

LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION OF COLLOQUIAL JAVANESE VARIETIES *

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Javanese (Western Malayo-Polynesian, Austronesian) is the 10th largest language in the world with over 80 million speakers in Indonesia. Despite such a high speaker population, Javanese is both understudied and underdocumented—and even more so in light of its numerous highly diverse dialects. This paper is a call towards more in-depth language documentation of colloquial Javanese varieties, and presents our preliminary work towards a comprehensive reference grammar on two Javanese dialects, as spoken in Semarang, Central Java, and Malang, East Java, Indonesia. We first set the stage for the need and importance of language documentation of colloquial Javanese varieties, and then give details to our ongoing documentation efforts culminating in a reference grammar.

1. A need for language documentation in Javanese

We argue that the need for current language documentation in Javanese is crucial for two main reasons. First, Javanese boasts a multitude of dialects that exhibit different properties not only in the lexicon, phonology, and morphology, but also in syntax and semantics. A glimpse of these different dialects is illustrated in the map in Figure 1 below. Despite this linguistic diversity, previous research has concentrated mainly on Standard Javanese, which is spoken in the courtly centers of Yogyakarta and Surakarta. Secondly, Javanese is increasingly vulnerable to language endangerment despite its large speaker numbers. Recent studies report overall differences in language choice, domains of use, and social attitudes towards Javanese as well as that an entire sub-system of the language, *Krama* ‘High Javanese’, is in fact endangered.

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Figure 1. Languages and dialects spoken on Java, Madura and Bali, Indonesia

1.1 Focus of previous linguistic research on Standard Javanese

Javanese has benefitted from a long history of linguistic research due to the Dutch colonial interest. The Netherlands colonized Indonesia for over 300 years from the beginning of the 17th century until 1948. Although over 700 languages are spoken in present-day Indonesia, during the Dutch colonization, language study focused primarily on Javanese since it was recognized as the most important language. This applied in terms of practicality—because a large majority of the population lived in Java; in terms of economics—since the sultanate originally controlled a vast majority of what is currently Indonesia (Brown 2003; Taylor 2003); and in scientific terms—because Javanese was believed to be the most complicated and highly developed of the indigenous languages (Kuitenbrouwer 2013: 43).

The truly scientific study of Javanese grammar began with T. Roorda's 1847 Javanese-Dutch dictionary, followed in 1855 with a bilingual Javanese grammar guidebook, and continued in the 19th century with works by H. N. Van der Tuuk, Th. W. Juynboll, and J. J. Meinsma. In all cases, the language that was described was that of the courtly centers of Surakarta (Solo), and secondarily Yogyakarta. The tradition was carried on with Dutch and other European scholars in the 20th century, such as J. G. de Casparis, C. C. Berg, L-C. Damais, and P. J. Zoetmulder. Their approach, however, was philological, and their focus was largely on Old Javanese as opposed to Modern Javanese. In this respect, one must mention Poerbatjaraka as the most significant local scholar of Old Javanese. It is not until the middle of the 20th century, when the Dutch scholar E.M. Uhlenbeck advanced the study of modern Javanese again, from a more modern structural linguistic methodology. However, the focus of his work was almost exclusively the standard variety.

More recently, the main scholarly attention has continued the focus on Standard Javanese. Concerning grammars, Javanese has a number available in different languages, including in French (Favre 1866); Dutch (Kiliaan 1919; Prijohoetomo 1937; Arps et al. 2000); Indonesian (e.g. Suharno 1982; Sudaryanto 1991; Wedhawati et al. 2006); and

English (Horne 1961; Keeler 1984; Robson 2014); among others. Many of these grammars leave implicit what dialect is the focus of study, which indicates the presumptive dominance of the standard variety. One notable exception is Wedhawati et al. (2006), which includes a short section of 12 pages on ‘Javanese Dialects’, briefly discussing aspects of Standard Javanese, Banyumas Javanese, and East Javanese (cf. Figure 1 above). Recent Javanese-English dictionaries have also focused on Standard Javanese, such as Robson and Wibisono (2002) and Nuraini (2014). Within sociolinguistics, well-known studies such as Errington (1985, 1988, 1998) on Standard Javanese constitute as the most widely cited.

