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## THE ANALYSIS OF THE LEARNING STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY STUDENTS IN MUSIC CLASS IN TERMS OF SOME PSYCHOSOCIAL VARIABLES

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### Abstract

*The aim of the study was to bring up learning strategies in music used by 4th, 5th and 6th graders in primary schools in terms of some psychosocial variables. This study is important as it lights the way for the future of our education system and specially strategy teaching in music. The problems and their possible solutions faced during learning of the music were represented. The Sample of this study was composed of totally 200, 4th, 5th and 6th graders in two different primary schools from İzmir-Bornova. The method of the study was Survey model. The opinions of the students regarding their strategies of learning music were gathered by the triple Likert type scale called "Scale for Strategies of Learning Music" which was developed by Kocabaş (1998b). The data analysis was computed under SSPS 15.0 program by using T-test and one way variance. The reliability of the scale of this study was 0,83. As a result of this study, it was observed that gender; school types, the existence of musical education outsources, a person in the family having musical background or playing a musical instrument were effective on the opinions about the strategies followed and used by students during learning music.*

**Key words:** Music education, learning strategies, learning strategies in music.

## ÖĞRENCİLERİN KULLANDIĞI MÜZİĞİ ÖĞRENME STRATEJİLERİNİN BAZI PSİKOSOSYAL DEĞİŞKENLER BAKIMINDAN ANALİZİ

### Öz

*Bu araştırmanın amacı İlköğretim okullarında okumakta olan 4. ,5. ve 6. sınıf öğrencilerinin kullanmakta oldukları müziği öğrenme stratejilerini bazı değişkenler açısından ortaya koymaktır. Bu nedenle müzik öğretiminde strateji öğretimi için önemli görülmekte ve müzik eğitiminde karşılaşılan problemlere olası çözüm önerileri sunulmaktadır. Araştırmanın örneklemini İzmir-Bornova'daki devlet ve özel ilköğretim okullarında öğrenim görmekte olan toplam 200, 4., 5. ve 6. sınıf öğrencisi oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma yöntemi betimsel tarama modelidir. Öğrencilerin müziği öğrenme stratejilerine ilişkin görüşleri Kocabaş (1998b) tarafından geliştirilen, Likert tipi, "Müziği Öğrenme*

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*Stratejileri Ölçeği” ile elde edilmiştir. Araştırma verileri, SPSS 15.0 programında T-testi ve varyans analizi ile analiz edilmiştir. Ölçeğin güvenirliği 0,83’tir. Bu araştırmanın sonucu olarak, cinsiyet, okul türü, okul dışında müzik eğitimi alıp alma durumları, ailede müzik eğitimiyle ilgilenen kişilerin olup olmaması, bir çalgı çalıp çalmama durumlarına göre öğrencilerin kullandığı müziği öğrenme stratejilerinde anlamlı farklılıklar bulunmuştur.*

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Müzik Eğitimi, Öğrenme Stratejileri, Müziği Öğrenme Stratejileri.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It’s a well known fact that the individual (Senemoğlu, 2003: 28) begins to hear reacts to music at any moment during his/her life. Music has always been a part of human life at the most joyful moments as well as the most sorrowful, beginning from the first years of life until the very last moment in the form of just plain sound, songs, folk songs, requiem, invocation and begging. Rideout and Allan (2002) strongly emphasize that music education should definitely be a part of every school’s curriculum since music is a significant fact in children’s social and educational achievement as well as progress in mental development and success in life (www.menc.org). Along with this, music studies develop the students’ potentials for music, make them good listeners and improve their listening abilities. This gives them the opportunity to express themselves. It contributes to their entire educational life by enabling the students to learn about their own cultures in addition to other cultures (Kocabaş, 2004: 54-55).

