

Object drop in Dutch imperatives

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0. Introduction

In Dutch imperatives, not only the subject, but also the Direct Object (DO) can be left out (1a).¹ Furthermore, the DO may show up at the right edge of the clause (1b). The imperative verb moves into first position, leaving the particle *op* in its base position. I assume the right peripheral DO in (1b) is base generated in an adjoined position.

- (1) a Eet (die spruitjes) op!
eat_{IMP} (those sprouts) up_{PRT}
'Finish those sprouts!'
b Eet e_i op die spruitjes!
eat_{IMP} e up_{PRT} those sprouts

Dutch has two types of imperatives, the simple imperative as in (1) and the infinitival imperative as in (2). Like simple imperatives, infinitival imperatives allow an empty or right peripheral DO.

- (2) a (Die spruitjes) opeten!
(those sprouts) up-eat_{INF}
b e_i Opeten die spruitjes!
e up-eat_{INF} those sprouts

Beside a DO, infinitival imperatives allow a Prepositional Object (PrepO) to be left out or to be realized in a right peripheral position (3).

- (3) Niet over e_i nadenken (dat probleem)_i!
not PREP e PRT-think_{INF} (that problem)
'Forget about that problem!'

By contrast, an empty or right peripheral PrepO is excluded in (4a), the simple imperative variant of the infinitival imperative in (3). However, insertion of the particle *maar*, which weakens the directive force, makes (4a) perfect, cf. (4b).

- (4) a *Denk niet over e_i na (dat probleem)_i!
think_{IMP} not PREP e PRT (that problem)
b Denk *maar* niet over e_i na (dat probleem)_i!

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The phenomenon of object drop is not typical of imperatives. Both an empty DO or a an empty PrepO is possible in declaratives, but only if nothing precedes the verb, cf. (5a,b). The analysis for such V1 declaratives is that the empty element is a zero topic in SpecCP (Huang 1984). This explains why in Verb second declaratives and in interrogatives, a DO or a PrepO cannot be dropped and must be realized, for example as a resumptive pronoun within the clause in addition to its right peripheral paraphrase in (5c,d).

- (5) a e_i Heb ik e_i opgegeten (die spruitjes)_i.
 e have I e up-eaten (those sprouts)
 b e_i Heb ik over e_i nagedacht (dat probleem)_i.
 e have I PREP e PRT-thought (that problem)
 c Ik heb *(ze)_i opgegeten (die spruitjes)_i.
 I have (them) up-eaten (those sprouts)
 d Heb je *(ze)_i opgegeten (die spruitjes)_i?
 have you (them) up-eaten (those sprouts)

In this paper I will argue that object drop, in both types of imperatives and also in other constructions, is subject to the requirement that the dropped element is in the minimal domain of C, bound by a discourse operator. In infinitival imperatives and V1 declaratives, the dropped element is in SpecCP. The more restricted nature of object drop in simple imperatives reduces to their lack of a SpecCP position. Yet, object drop is possible by virtue of the absence of a Tense projection in these imperatives. Consequently, the DO is in the minimal domain of the chain headed by C in its case position; a PrepO can be moved into an A'-position in the minimal domain of C, created by the presence of *maar*.

The paper is organized as follows: first I will examine the distribution of imperative object drop; I will briefly discuss Den Dikken's (1992a) analysis; then I will argue against an analysis involving SpecCP for simple imperatives; and finally I will present an alternative analysis for object drop in simple imperatives.

1. Distribution

Prominence. The referent of the empty DO or PrepO is prominent in the discourse or physically present, as the overt right peripheral paraphrases in (6) indicate. The right peripheral DO cannot be an indefinite. Marginally, a definite article is acceptable, but preferably it contains a demonstrative determiner.

- (6) a Leg e_i neer *een bal_i / ?de bal_i / die bal_i!
 put_{IMP} e down_{PRT} a ball / the ball / that ball
 b e_i Neerleggen *een bal_i / ?de bal_i / die bal_i!
 e down_{PRT}-put_{INF} a ball / the ball / that ball

Island sensitivity. Imperative object drop obeys island constraints, illustrated in (7). The PrepO of the (locative) adjunct PP in (7a) cannot be dropped, but the PrepO of the selected PP in (7b) can.