It is important to note here a difference between *standard* and *standardized*. What we refer to as the standard variety of Javanese is an idealized version of the language encoded in various references, such as grammars and dictionaries, both bilingual and monolingual. It represents the ‘prestige variety’, in that some version of it is often invoked by speakers, and popularly judged to be *better*, more desirable, or simply *lebih halus* ‘more refined’ than other varieties. It is not, however, a standardized language, such as in the way that Indonesian, the national language, is. That is, there is no official language planning board that regularizes, systematizes, and publishes principles and rules for Javanese. As such, there are no official spelling guidelines. As well, there is no official dictionary that is published or standardized language material that is used throughout the entire Javanese speaking educational system. All of these, by contrast, exist for Indonesian. The national language further puts significant negative pressure on all local languages, including Javanese. The former head of the *Badan Bahasa*, the Indonesian Language Board, Anton M. Moeliono, goes so far as to claim “... knowledge of Indonesian is not an automatic affair; it has to be planned, promoted, and monitored at all levels of education, and all domains of its use” (Moeliono 1994: 196). This is to the detriment of Javanese and other local languages, which we further discuss in the following section.

Beyond the focus of linguistic research on Standard Javanese, the *Pusat Perkembangan dan Pembangunan Bahasa* (PPPB; Language Development Board, formerly the *Pusat Bahasa*) produced a number of publications on Javanese varieties from the late 1970s to the early 1990s through projects specific to various locations. For instance, research projects begun in 1976 included West Java, East Java, and DIY (*Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta* ‘Special District of Yogyakarta’). Later on, projects begun in 1983 included areas of Central Java. However, the goals of PPPB are prescriptive rather than descriptive: in the foreword of Soemarto et al. (1986), the then head of PPPB, Anton M. Moeliono writes: “*Tujuan akhir [...] pemakaian bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa daerah dengan baik dan benar untuk berbagai tujuan oleh lapisan masyarakat bahasa Indonesia.*”¹ Outside of this period, and as noted above, the PPPB and its predecessors also explicitly promoted Indonesian as opposed to local languages. Since those projects ended, additional publications through Indonesian publishers on Javanese varieties have rarely appeared.

Beyond projects through the PPPB, more recent linguistic studies on colloquial varieties of Javanese include Smith-Hefner (1983) and Connors (2008) on Tengger Javanese; Wolff (1983, 1997) and Cole et al. (2008) on Peranakan Javanese; Ewing (2005) on Cirebon Javanese; Goebel (2002, 2005, 2010) on code choice with locals and non-locals in Semarang; Hoogervorst (2010) on Surabayan Javanese; Connors (2010) on Banyumasan Javanese; and Vander Klok (2012, 2015) on Paciran Javanese. Additionally, although not

¹ ‘The ultimate goal... is the use of correct and proper Indonesian and local languages for various purposes by all layers of Indonesian society.’ Author’s translation.

yet publically available, Connors et al. have created a Javanese Dialectal database based on recordings of naturalistic speech from across Java.² Given the number and diversity of Javanese dialects, these studies represent a relatively small but growing number of projects on colloquial varieties of Javanese. Nevertheless, it is crucial that documentation continues to expand to other dialects, as well as research towards major works on colloquial varieties, beyond Standard Javanese. This development will be crucial, especially in light of the vulnerability of Javanese to endangerment, which we turn to now.

1.2 Javanese is increasingly vulnerable to language endangerment

Cohn and Ravindranath (2014) observe that recent sociolinguistic and ethnolinguistic studies, mostly focused in and around Yogyakarta, show that Javanese is highly vulnerable to language endangerment—this constitutes the second main reason for a call for language documentation of colloquial varieties of Javanese.

This shift towards endangerment is documented in Kurniasih (2006), which shows both class and gender differences in language choices of Yogyakarta Javanese children and adult caregivers. Kurniasih observes that girls are leading the shift towards Indonesian across the board, and that the middle class tends to use more Indonesian than the working class. Specifically, 57% of middle class girls use only Indonesian (compared to 9% of middle class boys). The working class also shows a division based on gender, with girls tending to use more Indonesian along with High Javanese and Low Javanese than boys. With respect to caregivers, the data is particularly striking with mothers: while 95% of middle class mothers report that they use both Javanese (High and Low) and Indonesian in general, 88% of these mothers chose to speak only Indonesian to their children (compared with 98% and 39% of middle class fathers).

