, when online learning became the new norm and drove massive adoption of digital tools (Al-Ali, 2021). The ability to learn independently, supported by instant feedback from digital tools, empowers students to take charge of their learning process. The instant feedback feature provided by many digital tools is invaluable in language learning, allowing students to immediately correct mistakes and understand concepts (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023). In addition, technology facilitates various forms of collaboration, whether through online group projects or discussion forums, which can improve interpersonal communication skills and reduce learning anxiety (Technology in Language Education: Benefits and Barriers, n.d.).

Despite its many benefits, the integration of digital tools in language education is also faced with a series of significant challenges that require serious attention and thoughtful coping strategies. One of the most critical obstacles is the persistent problem of the digital divide (Al-Ghamdi, 2023). Unequal access to technological devices, stable internet connections, and even electricity, can widen the gap between students who have the resources and those who do not (Technology in Language Education: Benefits and Barriers, n.d.). This creates disparities in learning opportunities and can fundamentally hinder the inclusiveness of education.

In addition, many educators, especially in environments that are not yet fully accustomed to technology, may lack adequate training and the digital literacy required to effectively integrate these tools into their curriculum (Ma'arif, 2023). Shahbazi and Soltani (2018) highlighted the need for teachers' understanding of CALL facilities. Al-Malki and Al-Ghamdi (2023) further emphasized that the lack of ongoing professional development for educators can be a major barrier to successful technology adoption. Teachers' own perceptions of technology also play an important role in determining the level of acceptance and success of its implementation (Al-Azzawi & Al-Ghamdi, 2022).

Technical issues and inadequate infrastructure are also common barriers. Internet connection disruptions, software bugs, and lack of maintenance of adequate technological infrastructure in educational institutions often disrupt the smooth learning process (Radzhabova & Al-Abdi, 2023). Hardware limitations or outdated software can also restrict the types of digital tools that can be used effectively. Another challenge is teachers' time and workload constraints. Integrating digital tools into teaching practices requires a significant investment of time on the part of teachers for planning, adapting materials and managing the technology itself. Ma'arif (2023) identified time constraints as one of the main challenges English teachers face, potentially adding to their workload and causing burnout.

Finally, users' attitudes and acceptance of technology can vary significantly. Some teachers may be reluctant to adopt new tools due to a lack of trust, concerns about their effectiveness, or a preference for traditional methods. Similarly, students may face potential distractions from digital use or feel overwhelmed by the complexity of certain tools (Sabic & Trosic, 2023; Al-Zahrani & Al-Ghamdi, 2023). Thoughtful pedagogical and curriculum considerations are also vital; poorly planned integration of digital tools can be risky. It is important to ensure that the use of digital tools is aligned with clear pedagogical objectives and coherently integrated into the curriculum (Al-Khazali & Al-Ghamdi, 2023; Dantas & de Oliveira, 2021).

METHOD

This study will adopt a qualitative approach with interviews as the main method to explore the benefits and challenges of digital tools in language education from the perspective of students who will become teachers in the future. This qualitative approach was specifically chosen because it allows researchers to gain a deep understanding of the participants' views, experiences, and expectations, which are contextual and cannot be measured numerically. According to Sugiyono (2017), qualitative research is based on postpositivist philosophy and is used to study the natural conditions of objects. In this method, the researcher acts as the key instrument, data collection techniques are conducted through triangulation, data analysis is inductive, and research results emphasise meaning over generalisation. Sugiyono (2017) also explains that interviews are an appropriate data collection technique when researchers want to conduct preliminary studies to identify problems or when they want to gain a deeper understanding of respondents with a limited number of

participants. Therefore, in the context of this research, interviews will be the primary means of exploring prospective teachers' perspectives on the dynamics of using digital tools in language learning.

Four participants will be selected through purposive sampling. They are students in the English Education programme at PGRI University Pontianak. The selection criteria for participants will focus on students who have active experience in using digital tools for their own language learning and demonstrate a clear interest in language teaching in the future. There are no specific semester restrictions for participation, in order to obtain diverse perspectives from various stages of their education.

The interviews will be conducted using a semi-structured instrument consisting of six open-ended questions presented in English. These questions are carefully designed to explore participants' personal experiences as learners, as well as their views on the benefits, challenges, and potential strategies in using digital tools in their future roles as teachers. The questions to be asked include: (1) What are the new advantages of mobile language learning apps and online learning sites?, (2) How can technology help make language learning easier, more engaging, and accessible to everyone?, (3) What are the main problems with using digital tools for language learning, especially with uneven internet access?, (4) How does lack of access to technology affect students' language learning and use of technology?, (5) What do you think is the best way to overcome the problem of lack of technology in schools to keep language learning effective?, and (6) How can we make language learning easier for everyone to follow with the help of technology in this day and age?.