- (7) a *Ga maar niet in e_i uit (die buurt)_i!
 go_{IMP} PRT not in_{PREP} e out_{PRT} (that district)
 *Niet in e_i uitgaan (die buurt)_i!
 not in_{PREP} e out-go_{INF} (that district)
 b Ga maar niet op e_i in (dat voorstel)_i!
 go_{IMP} PRT not on_{PREP} e in_{PRT} (that proposal)
 Niet op e_i ingaan (dat voorstel)_i!
 not on_{PREP} e in-go_{INF} (that proposal)

Clause boundedness. A DO or PrepO embedded in an infinitival Verb Raising complement can be left out and realized right peripherally (8a), but an empty DO or PrepO originating in an infinitival or finite extraposed clausal complement is excluded (8b,c).

- (8) a Beloof e_i uit te lezen (dat boek)_i!
 promise_{IMP} e PRT to read (that book)
 ‘Promise to finish reading that book!’
 Beloven niet over e_i na te denken (dat probleem)_i!
 promise_{INF} not PREP e PRT to think (that problem)
 b *Beloof om e_i uit te lezen (dat boek)_i!
 promise_{IMP} COMP e PRT to read (that book)
 *Beloven om niet over e_i na te denken (dat probleem)_i!
 promise_{INF} COMP not PREP e PRT to think (that problem)
 c *Beloof dat je e_i uit leest (dat boek)_i!
 promise_{IMP} that you e PRT read (that book)
 *Beloven dat je niet over e_i nadenkt (dat probleem)_i!
 promise_{INF} that you not PREP e PRT-think (that problem)

Overt subject. In simple imperatives, an empty DO is only possible if the subject is empty too (9a).² Here again, insertion of the particle *maar* makes (9b) perfect, cf. (4a,b). However, the co-occurrence of an overt subject and an empty PrepO remains impossible, despite insertion of *maar* (10).

² This restriction is not operative in infinitival imperatives since their subject is obligatorily empty. The right peripheral nominative 2nd person pronoun in *Opeten_{INF} jij_{sg} / jullie_{pl}!* is not a structural subject but a vocative as in *Eet_{IMP} op jij_{sg} / jullie_{pl}!* where the presence of the plural vocative does not induce plural agreement on the verb. Contrary to overt structural subjects, which do agree, these vocatives do not interact with object drop, cf. **Eten_{IMP/pl} jullie op!* versus *Eet_{IMP} op jullie!*.

- (9) a *Eet jij e_i op (die spruitjes)!
 eat_{IMP} you e up_{PRT} (those sprouts)
 b Eet jij e_i *maar* op (die spruitjes)!
 (10) *Denk jij *maar* niet over e_i na (dat probleem)!
 think_{IMP} you PRT not PREP e PRT (that problem)

Datives. Dative NP's can be left out in both types of imperatives, but they cannot be realized right peripherally, cf. (11).

- (11) a Geef e_i dat boek terug (*die man)_i!
 give_{IMP} e that book back (that man_{DAT})
 b Niet e_i dat boek teruggeven (*die man)_i!
 not e that book back-give_{INF} (that man)

In simple imperatives, the presence of a dative NP interacts with object drop: the DO cannot be left out or realized right peripherally if there is a dative NP, cf. (12a). Again, insertion of the particle *maar* makes the sentence perfect, cf. (12b). In infinitival imperatives, there is no interaction, cf. (12c).

- (12) a *Geef die man e_i terug (dat boek)_i!
 give_{IMP} that man_{DAT} e back (that book)
 b Geef die man *maar* e_i terug (dat boek)_i!
 c Niet die man e_i teruggeven (dat boek)_i!
 not that man_{DAT} e back-give_{INF} (that book)

2. Den Dikken's analysis

Den Dikken (1992a) analyzes object drop in Dutch imperatives as the result of empty operator movement to the A'-position of a Mood & Modality Phrase, licensed by imperative mood. Den Dikken takes the empty imperative subject to be licensed by the imperative verb. The contrast between simple imperatives and infinitival imperatives with respect to the (im)possibility of an empty PrepO follows from the Uniqueness of Licensing Principle (TULIP) which states that licensing relations are one-to-one relations (Hoekstra 1991). In Dutch, preposition stranding is only possible if the PrepO is extracted via the R-position in SpecPP (Van Riemsdijk 1978). According to Den Dikken, this R-position can be licensed by overt [+R] morphology or by the governing verb. In case of empty operator movement, only the second option is available.

