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ARTICLE

## Navigating New Tongues: The Cultural, Educational, and Linguistic Hurdles of Algerians Learning German

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## Abstract

The mastery of a foreign language is closely intertwined with the cultural, educational, and linguistic context of the learner. In Algeria, learning German presents a distinct set of challenges that merit detailed investigation. This study explores the multifaceted barriers encountered by Algerians in their efforts to acquire proficiency in German. It highlights how linguistic distance, cultural unfamiliarity, and institutional limitations shape the learning experience, thereby enriching the discourse on second language acquisition in diverse sociocultural environments.

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## Introduction

The acquisition of the German language by Algerian learners is shaped by several structural and contextual hurdles. Among the primary challenges is the **linguistic distance** between Arabic—the native language of most Algerians—and German. While Arabic is a Semitic language with unique phonetic, grammatical, and syntactic structures, German belongs to the Germanic language family. These linguistic disparities often result in **phonological confusion**, as students struggle with unfamiliar sounds and intonations. Furthermore, German grammar—with its system of four cases, gendered nouns, and irregular verb conjugations—can be daunting for learners accustomed to a different grammatical paradigm. This often leads to reduced confidence and diminished motivation among learners.

## Challenges to German Language Acquisition

Beyond grammatical difficulties, **cultural understanding** plays a critical role in language acquisition. The German language is rich with cultural references and idiomatic expressions that may be obscure or meaningless to Algerian learners. The absence of a shared cultural frame of reference can lead to **misinterpretation of meanings**, particularly in colloquial or context-sensitive expressions. This cultural gap is compounded by limited opportunities for **authentic exposure** to German culture within Algeria, where most instructional materials are derived from text-

books or generic online platforms. Such materials often fail to convey the **depth and nuance** of the lived German experience, limiting students' ability to engage meaningfully with the language.

### *Educational Infrastructure and Instructional Limitations*

The **educational landscape** in Algeria presents additional obstacles. While interest in learning German has grown—partly due to migration aspirations and academic prospects in German-speaking countries—access to **qualified language instructors** remains limited. Many institutions lack teachers with high-level proficiency in German, which can lead to **pedagogical inefficiency** and a reliance on outdated, grammar-translation methods. Moreover, **infrastructural constraints**, such as the absence of language labs, conversation clubs, and digital learning tools, hinder the development of **communicative competence**. In many cases, students are left to memorize vocabulary and grammar rules without practicing real-life communication, which reduces motivation and the perceived relevance of language learning.

German language education in Algeria is shaped by a complex interplay of **linguistic, cultural, and institutional challenges**. The linguistic gap between Arabic and German, combined with limited cultural immersion and under-resourced educational settings, hampers effective language acquisition. Addressing these challenges requires not only pedagogical reforms—such as training qualified instructors and integrating multimedia tools—but also fostering intercultural exchange programs and immersion opportunities that bring learners closer to authentic German linguistic and cultural contexts.

Disparity between their language learning expectations and the reality they find.

Understanding these intertwined linguistic, cultural and educational challenges faced by the Algerians in German learning is essential not only for linguists and educators but also for political leaders who intend to improve language acquisition frameworks. Therefore, this research work aims to address the central question: what unique challenges the Algerians face by learning the German language? When exploring these complexities, the study strives to contribute to the broader discourse on language learning and shed light on potential pedagogical strategies that can be used to mitigate these obstacles. The linguistic landscape of Algeria is characterized by a complex interaction of languages which reflects the historical, cultural and social dynamics of the country. Arabic and Berber (Tamazight) are recognized as the official languages of Algeria, Arabic serving as a dominant language of government, media and education. The historical context of Arabization after the independence of French colonial domination in 1962 has considerably strengthened the predominance of Arabic in various spheres of Algerian life, while Berber languages enjoy growing recognition and status, in particular since the constitutional amendment in 2016 granting an official status of Tamazight (Khemis and Messaoudi, 2020).

French, although the more colonial language, retains a powerful symbolic and practical presence in Algeria as a language of education, trade and cultural exchange. It is estimated that around 33% of Algerians speak French fluently, the language often serving as French lingua in urban areas and among educated populations. The persistence of French more complicates the linguistic environment by creating a trilingual context in which Arabic, Berber and French coexist. This multilingualism can lead to a code switch and a significant linguistic overlap, where individuals navigate fluidly (Benhamou and Ziani, 2021).