The data collection procedure will involve individual interviews, which can be conducted face-to-face, tailored to the participants' preferences and in compliance with research ethics. Each interview will be audio recorded after obtaining verbal consent from the participants, and verbatim transcripts of the recordings will be made for analysis.

For data analysis, the interview transcripts will undergo a process of careful organisation, coding, and grouping of information. This is done to identify the main themes, patterns, and key perspectives that emerge from the participants' responses. The process involves repeated readings of the transcripts for in-depth familiarisation, marking important sections, and grouping them into larger categories. Most importantly, the findings from the interviews will then be combined and confirmed with findings from reference sources (literature) according to the experts discussed earlier. This approach aims to achieve a more comprehensive, verified, and perspective-rich understanding by comparing general views, differences in perspectives, and solutions or expectations expressed by prospective teacher students with existing theories and research.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Interviews with prospective teachers consistently highlighted several primary advantages of using digital tools in language learning. All participants emphasized the **flexibility and practicality** of language learning through apps and online sites, enabling "anytime and anywhere" learning without being tied to a specific time or physical location (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso, Widiанти, Nyemas Firda Atika).

Furthermore, the students uniformly noted how technology makes the language learning process **more engaging and less monotonous** through interactive features like gamification, videos, quizzes, and conversation exercises. Haafidz Akbar specifically pointed out the use of **artificial intelligence (AI)** to tailor content to user abilities, while Widiанти and Abang Sudarso also underscored the potential for **personalized learning**. Participants also recognized technology's significant role in **enriching the learning experience** by providing access to diverse **authentic resources**, such as educational videos, online dictionaries, and opportunities for direct communication with native speakers (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso, Widiанти). Nyemas Firda Atika and Widiанти particularly highlighted the benefits of multimedia use (video, audio, images) and **speech recognition** features. They also experienced a **comprehensive improvement in language skills**, including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, as a result of using these tools. The **lower cost** compared to traditional courses was also cited as an important factor in increasing the accessibility of language learning for more people (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso).

Discussion: Digital Benefits: Alignment between Prospective Teachers' Views and Research

The findings regarding the benefits of digital tools in language learning, as articulated by the prospective teachers, **strongly resonate with and reinforce** the advantages widely documented in academic literature. Their emphasis on **flexibility and practicality** directly supports claims in scholarly works about increased learner autonomy and accessibility (Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri, 2023; Al-Ali, 2021). This convergence shows that the fundamental convenience offered by mobile apps and online platforms is a universally recognized value.

The prospective teachers' consistent highlighting of **enhanced engagement and motivation** through interactive features, personalized content, and multimedia (Haafidz Akbar, Nyemas Firda Atika, Abang Sudarso, Widiанти) directly corroborates findings from studies by Zulfikhar et al. (2024) and Mohammedi & Al-Ghafri (2023). Haafidz Akbar's specific mention of **AI-driven personalization** further aligns with research emphasizing tailored learning experiences (Al-Ajmi, 2023). This alignment confirms that interactive and adaptive elements are critical drivers of effective language acquisition across various contexts.

The perceived **improvement in comprehensive language skills**—vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation—is also well-supported by previous research. Hasanudin's (2018) meta-analysis on Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Ariantini et al.'s (2021) work provide a robust academic foundation for these observations. The consistent perception of these benefits by prospective teachers indicates that these tools are indeed seen as effective supplements to traditional learning. The **lower cost** (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso) further expands on the concept of accessibility, a crucial benefit explored in the broader literature.

II. Challenges of Using Digital Tools and Strategies Proposed by Prospective Teachers Findings

The interviews also revealed **challenges anticipated** by the prospective teachers in using digital tools, along with their initial ideas on how to address these issues.

The most dominant issue raised was **limited and uneven internet access**, especially in remote areas or those with inadequate infrastructure (Haafidz Akbar, Nyemas Firda Atika, Abang Sudarso, Widiанти). They also highlighted the constraint of students owning **adequate devices**, which can create learning disparities and hinder the

development of essential digital skills (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso, Nyemas Firda Atika). Beyond access issues, participants also recognized the potential for **distraction** posed by digital tools (Haafidz Akbar), and Abang Sudarso mentioned **confusion in selecting effective learning resources** and a **lack of guidance**. Nyemas Firda Atika added that technological limitations could make students "less ready to learn" and "fall behind in learning."