Altınoluk (1990: 5-11) says music is the most natural and effective means of expression and education of human beings. Before birth, a baby is affected by music in the womb through the mother. After birth he sleeps with lullabies and in the early years of the childhood learns with nursery rhymes, games and numbering. In childhood and teenage years, he sets up relations with the environment and creates a common language with friends through music. Also during adulthood and old ages, a person cannot break away from music. In the simplest term, music fulfils the need for relaxation. This clearly shows that music-human relation continues throughout life. People make use of music in many fields. Some students prefer to study with music. Some people see music as a tool for entertainment. Some enjoy walking or doing exercises with music. Most children spend time playing accompanied with music. An individual interacts better with the environment with the help of music. People who want to express themselves through music compose their own music. Music, as a great educational tool, is beneficial for all levels of education starting from pre-school years. Music “softens the heart of the child and gives him the habit of resting”.

General music education aims at passing on the music culture to new generations during the basic education. The education for amateurs allows the

society to experience music widely. Professional music education aims at educating musicians specialize in their branches (Say, 2001: 20).

With the help of music education, children develop their ability to express themselves, movement and rhythmic skills, aesthetic sense, language skills, thinking and social skills. Çilden (2001: 3) argues that teachers evaluate the affect of music education on personality development, social and emotional development. Music plays an important role in fulfilling educational needs. Music as a part of formal and non-formal education around the World and in Turkey is considered to be "dimension of education" (Uçan, 1996: 31).

### **Learning Strategies**

According to the proponents of the Information Processing Model it is stressed that students should develop self-learning skills in the course of learning. The most important problem of the students in learning process is that they cannot overcome the difficulties they come across to in the course of learning. In order to overcome such difficulties, the students should be informed of the ways of learning. According to Weinstein and Mayer, a good education involves teaching students how to learn, remember and motivate themselves and how they can effectively control and direct their learning (Senemoğlu, 1997: 559).

Basically and in the most common form, the learning strategies can be classified as Repetition, Meaning, Organization, Monitoring Comprehension and Emotional Strategies (Kocabaş, 1998).

Especially for elementary school students, it is quite difficult for them to use learning strategies if they are not taught. The results of some researches show that the use of learning strategies during the teaching process improves academic achievement. Learning strategies should be taught to students starting from the first stage of primary education as it helps the students to learn by themselves and increase academic achievement.

Learning strategy is the way followed to perform learning, the operations a student uses to learn by himself, behaviours and thoughts of a student during the learning process, which is expected to affect his coding process. The purpose of learning strategy is to influence the student's affective state and help him select, organize and integrate new information (Weinstein, 1986: 315-326).

In educational institutions, teachers can give students the most effective assistance in learning strategies and study behaviours. However, it is not possible to suggest that teachers can provide help at a sufficient level. It is observed that teachers advise their students to study more and more instead of teaching them effective ways and techniques on learning and how to study. This attitude is far from meeting the needs of students when learning (Özer, 1993).

Achievements of students depend pretty much on their own awareness of how they learn and whether or not they can direct their learning. This reveals that students should be taught learning strategies starting from elementary school level.

### **Teaching of Learning Strategies**

As stated at the beginning, students need to be taught in the lessons about how they will learn as well as the course topics. Moreover, if the students know how they will learn, this also affects their learning of the course topics. Before they know how they can learn, students face difficulties in learning course topics. Therefore, for an effective learning and teaching, learning strategies should be taught to students besides the course topics in all steps of education from primary to higher education. It is essential that students should get information and acquire skills of learning strategies.

### **RELATED RESEARCH**

There are limited numbers of studies conducted in this area. One of them was about the use of learning strategies in music lessons, which was carried out by Kocabaş (1998a). The research concludes that the music learning strategies were used more frequently in the lessons where Cooperative Learning techniques were employed when cooperative and traditional music education were compared under experimental conditions (Kocabaş, 1998a; 1998b). Nevertheless, when class-teacher, pre-school teacher and music teacher trainees were compared in the study carried out by Kocabaş, the learning strategies employed by the teacher candidates were found to be higher (Kocabaş, 2003) among the classroom teacher candidates. Therefore, it can be stated that learning strategies used by instructors in the lessons affected the strategies students use.