The domination of Arabic and, to a lesser extent, Berber, as well as the historical heritage of French, presents unique challenges for Algerians learning foreign languages, like German. In the education system, the teaching of foreign languages often takes place in a framework which prioritizes Arabic and French, leading to an insufficient concentration on other languages. Consequently, learners may not receive an adequate exposure to German, whether through formal education or practical use, thus limiting their opportunities to develop skills (Khemis and Messaoudi, 2020).

In addition, the linguistic distance between Arabic and German poses a substantial obstacle. The contrast of phonetics, syntax and vocabulary can be intimidating for learners whose main languages - mainly Arab - clearly loved the Germanic family. Arab phonology, characterized by a set of sounds and graphics that are not present in Ger-

man, can lead to pronunciation challenges which affect both spoken and written communication. While learners try to transfer the phonetic structures from Arabic to German, they can encounter important obstacles that hinder their ability to articulate and effectively understand the new language (Khemis and Messaoudi, 2020).

### 1. Cultural barriers:

Cultural barriers are also binding with this linguistic landscape, influencing the motivations and attitudes of learners towards learning German. The perception of foreign languages in Algeria is deeply linked to historical stories and post-colonial identities. While knowledge of foreign languages - in particular English and French - is often perceived as a precious asset for employment and social mobility, German may not have the same weight in public discourse. Consequently, the absence of a strong cultural impulse or a societal approval for learning German could contribute to lower levels of motivation among learners (Zarif, 2021).

In summary, the linguistic environment in Algeria, dominated by Arabic and Berber, alongside the significant presence of French, creates a multifaceted context for language learning. The inherent challenges resulting from linguistic differences, associated with cultural perceptions and educational structures, collectively hinder the acquisition by Algerians of foreign languages like the German. These challenges finally have an impact not only on skill levels, but also the motivation and commitment of learners in the language learning process, presenting an important obstacle to the mastery of the German language. One of the most important cultural obstacles having an impact on the ability of Algerians to learn the German language is dominant societal attitudes towards foreign languages. In Algeria, the sociolinguistic landscape is characterized by a complexity rooted in the coexistence of Arabic, Berber and French, the latter being a vestige of the colonial past. This historical context has shaped a linguistic hierarchy where French is often perceived as a language of prestige and opportunity, eclipsing the importance of learning from other foreign languages such as German. Social preference for French, which is commonly used in higher education and professional fields, limits the perceived need to acquire competence in German, thus reducing motivation among learners (Hamane, 2024).

In addition, the colonial history of Algeria considerably informs contemporary attitudes towards foreign languages and cultures. The heritage of French colonization has led to certain ambivalence towards other European languages, including German. While French remains a dominant language, learners can bring with them a skepticism rooted towards the languages associated with previous colonial powers, in particular given the complex dynamics of power, identity and self-perception that colonial history instills. This ambivalence manifests itself as a reluctance to engage deeply with the German language, because learners can unconsciously associate it with cultural domination or political hegemony which conflicts with their sense of national identity (Hamane, 2024).

### 2. The consideration of the German language in Algeria:

The perception of Germany as an important destination for migration and education introduces another layer to the cultural challenges to which Algerians learn German. Although the attraction of the solid education system of Germany and the perceived economic opportunities is convincing, it also creates a paradox for potential learners. The German language is often considered as a migration tool rather than an opportunity for cultural exchange or personal enrichment. This utilitarian approach can lead learners to focus solely on the acquisition of the language to meet the specific requirements of immigration or academic, thus stripping the learning experience of intrinsic motivation and pleasure (Hamane, 2024).

In addition, societal stigmatization associated with the non-mastery of German can contribute to a culture of anxiety and apprehension surrounding language learning. Many Algerians may feel insufficient or dissuaded to seek linguistic resources or participate in linguistic training due to the fear of not meeting perceived societal expectations, exacerbating the feelings of isolation and discouragement. This social pressure can be particularly pronounced in communities where linguistic success is assimilated to social mobility and acceptance, leading to an environment where learners hesitate to take risks associated with the learning process.