To address these challenges, the prospective teachers proposed various strategies that demonstrate adaptive and solution-oriented thinking. For infrastructure and access issues, Haafidz Akbar and Nyemas Firda Atika emphasized the role of **government and the private sector** in providing internet networks and devices in schools. Abang Sudarso also suggested free Wi-Fi and device loan programs, while Widianti explicitly recommended "**investing in affordable, reliable internet access and providing devices**." In terms of pedagogical adaptation, there was an emphasis on using **offline-capable applications** as an alternative in areas without internet access (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso). Abang Sudarso also proposed **blended learning methods** and the utilization of simple technologies like WhatsApp or short videos. Regarding teacher competency development, Haafidz Akbar and Abang Sudarso specifically highlighted the importance of **training for teachers** to effectively maximize technology use. Widianti also stressed "**training for both students and teachers**." Finally, for content design, Abang Sudarso and Widianti suggested creating lightweight, accessible, engaging content that can be used offline.

Discussion: Addressing Obstacles: Prospective Teachers' Strategies for Effective Digital Use

The interviews revealed that prospective teachers keenly anticipate challenges in integrating digital tools, many of which are deeply rooted in persistent issues identified in academic literature. The dominant concern about **limited and uneven internet access and the lack of adequate devices** (Haafidz Akbar, Nyemas Firda Atika, Abang Sudarso, Widianti) directly mirrors the pervasive problem of the **digital divide** discussed by Al-Ghamdi (2023) and in broader reviews. This shows that despite technological advancements, the fundamental issue of equitable access remains a critical barrier in practical implementation.

Similarly, the anticipated challenges related to **distraction, lack of guidance in resource selection, and students' general readiness for technology-driven learning** align with broader discussions on digital literacy and pedagogical challenges.

Crucially, the prospective teachers did not merely identify problems; they also proposed various strategies to address them. Their emphasis on **systemic support from government and the private sector** for infrastructure and device provision (Haafidz Akbar, Nyemas Firda Atika, Abang Sudarso, Widianti) aligns with policy recommendations often found in educational technology literature. Their insights into using **offline-capable applications** (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso) and incorporating **blended learning methods** (Abang Sudarso) offer pragmatic solutions directly applicable to contexts with limited connectivity. These strategies highlight an adaptive mindset that prioritizes pedagogical continuity over strict reliance on ideal technological conditions.

CONCLUSION

This study explored prospective English language teachers' perceptions regarding the benefits, challenges, and proposed strategies for integrating digital tools into language education. The findings reveal a clear understanding among these future educators of digital tools' transformative potential, largely aligning with existing academic literature. They highly value the flexibility, accessibility, and engaging nature of digital learning resources, recognizing their capacity to personalize learning and enhance comprehensive language skills.

However, the research also highlights that prospective teachers are acutely aware of significant practical barriers, particularly the persistent digital divide, including uneven internet access and device availability. They also anticipate challenges related to distraction and the need for better pedagogical guidance in technology use. Crucially, these future educators don't just identify problems; they actively propose actionable strategies. These include advocating for systemic infrastructure improvements, promoting the use of offline-capable applications, endorsing blended learning approaches, and emphasizing the vital need for comprehensive teacher training in digital literacy and technology integration.

In light of these findings, the treatment for improving the effective integration of digital tools in language education must be multifaceted and collaborative. First, there's a pressing need for sustained investment in equitable digital infrastructure and device provision in educational settings, especially in underserved areas, involving government, private sectors, and local communities. Second, teacher education programs must be rigorously updated to include practical, hands-on training in leveraging digital tools for diverse learning contexts, equipping prospective and in-service teachers with both technological proficiency and adaptive pedagogical strategies. Third, educators should be encouraged to develop and utilize flexible, accessible, and engaging digital content that can function effectively even with limited connectivity, such as offline applications and blended learning materials. By addressing these foundational issues and empowering future educators with the necessary tools and training, we can bridge the gap between digital technology's immense potential and its realized impact on language learning, fostering a more inclusive and effective educational environment for all.

Furthermore, the call for comprehensive teacher training (Haafidz Akbar, Abang Sudarso, Widianti) directly addresses one of the most frequently cited challenges in the literature: the lack of digital literacy and pedagogical competence among educators (Ma'arif, 2023; Al-Malki & Al-Ghamdi, 2023). The prospective teachers' proactive stance on this issue suggests a recognition of the need for robust pre-service and in-service professional development programs that equip future educators with the skills to effectively integrate technology. Finally, their ideas about designing lightweight, accessible, and engaging content (Abang Sudarso, Widianti) align with principles of universal design for learning and instructional design best practices, aiming to ensure that digital resources are genuinely beneficial for a wide range of learners regardless of their technological context.

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