In addition to class and gender differences in language choice, Smith-Hefner (2009) also observes differences in social attitudes with respect to linguistic choices. In particular, women are found to gravitate towards Indonesian because it is more “participatory” and “relaxed”. Such attitudes define their future ambitions: with a future husband or children, Indonesian is preferred because it is viewed as a language that allows for closer relationships (*akrab*) (Smith-Hefner 2009: 69)

This aspect brings to light the emerging role of Indonesian: because Indonesian represents an unmarked alternative in social exchanges and because bilingualism (or trilingualism) with Indonesian is widespread among young Javanese speakers, asymmetric speech level exchanges in Javanese are able to be successfully avoided. The asymmetric exchange refers to the use of different speech levels in Javanese between the speaker and the hearer, which reflect social status, age, closeness, politeness (among other aspects). Javanese is well-known for its elaborate speech level system, with *Ngoko* ‘Low Javanese’, *Madya* ‘Mid Javanese’, *Krama* ‘High Javanese’ as well as a set of honorific and humble vocabulary (e.g., Errington 1985, 1988). Thus, a school-aged child might speak *Krama* to a grandmother that is not family, and the grandmother would respond in *Ngoko*. Instead of this asymmetric exchange, Indonesian could be employed.

² Available upon request from the authors; soon to be available from the Max Planck Digital Library.

The changing landscape with Javanese speech levels also raises the question of whether the current stability of Javanese-Indonesian bilingualism with younger speakers will continue to be stable. Already within Javanese itself as spoken in Semarang, Central Java, Goebel (2002, 2005, 2010) finds that exchanges are not as robustly anchored in Javanese compared to Indonesian. Further, symmetric exchanges were found to be more common instead of asymmetric ones, and linked to intimacy: *Ngoko* is used between those who frequently interacted (even ethnic non-Javanese), but *Krama* between Javanese speakers who rarely interacted, and Indonesian inter-ethnically. This shift in the use of Javanese speech levels pertains to a general shift away from *Krama*, reported in Errington (1998), Poedjosoedarmo (2006). In fact, *Krama* is identified as an endangered linguistic sub-system itself (Wohlgemuth and Köpl 2005), highlighting that specific losses are already happening in Javanese.

Lewis et al. (2013) estimate the current Javanese speaker population at 84.3 million. One could push the above-mentioned reports aside on the view that Javanese speakers are so numerous, compared to a highly endangered language like Aleut, where there are only 150 fluent speakers. However, the number of speakers is tangential when it comes to language endangerment: such language vulnerability or loss can happen independently of the size of the speaker population (e.g., Florey 2005). In extreme cases, it can only take one generation of non-transfer for a language to become endangered (Crystal 2000). Further, it is most often not simply the factor of size that plays a role in a shift towards language endangerment: Himmelmann (2010: 46) discusses that numerous factors come together in what is called a “endangerment scenario”. In the case of Javanese, increased speaker mobility and increased economic status (Wohlgemuth and Köpl 2005) as well as pressures from both the national language Indonesian and the global language English (Zentz 2012) have all been identified as contributing factors towards the vulnerability of Javanese.

While these studies are focused in and around Yogyakarta, these language shifts could potentially equally apply across all Javanese dialects, which would indicate large-scale endangerment. We provide preliminary examples from our own fieldwork in the village of Paciran, East Java, Indonesia. These results are based on 13 interviews (5 male, 8 female; age range 21-70 years old), conducted in Javanese in 2011.

First, a difference in age is observed. In answer to the question, *What language(s) do you use daily?* (*Bendinane, sampeyan gawe boso opo?*), only speakers under the age of 35 tend to state Indonesian as one of their daily languages. In answer to the question, *Can you speak another language other than Javanese?* (*Iso boso seng lio, sak liane boso Jawa?*), the eldest speaker (over 60) reports that she cannot speak any other language, while the middle-aged speakers (35-50 years old) all indicated Indonesian. Interestingly, two of the speakers initially responded *Gak iso* ‘I cannot’ to this question, but then after a pause or the interviewer’s prompting, responded with Indonesian (*Bahasa Indonesia*). This kind of response may suggest that some speakers are not aware of the extent that they are bilingual, or use Indonesian in their daily life—at least for the two speakers that responded in this manner, based on fieldwork observations, they are fluent in Indonesian.