In addition, social accounts surrounding migration often emphasizes integration, which is often linked to language mastery. This strengthens the idea that learning German is not only an educational company but also a prerequisite for social acceptance and success in a new context. Consequently, the cultural challenge becomes double; Algerians must sail in the complexities of a foreign language while facing the societal implications of their efforts to integrate into a foreign culture (Hamane, 2024).

In summary, the cultural barriers faced by Algerians in the learning of German are multifaceted and deeply rooted in historical, societal and perceptual dimensions. The complexities surrounding societal attitudes towards foreign languages, persistent shadows of colonial history and ambivalence linked to migration and education have a significant impact on motivation and access to the resources necessary for mastery of the German language. These cultural factors must be recognized and treated in order to facilitate more effective language learning frameworks adapted to the Algerian context. In the context of language acquisition, educational barriers significantly hinder the effectiveness of German language learning among Algerian students. Lethéf and Hadi (2023) provide a comprehensive analysis of the educational environment in Algeria, emphasizing the crucial role that qualified instructors, language programs and teaching materials play in determining student proficiency levels.

An identified primary challenge is the scarcity of qualified language teachers. In Algeria, many educators may have general language education training, but they lack specialized training in German teaching as a foreign language. This deficiency can lead to inadequate instructional techniques and limited exposure to contemporary pedagogical methodologies that facilitate effective language learning. Consequently, students may not receive the necessary methodological rigor to develop proficiency, essential to master complex linguistic structures and achieve German communicative competence.

In addition, the inadequacy of language programs exacerbates the challenges faced by students. According to Lethéf and Hadi (2023), existing curricula usually prioritize routine memorization in relation to interactive and communicative approaches. This can result in a learning experience that does not involve students or cultivate their interest in language, leading to lack of motivation. In addition, the standardization of language programs tends to ignore the specific needs and interests of Algerian students, which may stifle their enthusiasm for learning German and prevent overall progress in language acquisition.

In addition to these challenges, the availability and quality of pedagogical materials are critical components that influence the results of language learning. Lethéf and Hadi (2023) point out that many Algerian schools suffer from the lack of access to updated instructional resources and various adapted to the learning of German languages. As a result, students usually depend on outdated books that do not reflect the current linguistic and cultural nuances of the German -language world. These materials can no longer provide authentic contexts for the use of languages, thus limiting students to exposure to real -life applications. The impact of inappropriate resources is even more aggravated by the fact that many Algerian students are not exposed to German outside the classroom, leaving them with minimal opportunities to practice or get involved with significant language.

In addition, teachers usually face restrictions on technology integration into their language instruction due to insufficient support from educational authorities and lack of access to digital resources. In an increasingly globalized world, educational institutions should recognize the importance of technology as a tool for language learning, facilitating a live language immersion through multimedia resources, on -line platforms and interactive exercises. Limited integration of such resources can lead to a monotonous and disgusting learning experience, which can further contribute to students; disinterest and low proficiency levels.

In short, educational barriers in Algeria - characterized by the lack of qualified teachers, inadequate and outdated language programs and insufficient pedagogical materials - are deeply intertwined with the general challenges faced by students in the acquisition of proficiency in the German language. As highlighted by Lethéf and Hadi (2023), approaching these barriers is vital to improve language learning results and promote a more conducive environment for Algerians students achieve higher levels of German motivation and proficiency., The socio-economic panorama in Algeria plays a crucial role in modeling the access of individuals to German linguistic education and,

consequently, their competence and levels of motivation. Access limited to technology, in particular in rural areas, significantly hinders the ability to engage with different language learning resources, exacerbating the existing disparities within educational paintings. The digital gap in Algeria creates a scenario in which the students of urban centers benefit from various online platforms and languages of learning languages, while those in less rich rural environments often find it hard to find adequate materials or instructions. This gap is often accentuated by the infrastructure challenges that rural areas must face, such as unreliable electricity and insufficient internet connectivity, which in the end limit the availability of modern essential pedagogical resources for an effective acquisition of language.