With regard to other areas, The research, “Effect of Teaching Strategies on the Use of Learning Strategies”, accomplished by Karakoç and Şimşek (2004) was planned to examine whether or not the teaching strategies used by teachers have decisive effect on learning strategies and to determine the quality and level of this effect. The result of the research shows teaching techniques used by teachers affect learning strategies used by students in terms of type, quantity and the way of use.

The study, “Foreign Language Learning Strategies Used by Students: Methods, Findings and Instructional Issues” accomplished by Zhang (2003) is a meta-analysis study. Qualitative and quantitative studies between the years 1987 and 2002 were evaluated in order to determine the contribution of learning strategies to foreign language learning and to find their relationship by means of classroom activities. The research results stated that successful and unsuccessful students use different learning strategies in general. However, due to the differences of data collection tools, which strategy students use, more has not been revealed.

The research, “Learning Strategies, the Relationship between Learning Anxiety and Information Acquisition”, accomplished by Warr and Downing (2000) stated that the use of learning strategies greatly influences learning. In addition, learning anxiety affected learning negatively and the use of learning strategies which helps reduce learning anxiety were also included in the research results.

The research, “Effect of Teaching with Note-taking and Concept Maps in Elementary School Fifth Grade Science Lessons on Levels of Learning and Recall” accomplished by Arslan (2000) tried to determine the effect of learning strategies on the students’ level of learning and recall. The research results showed that knowledge, comprehension and recall levels of the experimental group students educated with note-taking and concept maps were higher compared to control group students.

The research, “Effect of Note-taking During Lessons On Learning and Recall Levels” accomplished by Oğuz (1999), involves 183 university students, and pre-test post-test control group model was used. As the result of the research, the difference between the learning levels of students who had note-taking training and students who followed the lesson without such training was found significant, in favour of experimental group.

The research, “Effect of Different Learning Strategies on Success, Attitude, Reading Comprehension and Learning Permanence” accomplished by Sömbül (1998), tried to determine to what extent learning strategies influence reading comprehension and learning permanence. As the research results, organization and meaning were found to be the most effective learning strategies in terms of student success and learning permanence. No significant difference was found between the strategies in terms of their effect on reading comprehension level. Among the attitudes towards learning strategies, the organizing strategy was revealed to provide the highest attitude level.

The research, “Effect of Learning Strategies Used by 10th Grade Students of Ankara Tevfik Fikret High School on Their Academic Achievements” accomplished by Talu (1997) tried to determine the learning strategies used by 10th grade students and whether or not their academic achievements change according to the learning techniques they use. Among the students of the sample group, 0,52 of them used meaning, 0,41 of them used repetition and 0,7 used organizing strategies. As the research results, the difference between the learning strategies students use and the average of their grades were found significant.

The research, “Effectiveness of the Learning Strategies Used by Fifth Grade Elementary School Students” accomplished by Erden and Demirel (1993) was investigated whether success about the text studied and time spent on it change according to the learning strategies used by fifth grade elementary school students

while studying. As the results of the research state, a meaningful relationship was found between the learning strategies used by students and their success.

As seen in the researches above, learning strategies have relations with many psycho-social variables and they themselves affect these variables. However, in Turkey there is very limited research on learning strategies in music education. In this case, learning about music itself that is known to have positive effects on learning in many different fields is a research topic that needs to be emphasized.

### **PROBLEM SENTENCE**

The problem of this research is constituted in the question, “Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly in music in terms of some socio-demographic characteristics?”

### **Sub-Problems**

Research questions have been given below.

1. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly in terms of gender?
2. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly in terms of age?
3. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to their grade levels?
4. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to the school type?
5. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to their music teacher?
6. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to whether they play an instrument or not?
7. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to whether they have had music education?
8. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to whether they have a family member who has music education or plays an instrument?