With respect to the results of the recent studies mentioned above on Standard Javanese, responses from the interviews conducted in Paciran also revealed parallel

findings. Concerning the use of *Krama* ‘High Javanese’, because Paciran is geographically situated away from the courtly centers of Yogyakarta and Surakarta (about 10 hours north by car), as well as from Surabaya, a large city center about 3 hours to the east, *Krama* is not as prevalent compared to villages next to Yogyakarta or Surakarta. Note, however, that *Krama* is certainly present in Paciran, due to the historical diffusion of the speech registers across Java (e.g., Smith-Hefner 1989). Second, Paciran is a fishing village (*desa*) of around 5000 people composed of three hamlets (*dusun*; Paciran, Jetak, and Penanjan); thus because of the general economic status of the overall population of Paciran, it is less likely that people will speak *Krama* to the extent that people in the courtly centres do. Nevertheless, there are some differences that Paciran Javanese speakers have noticed, as illustrated by the responses in (1a), from a male speaker, age 31; (1b) from a female speaker, age 26; and (1c) from a female speaker, age 37.

- (1) *Opo wong Paciran kabeh iso boso jawa kromo toh gak?*
 ‘Can people in Paciran speak *Krama*?’
- a. *Gak, cuma yo kromo pasaran. Coro pasaran iku tunggale, opo jengene, “iyo, gak”, “injih, mboten”. [...] Alus temenan, jarang seng iso. Luweh akeh seng umure luweh tuwo.*
 ‘No, only ‘market’ *Krama*. The market example, what’s-it-called, are ‘yes, no’ (*injih, mboten* in *Krama*). For truly refined Javanese, it is rare that there are people than can speak it. There are more people who can speak it who are older.’
- b. *Menurutku nek wong paciran iso boso jowo alus sekitar 30%. iku... iku ae... wong seng guru-guru.... wong tuwo-tuwo. Terus wong seng biasa merantau... lungo nek daerah liyo seng iso boso jowo alus. Nek wong kene dewe... jarang iso boso jowo alus.*
 ‘In my opinion, around 30% of the people in Paciran can speak ‘refined’ Javanese. That’s it. Teachers, elderly, and regular people who have traveled to different areas can speak refined Javanese. As for those who live only here [Paciran], it is rare that they can speak refined Javanese.’
- c. *Mungkin yo sebagian kecil tapi nek wong umuran tiga puluh.... telong puloh limo menduwur.... iku sebagian besar, he eh.*
 ‘Perhaps just small number, but for those who are older than 30... 35 years, it’s a large number of people, yes.’

From these examples, a common thread is the opinion that the ability to speak *Krama*, the high speech level of Javanese, is linked to age: more older speakers can speak *Krama* than younger.

Concerning social attitudes towards linguistic choices as well as the effect of widespread bilingualism with Indonesian, we also see parallel results in Paciran. Indonesian is viewed as the unmarked alternative when language difficulties arise, such as when knowledge of *Krama* is lacking and Javanese social interactions would normally require the use of *Krama*. This view is highlighted in the responses in (2a) from a female

speaker, age 36; and (2b), a male speaker, age 38, with exchanges with guests or outsiders. In (2c), although this female speaker, age 26, has lived in Paciran for most of her life, she was born in Tuban, a larger city about 0.5 hours east, and identifies more with Tuban. Her response reveals that she is not comfortable speaking *Ngoko Javanese* symmetrically with people in Paciran.

(2) *Waktu kapan bae sampeyan gawe boso iku?*

‘When do you use that/those language(s)?’