In addition, economic constraints play an instrumental role in determining the educational opportunities available for Algerian students. The increases in the costs associated with linguistic education, including university fees for private language institutes and the purchase of additional learning materials, represent significant obstacles for low-income families. As highlighted by Le Roux (2017), these economic disparities do not simply affect education; they have profound socio-linguistic implications, influencing the general motivation of students to pursue foreign linguistic competence. In the context of German, which is less commonly taught compared to more familiar foreign languages such as French or English, the lack of German language courses at affordable prices puts students in a remarkable disadvantage.

### 3. Understanding the socio-economic position:

The interaction between socio-economic status and motivation for the learning of languages in Algeria can be further understood through the lens of the hierarchy of Maslow's needs, in which it is unlikely that people pursue higher order objectives, such as mastering a foreign language, when the basic needs remain dissatisfied. For many Algerians, the limited financial resources force them to give priority to immediate economic concerns for long-term educational aspirations. As a result, aspirations to learn German can be obscured by the urgent need to guarantee employment and improve their socio-economic position. This dynamic can lead to a reduced investment in learning languages, since students can perceive it as an expenditure that is not essential if weighed against immediate survival needs.

In addition, the implications of socio-economic factors extend beyond individual students to understand wider social perceptions of language learning. In Algeria, where the French has historically covered a dominant position due to its colonial past and the British have increased in popularity in recent years, the perceived utility of German learning can be lower, in particular among the economically disadvantaged communities. These perceptions can negatively affect the motivation and lead to a cultural devaluation of the German language, marking it as a less practicable option for students who aim to improve their employability in a competitive labor market.

In summary, the socio-economic factors affecting the learning of languages in Algeria specifically influence access to resources, educational opportunities and motivational levels among students. As the Roux clarifies (2017), these economic disparities manifest themselves not only in academic competence, but also shape the wider socio-linguistic panorama, affecting social attitudes towards learning languages in general. The barriers imposed by economic constraints and limited access to technology, in particular in rural areas, represent a significant challenge in the pursuit of German linguistic education, contributing to a cycle of socio-linguistic inequality that must be systematically dealt with. Algeria's multilingual context has a unique set of challenges for German-language students, in which the simultaneous acquisition of multiple languages can significantly complicate the levels of student proficiency and motivation. Algeria is characterized by its linguistic diversity; Arabic, Berber (Tamazight) and French comprise the three dominant languages in their sociolinguistic landscape. The presence of these languages creates a complex cognitive environment that affects students; ability to acquire additional languages such as German.

Recent research by Lethet and Hadi (2023) highlights the phenomenon of cognitive overload, which occurs when students are flooded with various language systems. In their study, the authors identify that, in a multilingual context, students are usually required to reconcile varied linguistic rules, idioms and phonetic systems. This can lead to cognitive fatigue, which can decrease students; ability to internalize new grammatical structures or German vocabu-

lary. For example, the intricate grammatical gender system present in German may be particularly frightening for Algerian students, who may already have difficulties with Arab dialects that display different gender applications, while sailing simultaneously by the complexities of French noun classifications.

In addition, the language transfer process, where students apply rules of their native languages to new language learning, may result in interference during the acquisition of German. Given that Arab and French have totally different phonetic and syntactic systems compared to Germans, students can find themselves depending on family structures of these languages, leading to erroneous concepts and errors in the use of German syntax and pronunciation. For example, Arab morphology, characterized by its system of roots and patterns, contrasts with the flexed nature of German, which requires a longer understanding of the structure of sentences and the terminations of cases. Consequently, the application of Arab morphological rules to German can generate more confusion and make successful communication difficult.

Alternatively, variability in language exposure and inconsistent emphasis on German language instruction in Algeria exacerbates these challenges. The educational curriculum in Algeria traditionally prioritizes French as a second language over German, leading to disparities in quality and instructional resources available to German students. Numerous studies, including those referenced by Lethéf and Hadi, suggest that this curricular imbalance reinforces the negative perceptions of the importance of learning German among students. Consequently, students may display reduced motivation to get involved with language, further impacting their proficiency levels. When students perceive themselves as inherently disadvantaged in their language learning journey, this can create a negative feedback cycle, reducing their confidence and willingness to practice.

In addition, sociocultural dynamics around language learning should also be examined. In Algeria, the prestige associated with French, a remnant of colonial history, can overshadow the relevance of German in academic and professional contexts. Students can prioritize French proficiency, seeing it as more immediately beneficial for their social and economic development. This prioritization, together with the cognitive overload of multiple language management, can promote reluctance to dedicate the time and energy needed to develop German proficiency.

