

# An ethnographic insight into the causal factors of degrading English education in Ethiopia, Libya, and India

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**Abstract:** This paper is a holistic account of seven-year long ethnographic observations of EFL learners in *Ethiopia, Libya, and India* (E-L-I) where I found that the learners, despite acquiring linguistic competence for several years, are unable to convert their competence into performance. Given this, the study aimed at exploring the causes of learners' failure in mastering English language in particular and poor quality of English education in Ethiopia, Libya, and India in general. To attain this objective, three data gathering tools: participant observation, unstructured interview, and document analysis were used; whereas, descriptive statistics and analytic induction were used to analyze the data respectively. As part of findings, the paper discusses thirty causal factors attributable to degrading English Education in E-L-I.

**Keywords:** Impediments (Causal Factors), E-L-I (Ethiopia, Libya, India), Learning, Mastering, Vulnerable Factors

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## 1. Introduction

Metaphorically, the way oxygen is important to survive, so is English to survive in today's competitive world [1]. Coming of age from its tag of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) to ESL (English as a Second Language) and ESL to EGL (English as a Global Language), English has become the most preferred lingua-franca globally as the number of non-native speakers of English is outnumbering the native speakers of the language [2]. No language, ancient or modern, can be compared with English in respect of its international status [3]. Since English is used more as a tool of success and progress in every walk of life, many countries have already recognized English as an official language. Despite the growing popularity and importance of English the status of English in E-L-I (Ethiopia, Libya, and India) is highly unsatisfactory. To have better insight of the status of English in E-L-I, the paper presents an overview of the contemporary ELT literature as follows.

### 1.1. An Overview of Literature Review

In Ethiopian context, the formal English education had begun by 1908 and the teachers of the first three or four decades were entirely expatriates from India, the UK, and the USA until locally trained Ethiopians substituted them [4]. In 1994, a constitutional amendment was made in which regional languages were allowed to be used as the medium

of instruction in Ethiopia. As a result, almost all the states showed their affinity towards mother tongue education which resulted into a trilingual education consisting of mother tongue + Amharic + English [5]. This amendment marked the welcoming sign of multilingual education in Ethiopia, but the proliferation of mother-tongue education has caused more harm than good to the end users (students) because mother tongues took the driver's seat and English went on the backseat [6]. Although Ethiopia's need for English language is more intensified as globalization is the agenda of the time, the 'depressing picture of English language teaching' never improved [7]. English is foreign to most, and is known and used only by a small minority of educated, economic, and/or political elite in Ethiopia [5]. In current scenario, English is being used paradoxically as a foreign language rather than second language because average Ethiopian believes that English can never be a crutch to survive in Ethiopian society [8].

In Libyan context, English is in a terribly dismal state. English, which is the key second language taught in Libya, is popular with some but for the majority of the population it is unpopular [9]. There are hardly 1% English speakers with improvising knowledge of English. Not to say of learning or mastering, average Libyan learner is in pre-learning phase or they are learning 'learning' or 'how to learn?'. In Libya, there are three remarkable phases of ELT: 1943 to 1986, 1987 to 1992, and Post 1992 [10]. The first phase is epochal

in that it laid the foundation stones of ELT in Libya; whereas the second phase can be viewed as a blank phase in which teaching and learning English at schools, colleges, universities, and private institutes were totally stopped to mark a protest against US invasion on Libya in 1986. The third phase (post 1992) is remarkable as it realized the growing importance of English and tried to revive the six year old dead tree of ELT by establishing new colleges and institutes of graduating teachers and by sending a great number of students abroad in different branches of science including English language (ibid). Here, it is imperative to emphasize that Libya has faced two major setbacks when it was gaining momentum to spread English education. The first setback occurred during the blank phase (1987-92) and the second setback is an ongoing uprising which has also given birth to anti-English sentiment among certain factions. The future of ELT in Libya again looks bleak as three English teachers were targeted and killed in the past three months.

In Indian context, English is not downplayed like Libya and Ethiopia. According to 1971 census, India, popularly known as a museum of languages, has about 1652 languages and Indian states can be called linguistic states as they are formed based on language(s). Since every state is in the pursuit of establishing its own exclusive linguistic identity, the prevailing multilingualism has an adverse impact on English education as it deprives the learners to master English to an optimal level. Indian Ministry of Education advocates three language formula which is conventionally practiced in rural areas as mother tongue (L1) + state's official language (L2) + English (L3). If we look at the 7th All India School Education Survey 2007 report which was initiated by the National Council of Educational Research and Training with the objective of creating a uniform school database for the country, we find that 90.61% of schools at the upper primary stage follow three language formula and 84.86% of schools follow the formula at the secondary stage [11]. On the other hand, urban schools lay the emphasis otherwise as English + state's official language + mother tongue. Therefore, the students in India can be broadly categorized into two types; the one is having the regional language as medium of study from the primary level and the other is having English as the medium of study [12]. Along with these two types, we should add an extra category called semi-urban students who receive their education through English and regional language(s) in parallel. It is imperative to mention here that the first type of students (rural students), who receive their education in regional languages, constitutes 75% of student population in India and the remaining 25% comprises semi-urban and urban students.

### 1.2. The Statement of the Problem

Despite the growing importance of English, average learner of E-L-I finds it difficult to make their acquired-linguistic-competence functional in real life situation for lack of mastering the language. To be more precise, the learners of these three countries complain that

they have been learning English for several years but they are not able to master it. Viewing the concern of the learners, the paper believes in the hypothesis that learning is *understanding* the linguistic components of a language; whereas, mastering is the part of *using* them in a well structured way with perfection and ease. If learning is process, mastering is product; if learning is path, mastering is destination. Mastering is aimed at acquiring utmost perfection in speech fluency, writing accuracy, stylistic nuances, word choice, accent, etc [8]. To ensure the status of learning and mastering in Ethiopia, Libya, and India, a brief piloting was conducted with respect to four macro skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and four micro skills (vocabulary, grammar, structure, and accent) using dichotomous binary variables, i.e. (+/-) representing *presence* and *absence* respectively. The following figure-1 (subsuming three circular diagrams) shows the status of learning and mastering English in Ethiopia, Libya, and India respectively.