- a. *Kalau ada tamu bicarannya...cakapnya bahasa Indonesia*
“When there are guests, [I] speak...use Indonesian.”
- b. *Apan ketemu jawane yo wes jowo biasa ngono bae. Cumak apan bahasa indonesia, ketemu bongso majik-majikane, ngono be..... [...] bongso boss e.... boss iwak...iwak tok... roto-roto kan wong bali.*
“When meeting Javanese, [I] just use Javanese. When it’s only Indonesian, it’s with employers; that’s how it is. With the boss, the fish boss only. Most of them are Balinese.”
- c. *Wong kene [...] boso jowo alus patek ngerti, dadi kudu ngomong nganggo boso indonesia. [...] Nek nganggo boso jowo biasa, menurutku kurang sopan....bedo lek nganggo boso jowo halus.....Boso jowo kromo iku sopan, tapi wong kene kurang ngerti...dadi kudu nganggo boso indonesia.*
“As for the people here, High Javanese is not really known/understood, so I have to use Indonesian. If I were to use everyday Javanese [ngoko], in my opinion it’s less polite; it’s different than using refined Javanese. Krama is polite, but people here know it less, so I have to use Indonesian.”

These examples from Paciran Javanese, a colloquial East Javanese dialect, align with the results from Standard Javanese, with age differences in what language speakers self-identify as speaking/use daily, a general shift away from Krama, and social attitudes concerning language use. Overall, we observe strong pressures from Indonesian, the national language, even in a rural setting.

2. Language documentation of Malang and Semarang Javanese: Towards a reference grammar

Given both the facts that most language documentation has focused on Standard Javanese and that Javanese overall is increasingly vulnerable to language endangerment, with a unique linguistic subsystem (*the speech level system*) already endangered, we are targeting two non-standard Javanese dialects for documentation; namely those spoken in Malang, East Java and Semarang, Central Java. The two main outcomes of this ongoing documentation is a comprehensive reference grammar as well as an open-access, online language database comprised of recordings of conversational Javanese, transcribed, translated, and morphologically glossed.

Semarang is the capital and largest city of Central Java, with around 1.5 million people. Malang is the second largest city in East Java with a population of about 800,000.³ The selection of Semarang and Malang allows us to highlight two distinct varieties that are both understudied and underdocumented which are nevertheless sufficiently central to their respective regions to allow for a general characterization of the language.

The data on Malang Javanese comes from fieldwork conducted by Thomas Connors variously from 2001 through 2010, with two years residence in Kabupaten Malang in 2002-2003. Recordings from this past fieldwork are transcribed and glossed in FileMakerPro (Connors and Sugiarto 2011). The data on Semarang Javanese is currently being collected by Jozina Vander Kloek. The methodologies involve recordings of a range speech types from informal to formal, including naturalistic conversation, narratives, myths, or speeches. These recordings will be transcribed in ELAN, and all data will be appropriately digitally archived with PARADISEC. Additional methods in language documentation include elicitation, which involve asking grammatical or felicity judgments of set of sentences from a native Javanese speaker.

To give a brief outline of the reference grammar on Malang and Semarang Javanese, the grammar will include traditional components of phonology (inventory and processes), morphology (inflectional/derivational processes), and syntax (clause types; noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, and verb phrases), but will also include sections on semantics (tense, aspect, and modal markers, negation) and pragmatics (discourse). We will also devote sections to grammatical characteristics specific to Javanese such as the role of reduplication across categories. Finally, we will incorporate a section on texts in order to highlight distinctions between Malang and Semarang varieties as well as to give complete examples of discourse phenomena. This last section will take the examples from our database of transcribed Malang and Semarang Javanese recordings.

To illustrate some aspects of diversity between these two varieties that have been observed from our documentation, consider markers that indicate aspect, modality, and negation in Table 1 below. There are a number of lexical differences, such as *meh* in Semarang and *bakal* in Malang Javanese to indicate prospective aspect (or potential future tense); *arep* in Semarang and *kudu* in Malang to indicate ‘want’ (possibly as a main verb); and *entuk* in Semarang and *oleh* in Malang to indicate deontic possibility. Note also that *arep* and *entuk* in Semarang Javanese are similar to Standard Javanese, but *meh* is not used in Standard Javanese. Different lexical items are also used for predicative negation: Semarang speakers use *ora* while Malang speakers mainly employ *gak*.

Semantic variation is also observed with modal markers. In Semarang Javanese, the marker *arep* allows for volitional as well as ‘want’ interpretations, while in Malang Javanese *arep* lexically specifies for a (volitional) future interpretation. The ‘want’ reading is taken up in this dialect by *kudu*, a modal marker that is also compatible with circumstantial and deontic necessity.