In short, the multifaceted challenges faced by German Algerian students, resulting from the cognitive overload presented by multilingualism, educational disparities and sociocultural perceptions culminate in significant barriers to achieve language proficiency. The findings of Lethéf and Hadi (2023) offer critical information about cognitive phenomena at stake, highlighting the need for personalized instructional strategies that address these complexities in the Algerian educational context. By examining the multifaceted challenges faced by Algerians in their search for the acquisition of German languages, it is essential to address the significant impact of gender inequalities, as illustrated by Hamane (2024). Cultural expectations and social norms play a fundamental role in the formation of language learning trajectories for male and female apprentices, usually resulting in disparate access to educational resources and varied motivation levels that influence proficiency results.

Cultural constructions in Algeria traditionally attribute different gender-based roles, influencing educational opportunities available to women. Historically, the patriarchal structure in Algerian society promoted a bias to prioritize male education, particularly in perceived academic domains as male or intellectually demanding, such as foreign language studies. Hamane (2024) is elucidating that these gender educational disparities are aggravated by family expectations, where women usually face pressure to meet household papers rather than engaging in academic or professional ventures. This can lead to reduced opportunities for female students to access the formal language instruction or immersion experiences needed to achieve German proficiency.

In addition, the intersection of gender and cultural expectations extends to the domain of motivation. Hamane (2024) suggests that German apprentices can find a psychological barrier, whereby social perceptions of femininity are linked to compliance and modesty, thus inhibiting their assertiveness and engagement in language learning contexts. On the other hand, male students can be socially reinforced to take risks and pursue ambitious language goals, resulting in greater motivation. This dynamic is worrying because it systematically harms women, leading to the slightest self-esteem and decrease in the agency in their language learning activities.



This gender disparity also manifests itself in the accessibility of resources, particularly in the educational scenario. Female students may depend more on public educational environments, which usually suffer from infrastructure deficits compared to those attended by male students. Access to qualified German language instructors, extracurricular programs and technological aid becomes limited to women. Hamane (2024) points out that the lack of female models and proficient German mentors can demotivate even more aspiring women, creating a sub-representation cycle in advanced language studies.

In addition, the linguistic barriers inherent in German learning have unique challenges that can differentially affect male and female students. The complexity of German grammar and syntax requires sustained engagement and practice, elements that can be overloaded with competing household responsibilities faced by many women. Hamane (2024) notes that while male students often have more leisure time to devote themselves to their studies; female apprentices often juggle with various roles, which can limit their language exposure and, consequently, their proficiency levels.

In short, the exploitation of gender inequalities in the context of language learning in Algeria reveals a complex interaction between cultural norms, educational access and personal motivation. As Hamane (2024) articulates, addressing these inequalities is crucial to promoting an inclusive environment, where male and female students receive equitable opportunities and encouragement in the search to master the German language. Understanding these dynamics is fundamental for stakeholders and stakeholders aimed at developing targeted strategies that improve the results of language learning for all Algerians, regardless of sex., Improving German learning among Algerians requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the unique challenges that students face, including cultural, educational and linguistic barriers. As described in the above sections, these barriers can hinder not only competition but also the motivation to commit to the language. Therefore, the implementation of effective strategies to improve the education of the German language in Algeria is imperative.

A critical area for reform is the Algerian education system, which can benefit from incorporating more contemporary pedagogical practices that emphasize communicative competence. Traditional methods that focus largely on the memorization of grammar and vocabulary have proven inadequate to promote real world linguistic skills. Educational reforms could introduce immersive learning environments where students are encouraged to participate in authentic conversations, roles of roles and interactive language activities that reflect real-life situations in German-speaking contexts. These practices could help reduce the psychological distance that students often experience due to the strangeness of the language, as Sahraoui (2020) highlights.

In addition, the establishment of community-based language programs can provide additional support for Algerian students. These programs could take advantage of the experience of the native speakers of Germans living in Algeria or incorporate virtual associations with German-speaking countries. English-speaking language exchange platforms have a way to foster connections that can vigorize language enthusiasm. Involving local communities can also cultivate a support environment where the German language is valued, promoting its use outside formal educational contexts. The integration of cultural activities, such as film projections, culinary workshops and festivals that celebrate German culture, in these programs they can serve to close the cultural gap, which allows students to connect with the broader cultural context of the language.