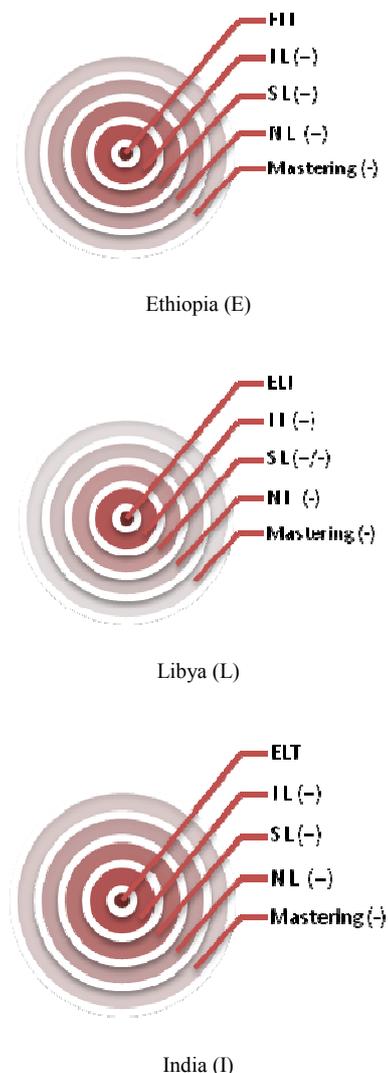


Figure 1. The Status of Learning vs. Mastering in E-L-I.

It is noteworthy in figure 1 that ELT is in the core, whereas the four orbits representing *item learning (IL)*, *system learning (SL)*, *natural learning (NL)*, and *mastering* respectively show the outcome of ELT in a diminishing order. The outer circles are more faded than the inner circles which substantiate that IL, SL, NL, and mastering do not take place in a desirable quantum. Item learning refers to learning a language at word level; system learning refers to learning at sentence level; natural learning refers to the state in which learner starts learning a language either inductively or deductively using generalization, under-generalization, and over-generalization [13]. It is noteworthy that item learning takes place in E-L-I equally as denoted by (+) mark; whereas, system learning takes place equally in Ethiopia and India as denoted by (+) mark but in case of Libya it occurs in a mixed state as denoted by (+/-). As for natural learning, it occurs equally in the Ethiopian and Indian contexts as denoted by (+) mark, but in case of Libya, it does not take place as denoted by (-). The most noteworthy fact in figure 1 is that *mastering* is nil in E-L-I as denoted by (-). Given the dismal state of English in E-L-I, the paper poses three research questions.

### 1.3. Questions of the Study

- 1) Do Ethiopian, Libyan, and Indian ELT practitioners employ the effective methods of ELT?
- 2) What are the causal factors that impede mastering English in E-L-I?
- 3) What are the 6 most vulnerable linguistic and non-linguistic impediment(s) to be rectified?

### 1.4. Significance of the Study

As for the significance of this study, the paper has pioneered a new area of discussion by addressing the learners' suppressed and accumulated outburst of not mastering English timely. Although a host of local researchers like Bogale [5], Jeylan [14], Eshetie [7], etc. in Ethiopia; RaJab [9], Salem [10], Zainol [15] in Libya, and Kapoor and Gupta [16], Bhandari [17], Dhanavel [18], Bhardwaj [3], Reddy [19], Meganathan [11], Murali [12] etc. in India have discussed ELT issues from different perspectives, e.g. assessment, syllabus design, language planning, gender, large class size etc. but there is almost no research concerned with exploring and rectifying the impediments in mastering English. This study tries to draw the attention of local and global ELT practitioners towards thirty causal factors which are commonly found in E-L-I. The paper also highlights six (20%) most vulnerable factors to be rectified based on Pareto analysis.

## 2. Methodology

The research is primarily ethnographic and secondarily phenomenological. Ethnographic, in that it requires long-term observations and investigations of the participants mostly from *emic* perspective in which a group of ESL

learners' own learning experience is investigated and partly from *etic* perspective in which researchers interpret what they see largely from their own perspectives in order to validate the findings. Phenomenological, in that the present work is more oriented towards eliciting perceptions, beliefs, and feelings of the participants with emphasis on subjectivity rather than objectivity.

### 2.1. Subjects and Sampling

As for Ethiopian subjects, 35 low-performing undergraduate and postgraduate students and 15 TEFL instructors of *Haramaya, Dire Dawa, Jijiga Universities*, and Harar secondary school were selected in the first phase of the study using purposive sampling as they were expected to have unique ability to explain, understand, and yield information about the problematic discourse. In the second phase of the study, 150 participants comprising 50 students, 50 teachers, and 50 government employees were selected using convenience sampling to explore non-linguistic impediments and their remedies. As for Libyan subjects, 50 final year undergraduate students and 5 teachers of Garyounis University, Ajdabiya were randomly selected as a primary source of the data using random sampling. As for Indian participants, 87 students and 15 teachers of three private language institutes and three middle schools from Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar were selected through random and convenience sampling.

### 2.2. Data Collection Method

Participant observation, unstructured interview, Semi-open ended questionnaire, and document analysis were employed to collect the required data. Participant observation was used as classroom observation to ensure what the subjects actually do, rather than what they say they do. It also tried to observe the use and effectiveness of ELT methods and activities, appropriateness between levels of the learners and the employed ELT activities, appropriateness of authentic materials, and impact of formative and summative assessment in the EFL classrooms. Since unstructured interview allows the respondents to answer freely and the researcher to probe and explore the exact and related problem(s) as they come up during the interview, it was aimed at eliciting linguistic and non-linguistic impediments in mastering English. Semi-open ended questionnaire was used as a supportive tool to triangulate the validity of the data collected through other tools. As part of document analysis, findings of the localized research papers on the relevant issues were studied in terms of reliability of the pertinent issues discussed by contemporary ELT researchers. For instance, the reflections of 265 Haramaya University students in an ethnographic research by Jeylan [14] in Ethiopian context, attitudinal observation of 1939 middle and high school students by Razab [9] in Libyan context, and insightful review of ELT by Kapoor and Gupta [16], Reddy [19], and Murali [12] helped in underpinning the major findings of this research.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

Three methods of analysis namely *Descriptive Statistics*, *Analytic Induction* and *Pareto Analysis* were used to analyze qualitative and quantitative data. More precisely, the ordinal and interval data gathered through semi-open ended questionnaire and unstructured interview were analyzed through descriptive statistics. All the categorical data (observed, heard, and read) were analyzed through analytic induction by thematically categorizing and interpreting in terms of descending degree of prominence, emphasis, and relativity of the issues under study. As for Pareto analysis, it was used to explore 20% most vulnerable impediments that need immediate attention and rectification.