Under the TULIP, the verb cannot license the R-position in simple imperatives, because it cannot license both the empty subject and the R-position for empty operator movement of the empty PrepO, cf. (13).

- (13) *Denk niet over e_i na (dat probleem)_i!
 think_{IMP} not PREP e PRT (that problem)

By contrast, the R-position can be licensed in infinitival imperatives. Following Kayne's (1991) analysis of Italian negative infinitival imperatives, Den Dikken assumes a complex structure with an empty modal verb governing the infinitival phrase. In (14), the empty modal licenses the imperative subject enabling the infinitival verb to license the R-position in accordance with the TULIP.

- (14) $\emptyset$ -SUB $\emptyset$ -modal niet over e_i nadenken (dat probleem)_i!
 not PREP e PRT-think_{INF} (that problem)

Den Dikken does not discuss the effect of an overt subject on object drop in simple imperatives, nor does he mention the neutralizing effect of *maar*. In the next sections, I will pursue an alternative analysis, accounting for these effects.

3. Against a SpecCP analysis for simple imperatives

Imperative object drop obeys island constraints and the referent of the empty DO or PrepO is prominent in the discourse or situational context. In this respect, imperatives pattern with zero topic V1 declaratives, cf. (15a,b).³

- (15) a * e_i Heb ik de opdracht gegeven ...
 e have_{IND} I the order given ...
 ... dat hij e_i terug brengt (dat boek)_i
 ... that he e back brings (that book)
 b e_i Ben ik vergeten e_i terug ...
 e have_{IND} I forgotten e back ...
 ... te brengen (dat boek_i / *een boek_i).
 ... to bring (that book / a book)

The standard analysis for the empty element in V1 declaratives involves empty operator movement to SpecCP, which position is accessible to the discourse. The island sensitivity of imperative object drop also argues in favor of a movement analysis. However, a unifying analysis might be problematic, since object drop is (relatively) unbounded in V1 declaratives, cf. (16), while it is (strictly) clause bounded in both infinitival and simple imperatives, recall the examples in (8).

³ Nor do V1 declaratives allow for a right peripheral dative NP: *Heb ik dat boek teruggegeven* (**die man*). ('Have I that book back-given that man.'). recall (11). Lack of space prevents me from addressing datives. I refer to Den Dikken (1992b:chapter 4) for an account for the ban on empty operator movement of indirect objects.

- (16) ? e_i Heb ik beloofd dat ik e_i uitlees.
 e have_{IND} I promised that I e PRT-read

A zero topic SpecCP analysis is even more problematic for simple imperatives, since object drop is far more restricted in these constructions than it is in infinitival imperatives and V1 declaratives. Furthermore, neither in V1 declaratives nor infinitival imperatives does the particle *maar* interact with object drop, cf. (17a,b).

- (17) a Heb ik (maar) niet op e gerekend.
 have_{IND} I (PRT) not on e counted
 b (Maar) niet op e rekenen!
 (PRT) not on e count_{INF}

The contrasts between simple and infinitival imperatives suggest that the options for empty arguments are different phenomena in the two imperative constructions. The correspondences and contrasts for both types of imperatives and V1 declaratives are summarized in (18).

(18)	Object Drop	Simple Imperatives	Infinitival Imperatives	V1 Declaratives
	Prominence	Y	Y	Y
	Island sensitivity	Y	Y	Y
	Clause boundedness	Y	Y	?N
	Prepositional Object	N	Y	Y
	Effect overt subject	Y	d.n.a.	N
	Effect <i>maar</i>	Y	N	N

A further argument against an analysis involving the specCP position for simple imperatives is that SpecCP never shows up overtly. In simple imperatives, the verb is in first position and fronting of any constituent is excluded, cf. (19) with a topicalized DO.⁴

- (19) *Die tas_i breng e_i naar boven!
 that bag bring_{IMP} e upstairs

A hanging topic, adjoined to CP and coindexed with a resumptive pronoun, is allowed to precede the verb, but a contrastive CP-adjoined topic coindexed with a

⁴ Dutch imperatives with an overt subject are indistinguishable from indicatives with VS-order, except for the verb *zijn* (be). The grammaticality of *Die tas, breng jij / je e_i naar boven!* with a realized subject suggests that this sentence be interpreted as an indicative with directive force, since the subject pronoun can be reduced to a weak form, which would be impossible if it were an imperative. See *Wees_{IMP} jij_{STRONG} / *je_{WEAK} maar aardig!* 'You be nice!'.