In addition, increasing access to online resources is essential to overcome the educational limitations faced by Algerians in German learning. The proliferation of digital educational platforms and language learning applications is transforming the language education panorama. It is essential to develop and select online content specifically adapted to the Algerian context that explains both cultural nuances and the specific challenges that students face. For example, the localized versions of Popular Language Learning software, such as Duolingo or Babbel, could offer Algerian dialects of Arabic and Berber within their interfaces to facilitate better understanding and connection between students. In addition, the introduction of free or subsidized access to online language courses could open doors for a larger demographic group, including those in remote areas that may not have access to formal educational institutions.

Finally, strategic associations with German educational institutions can promote academic exchanges and capacity construction initiatives for teachers and students equally. These alliances can provide training for Algerian educators, equipping them with innovative teaching methodologies and resources approved by German educational standards. These collaboration efforts would not only improve the quality of German language education, but would also be used to strengthen ties between Algeria and Germany, thus promoting long-term investment in language education.

In essence, the successful implementation of these strategies implies a holistic approach that recognizes the interaction of cultural, educational and linguistic factors that affect Algerian students. By focusing on institutional reform, community participation and digital access, Algeria can pave the way to improve competition and the greatest motivation to learn the German language. Addressing these dimensions together can contribute significantly to create a robust framework that supports the acquisition of language significantly, as recommended by Sahraoui (2020). The exploration of the unique challenges faced by Algerians in the learning of the German language reveals a multifaceted landscape marked by cultural, educational and linguistic barriers. The Algerian context, characterized by its rich history and its diverse cultural heritage, significantly influences the levels of motivation and competence of students. One of the main cultural challenges is the historical perception of foreign languages, where French, as a remnant of colonial influence, is often prioritized over others, including German. This cultural bias can lead to a diminished inclination towards the acquisition of German, which is often considered less relevant within the local context.

Educational barriers also play a fundamental role in the configuration of language acquisition. The existing educational infrastructure in Algeria tends to focus predominantly on French and Arabic, with insufficient resources dedicated to the teaching of the German. Many language programs lack qualified instructors, appropriate teaching materials and practical opportunities for immersive experiences. As a result, students often remain with a theoretical understanding of language without the necessary applications to reinforce their competence. In addition, the inconsistency of the instruction of the German language in educational institutions exacerbates the challenge, creating disparities in linguistic competence among Algerian students.

From a linguistic perspective, the unique characteristics of the German language have additional obstacles to Algerian students. The grammatical complexity of the German, including its case system and gender nouns, can be discouraging for students whose native languages do not have similar structures. For example, the distinction between the spoken and written forms of German, together with the phonetic complexities of the pronunciation, can hinder effective communication and understanding. Such linguistic challenges can contribute to a decrease in motivation, since students may feel overwhelmed or discouraged by their initial struggles to achieve fluency.

Addressing these barriers is essential to improve the competition and motivation of Algerians who learn German. The educational reforms aimed at integrating German into the curriculum together with French and Arabic could promote a more balanced linguistic environment. The training programs of teachers, who focus on developing specific pedagogical skills for German, along with the creation of committed teaching materials, would considerably benefit students. In addition, establishing associations with German-speaking countries could facilitate cultural exchanges, allowing Algerian students to experience immersion and practice in authentic contexts.

#### 4. Conclusion:

Future research should consider longitudinal studies to evaluate the impact of specific interventions on the competition of Algerian students in German. In addition, the qualitative research that explores the personal experiences of the students, together with the quantitative evaluations of the language competence, could provide invaluable information on the effectiveness of the different educational strategies. This research could also inform the linguistic policy in Algeria, emphasizing the need for a more inclusive approach that recognizes the value of multilingualism within the educational system.



Therefore, although the challenges faced by Algerians in the learning of the German language are substantial, they are not insurmountable. When addressing cultural, educational and linguistic barriers that inhibit language acquisition, interested parties can create a more support framework that improves the motivation and domain of students. This effort not only benefits the people in question, but also contributes to promoting a broader cultural understanding and international cooperation.

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