## 3. Findings and Discussion

In response to the three research questions, this section discusses the findings under three thematic headings as follows.

### 3.1. Methods of ELT Used Globally

Language learning is a natural process which has been theorized and analyzed by two prominent schools: Behaviorist and Mentalist. According to them, language learning is a process of both analogy and application, nature and nurture. Decoding theoretical base of several psycholinguistic theories of language acquisition, the field of ELT has proposed an array of methods to teach English. According to a recent finding by [20], 19 ELT methods were found to be used globally as follows.

**Table 1.** Methods of ELT used globally.

1. Grammar Translation Method (GTM), 1850s Theoretical Base: GTM is based on deductive learning. It gives grammar rules explicitly to learners and the rules are reinforced with examples [21]. Skill(s): writing reading Activities: translation, sentence completion, vocabulary and writing drills, and reading comprehension	listening, repetition drill, and group task to know each other
2. Montessori Method (MM), 1870s Theoretical Base: MM is based on what children reveal about their developmental needs. L2 is presented like L1. Skill(s): speaking writing Activities: rhymes, stories, opposites, finger-plays, memory cards, phonics, etc	6. Silent Way (SW) 1970s Theoretical Base: Learning in SW is not habit-formation rather inductive rule-formation. Skill(s): speaking listening Activities: cognitive coding with colour rods and fidel charts
3. Direct Method (DM), 1890s Theoretical Base: DM is based on inductive learning. Learners are directly exposed to L2. Skill(s): speaking listening Activities: conversation, vocabulary drills, dictation for listening	7. Suggestopedia (SUG) 1970s Theoretical Base: It activates mind's potential of learning by relaxation and positive suggestion. Skill(s): listening, speaking Activities: peripheral learning, concert, visualization, etc.
4. Audio Lingual Method (ALM) 1960s Theoretical Base: ALM is based on behaviorism that advocates learning a language through habit formation with immediate result. Skill(s): listening speaking Activities: memorizing, grammar games, repetition, chain and substitution drills	8. Total Physical Response (TPR) 1970s Theoretical Base: TPR is based on Innate Bio-Program, Brain Lateralisation, and Stress-affective Filter to up effective learning. Skill(s): listening, speaking Activities: commands for action, role reversal, and action sequence
5. Community Language Learning (CLL) 1970s Theoretical Base: CLL is based on a holistic approach. It views learners as a 'whole person' and makes them sit in a circle and share their feelings, intellect, and reactions. Skill(s): speaking listening Activities: L1-L2 lexical translation, experience sharing, reflective	9. Communicative Approach (CA) 1970s Theoretical Base: CA is based on real communication. It prioritizes function rather than form. Skill(s): speaking listening Activities: authentic discourse, role play, language games, picture strip story, scrambled sentences
	10. Audio Visual Method (AVM) 1970s Theoretical Base: AVM uses technology to teach less and learn more. It accelerates mastering of English grammar [22]. Skill(s): Speaking, listening, reading Activities: pronunciation and fluency drills using audio, video, and computerized lessons
	11. Cooperative Learning (CL) 1970s Theoretical Base: CL is based on mutual cooperation of the learners to maximize everyone's learning to reach a common goal. Skill(s): Speaking, reading, writing Activities: social and conflict-resolution based interaction, think-pair-share, and circle the sage
	12. Semiotic Approach (SA) 1970s Theoretical Base: SA theorizes that language learning is sign learning using different signs, symbols, icons, body language, and visual communications. Skill(s): Speaking, reading, writing Activities: visual illustration, dialogues, role-play, etc
	13. Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) 1980s Theoretical Base: PPP is based on three principles: Presentation, Practice, and Production. Teachers present a phenomenon which learners practice and finally produce. Skill(s): Speaking, listening, reading, writing Activities: It follows almost all the activities of TPR method.
	14. Task-Based Approach (TBA) 1980s Theoretical Base: TBA theorizes that we learn a language when we use it. So task is greater than the language [23]. Skill(s): Speaking, listening, writing Activities: completing a task in groups and making it public, problem solving activities
	15. Multiple Intelligences (MI) 1980s Theoretical Base: It has 8 intelligences: linguistic, logical, intrapersonal, kinesthetic, interpersonal, naturalist, musical, and spatial-visual. Skill(s): Speaking, listening, reading Activities: MI activities conform to those of CLT, TPR, ALM, AVM, and SUG.
	16. Natural Approach (NA) 1980s Theoretical Base: NA follows input hypothesis. Learners are exposed to comprehensible input. Skill(s): Speaking, listening Activities: situational dialogues using chart, pictures, and other realia
	17. Learner Autonomy (LA) 1990s Theoretical Base: LA is based on the "ability to take charge of one's own learning" [24]. Skill(s): Speaking, listening, writing Activities: Computerized learning, pair work, crosswords, audio-video

recordings, grammar games  
 18. Lexical Language Learning (LLL) 1990s  
 Theoretical Base: LLL is based on learning language through vocabulary in the form of collocations, idioms, phrasal verbs, etc.  
 Skill(s): speaking writing  
 Activities: word-clouds, vocabulary drills, corpus study to know and use frequent words  
 19. Principled Eclecticism (PE) 2000s  
 Theoretical Base: PE theorizes that language learning is a combined process of structural and communicative activities because of strengths and weaknesses of single theory based methods.  
 Skill(s): Speaking, listening, reading, writing  
 Activities: conversational drills, peers' correction, raising questions, reading comprehension, fill-in the blanks, writing story, etc

Prior to knowing the application of the nineteen ELT methods in E-L-I, a piloting was done beforehand to seek the participants' (teachers') views on the uses of the ELT methods in their classrooms. There was a common reply from the Ethiopian participants that they follow *learner-centred approach* which in fact is an offshoot of methods like *Learner Autonomy* and *Multiple Intelligences*.