### **Limitations**

1. Research was limited to elementary schools in Bornova district.
2. Research was limited to elementary school 4th, 5th and 6th grade levels.
3. This research was applied in 4th, 5th, 6th grades of National Education Directorate elementary schools of middle and lower socio-economic status.

### **Assumptions**

1. It was assumed that the students had given sincere and accurate answers to the questionnaire.
2. The variables that cannot be controlled affect all the classes at the same rate.

### **METHOD**

The participants of the research included 4th, 5th and 6th grade students in Bornova district. They were 200; 4th, 5th and 6th grade students studying at 2 different elementary schools. When the gender distribution of the students was examined, the sample of the research consisted of 86 males and 114 females. Looking at the percentages, the students that make up the sample were 0,43 male and 0,57 female.

In the research, descriptive screening method was used in elementary schools and it was conducted in the music lessons at the schools.

### **Data Gathering Instruments**

The research data was collected with the Likert type scale named “*Scale for Strategies of Learning Music*” developed by Kocabaş (1998b) in order to determine the opinions of 4th, 5th, 6th grade elementary school students about the performance and necessity of music lessons. The scale consisted of two parts. The first part was personal information form and in the second part the level of music learning strategies was evaluated.

The personal information form consisted of questions about students’ individual characteristics, age, class, school type, the instructor of the music lessons, whether or not they play an instrument, whether or not they had music education other than the music education of skills development program at school, whether or not they have a family member who had music education or plays an instrument. These items were totally 35 with the tree-point Likert scale: “Yes (1)”, “Partly (2)”, “No (3)”. After the data was collected, it was analyzed with SPSS 15.0 program. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of the scale was 0.83.

### **FINDINGS AND COMMENTS**

The results have been given in tables and interpreted in line with the sub-problems of the research.

1. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly in terms of gender?

**Table 1.**T-test Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Gender Variable

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	T	P
Female	114	59.07	12.41	198	-3.18	.002
Male	86	64.67	12.21			

P&lt;0.05

As seen in Table 1, the strategies used by students for learning music vary significantly according to gender. The means of 114 female students is ( $\bar{X}$  =59.07) and the means of the student group consisted of 86 males is ( $\bar{X}$  =64.67). According to the T-test analyzing there were meaningful differences between means of the groups (P<0.05). It can be understood from the means that as the male students have higher means, it can be said that the male students use music learning strategies in a meaningful way more.

2. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly in terms of age?

**Table 2.** Student Distribution According to Age Variable

Age	n	%
Nine	3	1.5
Ten	48	24
Eleven	83	41.5
Twelve	49	24.5
Thirteen	17	8.5
Total	200	100

As seen in Table 2, according to age variable there are 3 students at the age of 9, 48 students at the age of 10, 83 students at the age of 11, 49 students at the age of 12 and 17 students at the age of 13. Total number of students is 200. The percentages are 2% for the age of 9, 24% for the age of 10, 42% for the age of 11, 25% for the age of 12 and 9% for the age of 13.

**Table 3.** Variance Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Age Variable

Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	P
Between Groups	52.523	46	1.142	1.453	0.049
Inside Groups	120.272	153	.786		
Total	172.795	199			

P&lt;0.05

As seen in Table 3, the strategies used by students for learning music vary significantly according to age variable. F(Sd= 46,153)=1.45, p<0.05. In other words, the use of strategy by students differs significantly by age.



3. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to their grade levels?

**Table 4.** Student Distribution According to Grade Level Variable

Grade	N	%
4	59	29.5
5	100	50
6	41	20.5
Total	200	100

When Table 4 is reviewed, it's observed that it consists of a total of 200 students; 59 of which are at 4<sup>th</sup>, 100 at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 41 students are at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. The percentages of the sample are 30 % at the 4<sup>th</sup>, 50 % at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 21% are at the 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Table 5.** Variance Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Class Variable

Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	P
Between Groups	30.255	46	.658	1.316	.111
Inside Groups	76.465	153	.500		
Total	106.720	199			

P>0.05

As seen in Table 5, class variable does not have a significant effect on the strategies used by students while learning music.  $F (Sd = 46,153) = 1.316 p>0.05$ . In other words, the ways they follow or the strategies they use while learning music does not constitute a meaningful difference according to their grade levels. Learning strategies shows similar characteristics according to class variable.

4. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to the school type?

**Table 6.** Distribution of Students According to School Type Variable and T-Test Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to School Type Variable

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	T	P
Public	100	59.36	10.06	198	-2.40	.017
Private	100	63.60	14.46			

P<0.05

As seen in Table 6, the research sample consisted of 200 elementary school students, 100 students study at private schools and 100 students study at public schools. Looking at the percentages of students that make up the sample, 50% of them study at private schools and 50% of them study at public schools. The means of students studying at private schools ( $\bar{X}=63.60$ ) is higher than the means of students studying at public schools ( $\bar{X}=59.36$ ). According to the t-test analysis

related to whether the difference in between is significant or not, strategies and ways students use while learning music varies significantly by type of school. In private schools, implementing physical hardware during music lessons, instrument variety, organizing musical events and students' participation, more careful course processing might be considered effective on use of strategies.

5. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to their music teacher?

**Table 7.** Variance Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Instructor in Music Lessons Variable

Variance Source	Sum of Squares	sd	Mean of Squares	F	P
Between Groups	.162	46	.004	.645	.957
Between Groups	.833	153	.005		
Total	.995	199			

P>0.05

It was understood the entire 200 students of the research sample have music teachers, not different branch teachers or class teachers, in their music lessons. All the students that make up the sample have branch teachers in their music lessons. As seen in Table 7, the usage of music learning strategies does not show a significant difference according to the instructor of music lessons.  $F(Sd=46,153)=.645$   $p>0.05$ . The strategies they use in learning music do not show a significant difference according to the teacher in the music lessons. It can be stated that music teachers are similar in terms of teacher qualifications.

6. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth graders vary significantly according to whether they play an instrument or not?

**Table 8.** T-test Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Students Play a Musical Instrument or Not Variable

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	T	P
Yes	128	65.50	14.14	198	-3.47	.001
No	72	59.21	11.08			

P<0.05

As seen in Table 8, the music learning strategies students use while learning music show significant difference according to whether or not they play a musical instrument variable [ $t(198)=-3.47$ ,  $p<.05$ ]. The strategies used by students who play an instrument while learning music ( $\bar{X}=65.50$ ) are higher than the means of students who do not play an instrument ( $\bar{X}=59.21$ ). This result might be interpreted as students use more strategies and their more senses function in a coordinated manner while they play an instrument; therefore it can be stated that playing an instrument increases the use of strategies.

7. Do the strategies fourth, fifth, sixth grade elementary school students follow or use while learning music vary significantly according to whether or not they had music education other than the music education of skills development program at school?

**Table 9.** T-test Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Students Had Music Education Outside School or Not Variable

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	T	P	
Realization	Yes	28	62.26	8.04	198	-2.19	.029
	No	172	56.67	13.05			

P<0.05

As seen in Table 9, the strategies students use while learning music vary significantly according to whether or not they had music education outside school or not [t (198)=-2.19, p<.05]. The strategies used by the students who had music education outside school ( $\bar{X}$ =62.26), are higher than the means of the ones who did not ( $\bar{X}$ =56.67). This can be interpreted as the support of outside music education, to take additional lectures or courses, have a positive impact on the strategies students use to learn music, also in terms of diversification.

8. Do the strategies of fourth, fifth, sixth grade elementary school students follow or use while learning music vary significantly according to whether or not they have a family member who had music education or plays an instrument?