(20) a Die tas_i, breng 'm_i naar boven!
b *Die tas_i, die_i breng e_i naar boven!
c Die tas_i, breng e_i naar boven!

The question is whether the SpecCP position is available in infinitival imperatives, since a zero topic analysis is appealing because of their less restricted nature of object drop. Assuming Kayne's complex structure for infinitival imperatives, cf. (14), any fronted constituent might be an instance of scrambling:

- Yet, infinitival imperatives with a left dislocated element make things clear. A hanging topic, coindexed with a resumptive pronoun, is possible in infinitival imperatives, but the dislocated element preferably gets a contrastive interpretation with *daar* as a d-operator in SpecCP, cf. (22).

- Now we are left with the contrast with respect to the strict clause boundedness of object drop in infinitival imperatives versus the relative unboundedness of object drop in V1 declaratives, recall (16). However, the acceptability of V1 declaratives with a zero topic originating in a finite clausal complement degrades with tenses other than perfect Tense, cf. (23a) with present Tense, and even results in ungrammaticality if the sentence has illocutionary force, cf. (23b).

- ⁵ Cf. Van Haaften et al. (1983) for a discussion of Hanging Topic and Contrastive Left Dislocation.

- b *e_i Beloof ik dat ik e_i terugbreng.
 e promise I that I e back-bring

The clause boundedness of object drop in infinitival imperatives might be due to the illocutionary force of these constructions on a par with (23b).

4. Analysis: object drop in simple imperatives

I will now focus on object drop in simple imperatives. In section 4.1. I will give an account for the data in (9a) and (10), here repeated as (24) and (25). In 4.2. I will account for the neutralizing effect of the particle *maar*.

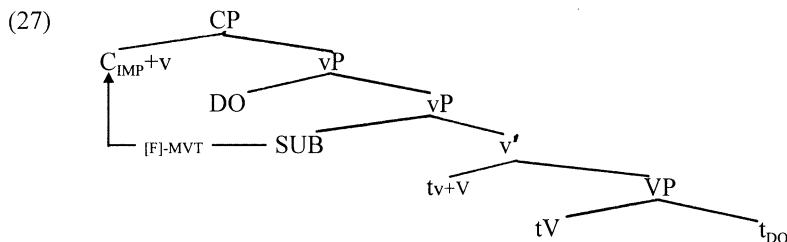
- (24) Eet (*jij) e_i op (die spruitjes)_i!
 eat_{IMP} (you) e up (those sprouts)
 (25) *Denk (jij) niet over e_i na (dat probleem)_i!
 think_{IMP} (you) not PREP e PRT (that problem)

The ungrammaticality of the co-occurrence of an overt subject and an empty DO in (24) and the ungrammaticality of the empty PrepO preceded by an overt or covert subject in (25) lead to the generalizations in (26).

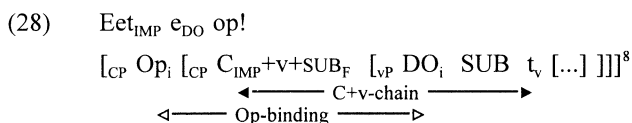
- (26) In simple imperatives,
 (i) an empty DO cannot be preceded by an overt subject
 (ii) an empty PrepO cannot be preceded by any subject

4.1 The effect of the subject. Imperatives typically refer to actions or states to be accomplished by the addressee(s) in the (near) future. Since imperatives do not show any tense differentiation, I assume there is no TenseP.⁶ We will see in a moment that the lack of Tense is crucial for the licensing of object drop in simple imperatives. C_{IMP}, where sentence type is determined, triggers overt movement of the verb. The empty imperative subject does not move overtly, but is licensed and identified at LF by feature movement to C_{IMP}, cf. Chomsky (1995). C_{IMP} restricts the reference of the subject to the addressee(s). Since there is no Tense, the subject cannot get nominative case in the canonical way. I assume that the subject has default case, which is nominative in Dutch. The DO moves overtly to the outer Spec of vP to check its case. These assumptions result in the structure (27) for a simple imperative with a transitive verb.