As for Indian and Libyan EFL classrooms, the teachers claim to practice communicative approach but in reality GTM still prevails. Viewing the paradoxical stance on the uses of ELT methods, 10 EFL classrooms in E-L-I were observed to determine the uses of ELT methods. For this, two variables: *application of method (AOM)* and *degree of application (DOA)* were set. AOM was ascribed two values (+) and (-) which respectively imply the presence or absence of any method, whereas DOA was ascribed six temporal values in descending degree: {*always*→*often*→*sometimes*→*rarely*→*seldom*→*never*}. The first three temporal values: *Always*, *Often*, and *Sometimes* were equated with (+) to affirm the application of an ELT method, whereas, *Rarely*, *Seldom*, and *Never* were equated with (-) to negate the application of method(s) regardless of their DOAs. Moreover, an attribute 'unfamiliar' was added under DOA to show teachers' unawareness of ELT method(s) as shown in table 2.

**3.2. Methods of ELT Used in Ethiopia, Libya, and India**

Table 2. Methods of ELT Used in E-L-I.

	ELT Methods Used in Ethiopia		ELT Methods Used in Libya		ELT Methods Used in India	
	AOM	DOA	AOM	DOA	AOM	DOA
GTM	+	Frequently	+	Frequently	+	Frequently
MM	+	Often	+	Sometimes	+	Often
DM	+	Sometimes	+	Rarely	+	Sometimes
ALM	+	Sometimes	+	Rarely	+	Sometimes
CLL	+	Sometimes	-	Seldom	-	Rarely
SW	-	Seldom	-	Never	+	Sometimes
SUG	-	Never	-	Seldom	-	Seldom
TPR	+	Sometimes	+	Seldom	+	Sometimes
CA	+	Often	+	Sometimes	+	Often
AVM	-	Rarely	-	Rarely	-	Rarely
CL	+	Sometimes	-	Rarely	-	Rarely
SA	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Rarely
TBA	+	Sometimes	-	Rarely	+	Often
NA	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar
PPP	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar
MI	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar
LLL	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar
LA	-	Rarely	-	Rarely	+	Sometimes
PE	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar	-	Unfamiliar

The results of DOA in table 2 not only show the absence of effective methods but also unfamiliarity with important methods among the teachers. In addition, the result also falsifies firstly the claim of practicing *learner centred approach* because the Ethiopian learners are fully dependent on teachers and lack a sense of responsibility for self learning activities. Nor, the textbooks drive learners in interactive activities to be autonomous learners. Similarly, an utter lack of communicative activities was found in Indian and Libyan EFL classrooms.

**3.3. Major Impediments in Mastering English**

Using participant observation and unstructured interview, 15 linguistic and 15 non-linguistic impediments were commonly found in Ethiopia, Libya, and India with varying degrees, though. It is noteworthy in table 3 that varying

degrees of impediments were measured using four variables (extreme (E), high (H), moderate (M), and low (L)) followed by their narrative analysis from 3.3.1 to 3.3.30.

Table 3. Degrees of Impediments in E-L-I

Linguistic Impediments	E	L	I
Lack of Integrative-Skills Teaching	H	L	E
Incompatibility between Levels of Learners and the Lessons	E	E	E
Faulty Methods	E	E	E
Sloppy Curriculum	H	H	M
The Students' Incompetence in English	H	E	H
Audio-Visual Teaching Reduced to Nil	E	E	E
Communicative Incompetence of the Teachers	M	H	H
Pedagogic Incompetence of the Teachers	H	H	H
Phobia of English and English-test	E	E	E
Lack of English Exposure outside Classroom	E	E	L

Linguistic Impediments	E	L	I
English Taught as a Subject rather than a Language	E	E	E
Lack of Identifying and Availing Authentic Study Materials	H	H	H
Lack of Task based Interactive Activities	H	H	H
Excessive Impact of L1 and GT Method	H	H	H
The Use of Unscrupulous Handouts	E	E	H
Non-Linguistic Impediments			
Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instruction	E	E	E
Mother Tongue Affinity	H	H	H
Imbalance between Class Size and Classroom Size	H	H	H
Time Constraint	H	H	H
Teachers' Comfort	H	H	H
Ego War among Teachers	H	H	H
Low Reward Causing Reluctance to Teach	E	L	M
Disrespect towards Teaching Profession	H	M	L
Alien Control of EFL Classroom	M	L	L
Lack of Motivation and Professional Insight	H	H	H
Negative Attitude towards English	H	E	M
Faulty Educational Planning and Language Policy	H	H	H
Poverty	E	L	H
Lack of Qualified ELT Practitioners and Professional ELT Courses	H	H	E
Starting Late Education	H	H	M

### 3.3.1. Lack of Integrative-Skills Teaching

Since, none of the ELT methods gives equal focus on four macro skills, i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing, a host of scholars such as Jing (2006), Larsen (2000), McDonough and Shaw (1993), Richard and Rodgers (1995), Scarcella and Oxford (1994), Oxford *et al* (1994), Snow (1991), and many others have preferred the use of integrative-skills teaching. Integrative teaching hypothesizes that what has been learnt and practiced through one skill is reinforced and developed through other skills [1]. If we want our language learning to come as close as possible to real life communicative situations, then we have to organize activities that let students use all the four language skills [25]. Observing the Ethiopian EFL classrooms, this impediment was recorded with *high* degree as teachers are still imparting segregated teaching by focusing on one or two skills especially *Reading* and *Writing*. This fact has also been documented by a number of local researchers like [26], [27], etc. As for Libya, it was found to be low; whereas it was extreme in case of India.

### 3.3.2. Mismatch between Lessons and Levels of Learners

The mismatch between levels of learners and the given lessons or activities is a serious impediment in teaching-learning process. Considering the varied degrees of linguistic proficiency, learners are labeled with levels like *Beginner*, *Pre-elementary*, *Elementary*, *Upper-elementary*, *Pre-intermediate*, *Intermediate*, *Upper-intermediate*, *Advanced*, *Very advanced*, and finally *Proficiency level* in which learners master an L2 with precision sometimes superior to that of some native speakers [8]. In E-L-I, this impediment was recorded with extreme degree as neither the teachers try to identify the levels of the learners nor have the course contents or activities been designed in such a way

that could fit with a particular level of learners. As a result, the underperforming learners are often unable to cope with the desirable progression of learning and mastering the language.