**Table 10.** T-test Analysis of Music Learning Strategies According to Whether or Not Students Have a Family Member Who Had Musical Education or Plays an Instrument Variable

Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	sd	T	P
Yes	112	60.86	12.70	198	-.776	.439
No	88	62.26	12.50			

P>0.05

As seen in Table 10, the sample of the research consists of 200 students in total, 112 students have a family member who had music education or plays and instrument and 88 students do not have a family member who had music education or plays an instrument. When looked at the percentages, 56% of the students that make up the sample have a family member who had musical education or plays an instrument and 44% of the students do not. Means of the students who have family members interested in music is ( $\bar{X}$ =60.86). However, means of students who do not have family members interested in music is ( $\bar{X}$ =62.26). Apparently, means of students who do not have a family member interested in music is higher. The students who do not have a family member interested in music might be applying

the instructions given by teachers during lessons due to their higher personal curiosity for learning. According to the t-test analysis regarding whether the difference is significant or not, the strategies students use while learning music does not generate a significant difference according to they have or do not have a family member who had music education or they have or do not have a family member who play a musical instrument variable.

## **CONCLUSION**

According to the results of this study; conclusions were given below.

1. The strategies students use while learning music lessons show a significant difference due to gender, in favour of male students.
2. The strategies used while learning in music lessons show a significant difference according to age variable.
3. The strategies students use while learning music lessons does not show a significant difference according to the grade level variable.
4. The strategies students use while learning music shows a significant difference according to school type, in favour of private schools.
5. The strategies students use while learning music does not show a significant difference according to the instructor in music lessons variable.
6. The strategies students use while learning music show a significant difference according to whether or not they play a musical instrument, in favour of the ones that do.
7. The strategies students use while learning music show significant difference according to the variable of whether or not they had music education outside, in favour of the ones who did.
8. The strategies students use while learning music does not show a significant difference according to the variable of whether or not they have a family member who had musical education or plays a musical instrument.

## **DISCUSSION**

The main subject of this study, learning strategies, is a combination of cognitive, affective, and self regulated strategies at many various differing levels (Tarman, 2006). To be able to teach these strategies are closely related to a lot of strategies that are directly and indirectly used in the stages of the acquisition, storing and employment of the knowledge (Dansereau, 1985). Boyle and Radocy (1987: 86) classifies musical attitudes as musical performance, musical reading and writing, musical listening /ear training and the cognitive musical behaviours. Although there are many studies about categorizing some learning strategies as important, the studies about the validity and reliability of the scales are not

numerous. Music course in primary education was designed according to the constructivist approach in 2007 and was grounded on four main areas: listening-playing-singing, music knowledge, musical creativity and music culture (MEB, 2007: 6). However, music classes in primary education do not encompass such strategies as how to teach music, how to remember music, how to motivate oneself, and how to regulate self learning. Music education is a process where children acquire such basic skills and strategies about music and they implement such Weinstein and Mayer (1986) believe that a good education requires the teachers to enlighten students in the areas such as how to remember, how to motivate oneself and how to regulate self learning and how to pace it (Senemoğlu, 1997: 559). The cooperative learning groups have higher and better results regarding the use of music learning strategies, which emphasizes the importance of the methods used by the music teachers. (Kocabaş, 1998a; 1998b). This study shows some similar results with the other studies conducted by Zhang (2003) and Kocabaş (2003) where hardworking and slow learners employ different strategies, boys, students in private schools, students playing instruments have higher scores (Talu, 1997; Warr and Downing, 2000). Students' learning differences and use of strategies change depending upon their levels.

As is shown above, learning strategies are an important topic where cognitive, affective and metacognitive strategies are closely interrelated. Music education should be oriented towards developing such strategies.

## **SUGGESTIONS**

The following suggestions were developed according to the results of this research.

1. Students should be provided, directly or in a redirected manner, the teaching of music learning strategies they can use in music lessons.
2. Students should be provided the use of a common musical instrument during music lessons under the guidance of music teachers.
3. Students should be provided the appropriate environment and conditions during music lessons to be educated on playing a musical instrument.
4. In the music, class and pre-school teacher training sections of the education faculties, teacher candidates should be taught music learning strategies.
5. Music education in public schools should be improved to the level of private schools.

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