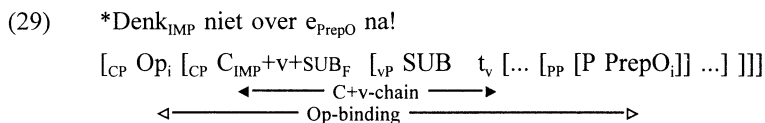
⁶ Cf. Beukema and Coopmans (1989) and Zanuttini (1990) for an analysis of imperatives based on this assumption. But see Rivero and Terzi (1995), among others, for a different view. My proposal supports the claim that imperatives lack a TP.



Empty elements must be recoverable. Since the referent of the empty DO or PrepO in imperatives is prominent in the discourse, I assume them to be bound by a discourse operator adjoined to CP. This binding, apparently, can only be realized if the bindee is close enough, i.e. if no other material intervenes. This is the case for the empty DO in (28) where the subject and the DO are equidistant to the discourse operator, because both are in the minimal domain of the chain $(C+v, t_v)$ created by movement of the verb to C_{IMP} .⁷



A PrepO, as opposed to a DO, is too far away to be bound by the discourse operator since the subject is closer to the adjoined operator, cf. (29).



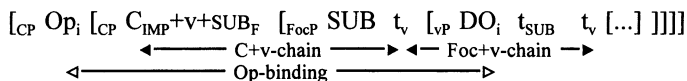
Strict locality is also violated in (30), where the subject is overt. Since the overt imperative subject has to be stressed and cannot be reduced to a weak form (cf. also fn. 4), I assume it is in a focus position, licensed by overt movement of the verb to the empty focus head. Consequently, when the verb moves to C_{IMP} , the overt subject and the empty DO are not in the same minimal domain, the subject being in a higher domain closer to the discourse operator than the DO.⁹

⁷ See Chomsky (1995:299) for the definition of minimal domain.

⁸ SUB_F = subject features at LF.

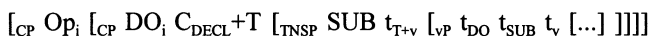
⁹ The ungrammaticality of the co-occurrence of a dative NP and an empty DO, recall (12a), can be accounted for in a similar way.

- (30) *Eet
- _{IMP}
- jij e
- _{DO}
- op!

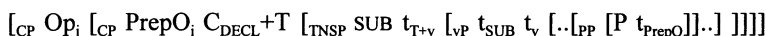


In a tensed clause, a situation arises which is comparable to (30). Instead of a FocP, there is a TP above vP. The verb moves to Tense and the subject is in SpecTP. Consequently, the subject ends up in a higher domain than the empty element and will be closer to the discourse operator, unless the empty element is moved to SpecCP. This is the case in V1 declaratives, such as (31) and (32).

- (31) e
- _i
- Eet
- _{IND}
- ik e
- _i
- op.
-
- e eat I e up



- (32) e
- _i
- Reken
- _{IND}
- ik op e
- _i
- .
-
- e count I on e



What the grammatical instances of object drop have in common, both in simple imperatives and zero topic V1 declaratives, is that the dropped element is in the minimal domain of the chain headed by C. Only then will there be no closer element, e.g. the subject, for the adjoined operator. The generalizations in (26) can be restated as (33).

- (33) A discourse bound empty element has to be in the minimal domain of the chain headed by C.

4.2 *The effect of MAAR.* Insertion of the particle *maar* neutralizes the effect of an intervening subject: compare the grammatical co-occurrence of an overt subject and an empty DO in (34) and the grammatical empty PrepO in (35a) with their ungrammatical counterparts (30) and (29), respectively. However, (35b) remains ungrammatical, despite insertion of *maar*.