### 3.3.3. Faulty Methods

Faulty methods have two inferences: using wrong ELT method(s) and using ELT methods wrongly. *Using wrong methods* implies unawareness of using an ELT method for a particular level of learners, whereas *using methods wrongly* implies using a method aimlessly without knowing its effectiveness to improve a particular language skill [28]. In E-L-I, the ELT practitioners are unable to decipher and use appropriate ELT methods for appropriate levels of learners. Nor have the prescribed text-books any indicator of using any particular ELT method for particular skills and activities. The conventional chalk-and-talk method (as a part of GTM) often ends up with teaching by the rules and learning by rote memorization.

### 3.3.4. Impractical Curriculum

Curriculum plays a decisive role in the ultimate outcome of the learners. The current curriculum is impractical as it does not inculcate adequate interest in the learners to orient them to learn English innately and enjoyably. Nor, does it put theoretical competence into practice, usage, or performance. To be more precise, the curriculum and the prescribed textbooks lack authentic and interactive lessons for real communication related to the life of the learners in terms of their indigenous culture, language, real life events, needs, and paraphernalia [1]. The curriculum prescribes textbooks which are either archaic or laden with form rather than function (interactive lessons). Even though, the prescribed textbooks contain some interactive lessons, the teachers do not involve the learners in task-based interactive activities such as role play, pair and group work activities, group discussion, presentation, public speaking and so on to accomplish certain task or goal in an enjoyable manner [2]. In addition, the curriculum is frequently changed breaking the natural hierarchy of the course components especially in Ethiopia and Libya. Viewing the ongoing changes in our thought process and perception of the world, a periodic reform in curriculum is needed but it should not be too frequent that the existing teachers may find it hard to bridge the gap between their existing competence and the expected competence at fast pace.

### 3.3.5. The Students' Incompetence in English

Not to say of active participation in classroom activities, Ethiopian students are often deprived of understanding what they hear from their teachers or read in their textbooks [5]. English is ignored as a medium of instruction from grade 1 to 8 as well as during diploma program especially in Oromia region [8]. The Ethiopian students often complain of being dismissed from the university because of their incompetence in English. The students can express their subject-matter knowledge in L1 but not in English. In India, many students, despite being awarded master degree in English, are not able

to write and speak it accurately [17]. Lack of access to good study materials in English is also a chief cause of the students' incompetence in English. Thus, English proves more as a medium of obstruction rather than instruction [29].

### 3.3.6. *Audio-Visual Teaching Reduced to Nil*

It is an irony that most of the urban schools in E-L-I are equipped with language labs, but the audio-visual devices therein are gathering dust as they are unused. There is no audio-visual drill on phonological aspects of English language due to exceedingly large number of students and the teachers' technical inability to operate the language lab [28]. With unprecedented advancements in multimedia, we are privileged today to avail simplest to complex ways of language learning and teaching through TV, Radio, Stereo systems, Computer, Laptop, Ipad, Cellphone, etc. However, these devices are seldom used by the language learners inside or outside classrooms of E-L-I. For lack of audio-visual drill, both the teachers and the learners remain deprived of learning and mastering standard pronunciation, knowing cultural nuances of the native speakers, and knowing the natural or real communication used by the natives in terms of communicative words and commonly used syntactic patterns.

### 3.3.7. *Communicative Incompetence of the Teachers*

Communicative incompetence, which implies teachers' low proficiency in terms of word stress, sentence stress (intonation), sentence formation, words choice, stylistic, and cultural nuances of English language, is normally found in the ELT practitioners of E-L-I. As seen in table 3, this impediment is moderate in case of Ethiopian ELT practitioners as they were found to use better accent and sentence structures; whereas Libyan ELT practitioners are as good as Ethiopian ELT practitioners accent wise but awfully weak in terms of sentence structures. In India, ELT practitioners are found in very small number as [19] reports: "The teachers of English are either not trained properly or they are the teachers of other subjects. Even if they are trained, they are trained by the teachers of English in India but not by the native speakers. Though there are institutes like CIEFL (now EFLU), RIEs and, ELTCs to train teachers of English, they are hardly enough for the large demands of the Indian teacher population." By and large, teachers' communicative competence in E-L-I is in question.

### 3.3.8. *Pedagogic Incompetence of the Teachers*

Pedagogic incompetence here refers to the teachers' lack of subject knowledge and inability to manage classroom activities. In Ethiopian context, most of the schools in Southern Oromia regions report that students often stay away from English classes due to teachers' sloppy subject matter knowledge. In Eastern Ethiopia, most of the MA students with poor proficiency in English are often assigned to teach undergraduate English courses. Such a practice of teaching by novice instructors is forming a vicious cycle or chain of incompetent teachers in Ethiopia. The average Libyan teacher is relatively accepted by students but the

college and university students often frown upon them for lack of their pedagogic incompetence. In Indian context, students of B.A. and M.A. English literature are expected to become teachers of English language but they are deprived of a sound training in English Language Teaching [18].

### 3.3.9. *Phobia of English and English-test*

Phobia of English in general and phobia of English test in particular deprive the learners of learning and mastering English [2]. The present mode of exam in E-L-I neither measures the progression of learning nor explores learners' areas of weaknesses followed by suggestive feedbacks to overcome them. As a result, the students develop English phobia which gradually results into test phobia. The degrees of this impediment (as shown in table 3) were found to be extreme in E-L-I.

In case of Ethiopia, formative and summative tests are held so often that the students always find themselves over-assessed and over-stressed. For instance, a common course namely *Communicative English* designed for 1st year undergraduate students is offered for one semester (3 months). Over the period of 3 months, the students normally undergo five to six tests of both formative and summative type. It is true that teaching-learning process should be followed by tests in order to assess the progression of learning. Viewing the current approach of testing, it won't be exaggeration to say that testing takes place more often than teaching-learning process in the EFL classroom [2].

According to [3], the examination in India puts a lot of premium on rote learning rather than on language mastery. There is hardly any examination in spoken English. The result is that the students devote their time to memorizing bits of grammatical rules and text book material. A similar observation was made by [19] as he claims that speaking skills are totally neglected and the questions are often based on summarizing either a poem or a narration. Overall, the students remain deprived of performance based assessments and mastering the language in turn. The current mode of exam in E-L-I not only confines the learners to rote learning but also encourages them to merely pass the English test by memorizing, cheating, or pestering teachers.