One phonological difference is shown with the circumstantial possibility modal, concerning the final vowel where Semarang Javanese uses the low back unrounded [ɑ], while Malang Javanese uses the mid back rounded [o].

³ The capital of East Java, Surabaya, was not selected due to the large number of Madurese speakers, the increasing number of monolingual Indonesian speakers, and the number of non-Javanese speaking Indonesians – all of which leads to a very interesting but less clear language ecology (cf. Hoogervorst 2010).

Table 1. Lexical, semantic, and phonological differences in Semarang and Malang Javanese in aspect, modality and negation

	Aspect, modality, and negation	Semarang Javanese	Malang Javanese
A S P E C T	<i>already</i>	<i>wis</i>	<i>wis</i>
	EXPERIENTIAL PERFECTIVE	<i>tau</i>	<i>tau</i>
	PROGRESSIVE	<i>lagek; nembe</i>	<i>(la)gek</i>
	PROSPECTIVE	<i>meh</i>	<i>bakal</i>
	VOLITIONAL (FUTURE)	<i>arep</i>	<i>arep</i>
M O D A L I T Y	<i>want</i> (auxiliary)	<i>arep</i>	<i>kudu</i>
	<i>have to</i> (circumstantial necessity)	<i>kudu</i>	<i>kudu</i>
	<i>must</i> (deontic necessity)	<i>kudu</i>	<i>kudu</i>
	<i>must</i> (epistemic necessity)	<i>mesti</i>	<i>mesti</i>
	<i>can</i> (circumstantial possibility)	<i>isa</i>	<i>iso</i>
	<i>allow</i> (deontic possibility)	<i>entuk</i>	<i>oleh</i>
	<i>may</i> (epistemic possibility)	<i>mungkin</i>	<i>mungkin</i>
	NEGATION	<i>ora</i>	<i>gak</i>

3. Conclusion

The past several decades have seen a dramatic shift in recognizing the importance of documenting and supporting languages that are undergoing significant shifts and facing ever greater pressures due to the effects of post-colonialism and globalization. Lead by organizations such as the Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL) program sponsored by the National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Endowment for Humanities (NEH); the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) sponsored by the Hans Rausing Fund; the Endangered Language Fund (ELF); the Jacobs Research Fund (JRF)—to name but a few, documentation of small, highly endangered languages has progressed like never before. These efforts are commendable, and need to be encouraged and promoted.

In addition, however, attention must also be given to languages which, at first glance, do not seem to be endangered or are not facing the same existential threat. First, in the history of language loss, there have been many cases of smaller languages succumbing to majority languages, generally through political pressure but also through economic pressure. As we have noted, these changes can come about quite quickly. Second, and perhaps more importantly, language maintenance programs can be more successful than language revitalization programs where a community of speakers currently exists and can be supported. This requires proper documentation of larger languages that are threatened in different ways than languages with much smaller numbers of speakers. In many cases, there is also a significant amount of dialect and other variation that exists among communities with many speakers that has not yet been documented.

Javanese represents just such a case. While there are perhaps 85 million native speakers which places the language as a whole in ranks of the most widely spoken languages on the planet, it is also facing increasing pressures from the national language of Indonesian, and in some cases even from English. Part of the reason for this is political

and economic, but interestingly, there are unique pragmalinguistic features of Javanese that apply additional social pressures encouraging language shift. The asymmetric nature of the speech level system means that the relative social status of interlocutors is encoded in every speech act of Javanese. Coupled with widespread bilingualism which provides a viable alternative, language shift can proceed rapidly. Ravindranath and Cohn (2014) demonstrate that this is already happening with Javanese, at least in areas in and around the courtly centres of Yogyakarta and Surakarta.

In fact, of the 50 languages with the largest number of native speakers, Javanese is by far the largest that has no official status at either the national or regional level (in fact, it is only the non-Indonesian languages of Indonesia and non-Mandarin languages of China that are on that list and have no official status) (cf. ethnologue.org). Given its unique linguistic properties, unique position among Austronesian languages and the recorded history of Austronesian languages, and its largely unexplored dialect diversity, Javanese—as a large language facing significant maintenance challenges—warrants documentation and description.

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