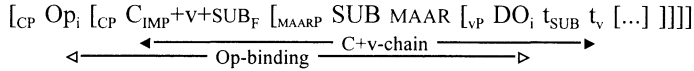
- (34) Eet jij
- maar*
- e
- _i
- op (die spruitjes)!
-
- eat
- _{IMP}
- you PRT e up (those sprouts)

- (35) a Denk
- maar*
- niet over e
- _i
- na (dat probleem)
- _i
- !
-
- b *Denk jij
- maar*
- niet over e
- _i
- na (dat probleem)
- _i
- !
-
- think
- _{IMP}
- you PRT not PREP e PRT (that problem)

I assume *maar* to be the head of a MAARPhrase above vP, its Spec an A'-position for an argument. Contrary to the empty headed FocusP I assumed for the overt

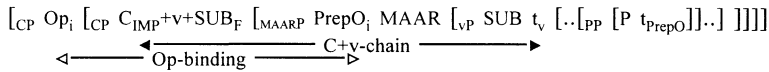
subject in (30) which attracts the verb, *MAAR* is skipped by the verb.¹⁰ Now the overt subject in (34) can be licensed in SpecMAAR. Since the verb moves to C in one step, the empty DO is in the minimal domain of the chain (C+v, t_v).¹¹

(34') Eet jij maar e op!



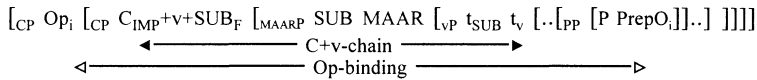
In (35a') the empty PrepO is moved to SpecMAAR, where it is in the minimal domain of the chain (C+v, t_v) and can be bound by the discourse operator.

(35') a Denk e_i maar niet over e_i na!

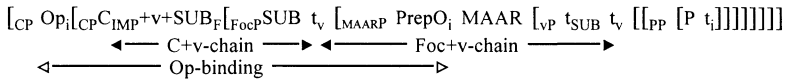


There is no grammatical derivation for (35b): either the overt subject is licensed in SpecMAAR as in (34), preventing the empty PrepO to reach the minimal domain of the chain headed by C, or the empty PrepO moves to SpecMAAR and the overt subject is licensed in SpecFocP as in (30) by movement of the verb through the empty Focus head, closing off SpecMAAR from the minimal domain of C:

(35') b *Denk [jij maar] niet over e_i na!



b *Denk jij [e_i maar] niet over e_i na!



¹⁰ Under the Last Resort Condition (Chomsky 1995) this head-skipping by the verb is forced since *MAAR* does not seem to have features which attract the verb. The particle *maar* may have several functions and meanings. In imperatives, it may focus the preceding element and/or weaken the directive force, turning the command into permission or advice. *Eet de spruitjes maar op!* can have the following readings: i. 'Finish the sprouts (and leave the rest)!'. ii. 'You are allowed to finish the sprouts.' iii. 'I suggest you finish the sprouts.'

¹¹ Recall also the neutralizing effect of *maar* on the presence of a dative, cf. (12b): the empty DO is in the minimal domain of C provided that the dative can be licensed in SpecMAAR.

5. Conclusion

Object drop, both in imperatives and other constructions, is possible if the referent of the dropped element is recoverable from the discourse, i.e. bound by an operator adjoined to CP. This binding is strictly local: the empty element has to be in the minimal domain of the chain headed by C.

In V1 declaratives and infinitival imperatives, the dropped element is moved to SpecCP to meet this requirement. In simple imperatives, there is no SpecCP position. By virtue of their lack of a Tense projection, the verb moves in one step to C. A DO is in the minimal domain of the chain (C+v, t_v) in its case position and can be dropped. An empty PrepO in its case position is too far away, but insertion of the particle *maar* creates an A'-position for the empty PrepO within the minimal domain of the chain headed by C. However, if there is an overt imperative subject, this subject passes through the specifier of an empty headed FocusP, which attracts the verb. This movement of the verb closes off the DO from the minimal domain of C. If the particle MAAR is present, the overt imperative subject can be licensed in the specifier of MAARP, also a focus position. Contrary to the empty focus head, MAAR is skipped by the verb, and the DO still is in the minimal domain of the chain headed by C and can be dropped. The particle MAAR does not neutralize the presence of an overt subject for a PrepO: if the overt subject is licensed by the empty focus head, the PrepO in SpecMAAR is closed off from the minimal domain of C; if the overt subject is licensed by MAAR, the PrepO has to stay downstairs. In both cases, the PrepO is not in the minimal domain of C and cannot be locally bound by the discourse operator.

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