Related to English test and the learners' performance, there is a serious impediment called anxiety. According to affective-filter hypothesis of [13], higher the anxiety, lower the learning and lower the anxiety, higher the learning. In line with Krashen's view, it was found in E-L-I that almost all the participants (students) expressed their anxiety on two issues most. They had *fear of failure in English paper* and *fear of being ridiculed during classroom activities*. Here it is apt to quote four points of [30] against the notion of testing as follows.

- Some students become so nervous that they can't perform and don't give a true account of their competence
- Other students can do well with last-minute cramming despite not having worked throughout the course
- Once the test has finished, students can just forget all that they had learned

- Students become focused on passing tests rather than learning to improve their language skills.

### **3.3.10. Lack of English Exposure outside Classroom**

Believing in Krashen's hypothesis of comprehensible input, learners learn a language by getting exposed to comprehensible inputs. But, there is hardly any exposure to comprehensible inputs for the learners of E-L-I outside classroom. English language learning is entirely limited to the classrooms. As for the degree of this impediment in table 3, it is extreme in Ethiopia and Libya; whereas, it is low in case of India.

In Ethiopian context, there are few opportunities for students to practice the language outside the classroom context [4]. Ethiopia – being a multilingual country with 82 languages and several dialects – has people from eight main regions where they like to communicate in their regional languages to promote their linguistic and cultural identities sidelining other languages including English. The average Ethiopian believes that life can move easily without English as English is not a crutch to survive in Ethiopian society. The similar belief is found in Libya too which unlike Ethiopia is monolingual as Arabic is used predominantly all over the country. Projecting Arabic as an alternative lingua franca in parallel with English prevents them from adopting and using English as a second language in daily life. In Indian context, most of the students who come from rural areas are exposed to English only during English class. Because of poor, social, and economic backgrounds, rural students neither get access to English medium school nor enough exposure to English outside the classroom [19].

### **3.3.11. Projection of English as a Subject rather than a Language**

In E-L-I, English is prescribed and taught as a part of curriculum like any other science or arts subject for a few months. Due to short duration of the course loaded with a number of formative and summative assessments, the learners, having suffered from English phobia, simply aim at securing pass marks in English paper rather than learning or mastering English as a language innately. On the other hand, the teachers are often concerned with finishing certain chapters of the textbook within the specified course duration. Ethiopian education uses English as one subject up to grade 6 except some schools in Addis Ababa; whereas, Libyan education imposes the use of English as a subject even up to graduation. In Indian context, the students never realize the importance of learning English as a language because emphasis goes on passing the exams by cramming unscrupulous guides or notes [17].

### **3.3.12. Lack of Identifying and Availing Authentic Study Materials**

First of all, the ELT practitioners in E-L-I are not fully successful in identifying and preparing authentic materials to suit the needs of different levels of language learners. In Ethiopian context, not to say of availing authentic materials, the students are often deprived of prescribed textbooks. One

text-book is often shared by three students. Unlike Ethiopia, Libya caters to the needs of the students in terms of availing study materials but the study materials are not authentic. For instance, the study material like Headway of Oxford University Press is undoubtedly good but not authentic for the Libyan learners as it lacks real life communication in terms of learners' indigenous culture, language, real life events, needs, and paraphernalia. Lectures are delivered through chalk and talk method without involving the students in communicative activities. The same trend is found in the rural schools of India where teachers simply involve the students in grammar and vocabulary drills. The essential teaching and learning materials like — good textbooks, workbooks, TV, radio, charts or other useful audio-visual materials — are not availed to the teachers and learners which make teaching and learning more imaginative than practical [19].

### **3.3.13. Lack of Task-based Interactive Activities**

The degree of this impediment is common, i.e. 'High' to E-L-I. Task based interactive activities normally refer to the tasks which involve the learners in role play, pair and group work activities, group discussion, presentation, public speaking and so on to accomplish certain task or goal in an enjoyable manner. But, the ELT practitioners in E-L-I involve the learners in grammar exercises rather than task-based interactive activities.

### **3.3.14. Excessive Impact of L1 and GTM**

Due to heavy dose of GTM in English classes in E-L-I, the learners are not able to use English instinctively. Along with pre-occupied knowledge of L1 (mother tongue), GTM makes the learners highly dependent on their mother tongue. Ref [17] has rightly noted in Indian context which can also be generalized to Ethiopian and Libyan learners. According to her, "whatever students read, they translate them into their own vernacular or L1 and they cram the expected questions-answers for the exams because they cannot write one original sentence of their own.

### **3.3.15. The Use of Unscrupulous Handouts**

Since, teaching-learning process does not abide by any standard norm in E-L-I, the only instant solution for the teachers is to prepare and distribute handouts to students. The trend of handouts is so popular in E-L-I that students rarely think of consulting any additional study materials to enhance their communicative proficiency (written and spoken) in English. Making students dependent on handouts is nothing but making them knowledge-wise handicapped. And worse comes to the worst when even the prepared handouts are not made easily available to the students on time due to laxity in the management.

### **3.3.16. Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instruction**

Mother tongue as the medium of instruction is emerging as a serious impediment in the process of mastering English in E-L-I. In 1994, Ethiopian constitutions underwent an amendment in which each regional state was given a right to

choose, use, and diffuse its language from both educational and cultural perspectives [6]. This amendment marked the welcoming sign of multilingual education which resulted into trilingual education consisting of *mother tongue + Amharic + English* [5]. But the prevailing multilingual education has caused more harm than good to the end users (students) in terms of learning and mastering English language to an optimal level because mother tongues became the media of instruction as well as subjects from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade [31]. As for Libya, Libyan education uses Arabic from primary to higher education and English is used like a movie trailer in the form of a subject. The medium of instruction is Arabic not only for other subjects but most often for English subject too especially when the instructors are Libi (Libyans). Indian schools in rural areas introduce English from grade 5 onwards. Till then, English is used merely as a subject. Teachers are appointed to teach English but they entertain or excruciate the students in their mother tongue because the students are prone to their mother tongue and find themselves comfortable in using it [18].

### 3.3.17. Mother Tongue Affinity

In the race of linguistic supremacy and the proliferation of mother-tongue education, the average Ethiopian, Libyan, and Indian has developed a strong affinity towards mother tongues in terms of establishing their exclusive and distinct socio-linguistic and cultural identities. Such an affinity has impaired their desire to learn and master English language.

### 3.3.18. Imbalance between Class size and Classroom Size

Class size here refers to the number of students in a classroom; whereas, classroom size refers to the length and width of a classroom. In E-L-I, a great imbalance is found between class size and classroom size due to large number of students. According to international standard, the ideal number of students in an EFL classroom of 15x20 feet size is 20 to 25 students for closer or individual attention. According to [32], the ideal number of students in a language class is 30 at most, because only under such a scale can offer enough chances for the students to communicate with each other. In case of Ethiopia, the average size of a classroom is 20x40 feet which accommodates 50 to 100 students. Similarly, Libyan and Indian language classrooms normally accommodate up to 100 students. Here, the issue is not of accommodating a large number of students; rather, managing the large number of students as it affects teaching and learning in terms of closer attention, voice quality of teachers and learners, visibility of the board, managing pair and group work activities, etc. If we decrease the number of students for closer attention, it requires more groups of students which in turn will require more periods of teaching. More periods of teaching require more manpower which is not available in E-L-I at present.

### 3.3.19. Time Constraint

For mastery of English, an intermediate learner is expected to be exposed to English at least 3 hours a day. In Ethiopia and India, one class period is of 45 minutes and the

number of period is 5 per week; whereas, one class period in Libya is of 2 to 3 hours once a week. If we calculate the total time devoted to English classes in Ethiopia and India, it amounts to 225 minutes and in case of Libya it amounts to 180 minutes per week. It should be noted that teachers normally spend 10 minutes in non-teaching activities such as roll-call, arranging chair, table, board, marker pen/ chalks, etc. in each class. So 50 minutes should be deducted from 225 minutes and 10 minutes from 180 minutes. Thus, we find that only 170 to 175 minutes of English dose is given per week to the students of E-L-I which is far below the expected dose of 1260 minutes per week for effective teaching, learning, and memory retention. For lack of time, not only students are deprived of individual attention, but teachers also find it difficult to complete the full course within the specified time.

### 3.3.20. Teacher-friendly Test

For the sake of saving time in correcting answer scripts, the ELT practitioners of E-L-I usually exclude analytical (subjective) questions from the final exam papers and set multiple choice questions as they are easier to be corrected by anyone in lesser amount of time with the help of answer-keys. Similarly, writing activities and assignments are not preferred during classes as they consume more time in suggesting corrective measures to improve the faulty and illegible write up of the students.

### 3.3.21. Ego War among Teachers

Intellectual jealousy and intellectual arrogance have been part of academia from time immemorial. If they are not nipped in bud, they prove hazardous in the long run for the teachers, learners, and the whole setup. The ego war, which mainly arises out of age supremacy, designation supremacy, knowledge supremacy, and mean intellectual jealousy among the teachers, is commonly and equally found in E-L-I. Senior teachers show high-handedness towards juniors and juniors do not like to be influenced by the seniors. In many instances, an individual's constructive ideas on ELT matters are plagued by robust views of a group of underperforming teachers [8].

### 3.3.22. Low Remuneration Causing Reluctance to Teach

This impediment was mostly found in Ethiopia where almost all the participants (teachers) expressed their huge dissatisfaction during unstructured interview over meager remuneration. As for Libyan and Indian ELT practitioners, they too expressed their reluctance to teach due to low remuneration in comparison with their counterpart expatriate colleagues.

### 3.3.23. Disrespect towards Teaching Profession

This impediment is mostly found in Ethiopia and Libya. Due to low remuneration, teaching is not viewed as a noble profession by the ELT practitioners in Ethiopia and Libya. Teaching especially in Ethiopia is taken as a last resort by many young English teachers [8]. They are more ambitious of becoming merchants, medical professionals or engineers

but not teachers.

### **3.3.24. Alien Control of EFL Classroom**

Alien Control of EFL Classroom refers specifically to external control of the EFL classrooms by super-imposed committee. It was found especially in the secondary schools of Harari region in Ethiopia where an external committee, which does not have any active role in teaching, controls and monopolizes the entire examination activities by setting question papers for both mid-term and final exams of grade 9 and 10 [8].

### **3.3.25. Lack of Motivation**

Positive attitude is essential to learn a language in a relaxed and enjoyable manner [33]. On the contrary, the E-L-I learners lack adequate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to master English chiefly due to their underestimation of English. The average E-L-I learner undermines the importance of English because most of the E-L-I students and teachers treat English as a foreign language rather than a second language. They view English as an object of discussion only within the four walls of classroom or in compelling situations. In addition, they rarely encounter the necessity of using it. The prescribed curriculum also lacks professional insight as it does not contain any segment on business communication to groom students to be an efficient communicator at workplace [28]. Fear of being ridiculed, poverty, and the insecure sociological conditions dampen the students' enthusiasm and force them to neglect English language learning.

### **3.3.26. Negative Attitude towards English**

This impediment was found mostly in Libya where average student has a negative attitude towards learning English. Al-Zahrani (2008) reports in his study that the reason of negative attitude could be a reaction to the instructional and traditional techniques used by some of the English language teachers. The teachers as well as students show positive attitudes towards using Arabic rather than using English language. Unlike Ethiopia and India, female students show more interests, positive behaviors and performances compared to the males. The respondents' obvious negative attitude towards English may lead to conclude that they are not well aware of the importance of English. Positive attitude is essential to learn a language in a relaxed and enjoyable manner [15].

### **3.3.27. Faulty Educational Planning and Language Policy**

It is appalling to see that today's educational planning in E-L-I is driven and monitored by unrealistic personnel who do not have a tinge of concern on the pros and cons of implementing and stopping an English programme in academia. Most of these personnel are not only divided on the role, status and function of English but also devoid of any eligibility or prerequisite for becoming decision makers on English issues. Ref [5] reflects on this issue in Indian context: "The inspection and supervisory staff of the Education Department of the State Government are far from

qualified to maintain and improve teaching standards in English. Many of them are totally unaware of the new structural syllabus in English. Many of them are those who themselves were trained in the heyday of Grammar Translation Method. As such, they provide tremendous psychological resistance to the introduction of right techniques of teaching English." Each day sprouts more "instant Indian education experts," who do more damage than good. These experts usually depend on superficial, shallow studies done, or they depend on one or two conferences with Indians who have little or no knowledge of the critical problems confronting the Indian generally [34]. Similarly, [9] reports in Libyan context: "there are few attempts by politicians and educational managers to consider how the school students react to their experiences."

In line with faulty educational planning, politicizing language(s) also attributes to the poor standard of English in E-L-I. E-L-I have witnessed frequent changes in the language policy on teaching and learning English. In most of the Indian universities, English is made a compulsory subject at college level. But, as the percentage of low achievers has been ever increasing, the Government has decided not to consider marks in English as essential for admission into a university course [3]. The basic problem is that we do not have a consistent and comprehensive language policy with reference to English. Probably we cannot have one, given the socio-cultural and historico-political climate [18]. It is an irony to see that politicians decide whether English is needed or not but when it comes to their own ward they send them to native countries to avail high quality English education.

### **3.3.28. Poverty**

Unlike Libya, the average student from Ethiopia and rural India is badly stricken with poverty as the income of their families is not adequate. So, poverty can be viewed as the root cause of several non-linguistic impediments. First of all, poverty results into unfavorable family condition which mars the motivation of the students to learn English. The degree of poverty was found to be extreme in case of Ethiopia. In case of India, the parents are not interested in giving good education background to their children. In contrast, they are willing to engage the children in some jobs in order to earn money [12]. The students from rural areas cannot afford to have English medium quality education. Most of the schools and colleges in rural areas do not have class-rooms for language teachers and students. They sit in open or under trees and learning takes place in adverse weather conditions. As a result, they face great difficulty during higher education in general and in competing with the urban students in particular for lack of proficiency in English. In general, the demand far exceeds the supply, and available monies are only for the most basic educational needs of the students. Very small amounts, if any, are available for innovative programs and ideas [34]. In this scenario, it is highly unlikely to think of quality English education.

### 3.3.29. Lack of Qualified ELT Practitioners and Professional ELT Courses

The scarcity of qualified ELT practitioners and professional ELT courses is an intertwined issue in E-L-I. There is a popular misconception in India that College and University teachers do not require any training. A Central Institute of English was established to nourish English but was expanded to contain Foreign Languages for its survival [18]. Today, almost all the ELT courses such as Cambridge DELTA, Trinity (Dip-TESOL), MA (TESOL/Applied Linguistics), etc. are normally available in native countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The geographical distance and hefty tuition fees deprive the aspiring and existing ELT practitioners of availing these ELT courses and becoming qualified ELT practitioners.

### 3.3.30. Late Education and Introduction of English

Unlike Indian, Ethiopian and Libyan learners start their education very late sometimes after the age of 13. According to critical period hypothesis of [13], there is a period in a person's life in which s/he must learn a language, or else language acquisition becomes not only difficult but also impossible. The theoretical base of this hypothesis is that our brain becomes fully developed by puberty, i.e. the age of 12. After puberty the language learning becomes extremely difficult. Thus, late education also proves an impediment in the process of learning and mastering a second language like English.

## 4. The 20% most Vulnerable Impediment(S) to be Rectified

Of the aforementioned 30 causal factors, the paper further aims at identifying 20% most vulnerable impediments based on the premise of Pareto Analysis. Pareto Analysis says that a large majority of problems (80%) are produced by a few key causes (20%). The assumption is based on the premise that if 20% of the impediments is rectified, it will help in minimizing the associated 80% problem and attaining optimal goal of mastering the language. Since, 20% of 30 come approximately to six, so the study went for seeking the perception of the participants to identify 6 most vulnerable impediments. For this, the participants were given a close-ended questionnaire (containing the list of 30 impediments) and asked to mark the degree of vulnerability of the concerned impediments based on 10 rising degrees of vulnerability, i.e. (1-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60, 61-70, 71-80, 81-90, 91-100). The result of the questionnaire is presented in the following table 4.

Table 4. Six Most Vulnerable Impediments.

The most vulnerable causes (highlighted in red)	%
Lack of Integrative-Skills Teaching	91
Mismatch between Lessons and Levels of Learners	88
Faulty Methods	89
Impractical Curriculum	66

The Students' Incompetence in English	79
Audio-Visual Teaching Reduced to Nil	78
Communicative Incompetence of the Teachers	39
Pedagogic Incompetence of the Teachers	46
Phobia of English and English Test	89
Lack of English Exposure outside Classroom	68
Projection of English as a Subject rather than a Language	77
Lack of identifying & availing Authentic Study Material	88
Lack of Task based Interactive Activities	55
Excessive Impact of L1 and GT Method	52
The Use of Unscrupulous Handouts	56
Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instruction	94
Mother Tongue Affinity	66
Imbalance between Class Size and Classroom Size	66
Time Constraint	55
Teacher-friendly Test	44
Ego War among Teachers	46
Low Remuneration Causing Reluctance to Teach	55
Disrespect towards Teaching Profession	66
Alien Control of EFL Classroom	47
Lack of Motivation	66
Negative Attitude towards English	71
Faulty Educational Planning and Policy	48
Poverty	55
Lack of Ideal ELT Practitioners and Courses	85
Late Education and Introduction of English	60

The six most vulnerable impediments to be rectified are (i) Lack of Integrative-Skills teaching, (ii) Mismatch between levels of learners and the lessons, (iii) Faulty Methods, (iv) Lack of Authentic Study Materials, (v) Mother Tongue as the Medium of Instruction, and (vi) Phobia of English and English Test.

## 5. Conclusion

Adhering to the three research questions, the paper, in its long-term ethnographic observation, sheds light on comparative status of ELT methods used in E-L-I with respect to nineteen ELT methods used worldwide. Secondly, it explores and discusses thirty impediments or causal factors in learning and mastering English language. Subsequent to the narrative analysis of thirty impediments, the paper explores six (20%) most vulnerable factors which need to be counteracted from remedial perspective. Since this paper has been documented from causal perspective only, the paper aims at discussing remedial insights in the next piece of work.

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