NTTSU at WMT2024 General Translation Task

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Abstract

The NTTSU team's submission leverages several large language models developed through a training procedure that includes continual pre-training and supervised fine-tuning. For paragraph-level translation, we generated synthetic paragraph-aligned data and used these data for training. In the task of translating Japanese to Chinese, we focused on speech domain translation. Specifically, we built Whisper models for Japanese automatic speech recognition (ASR). Since the dataset used for Whisper training contains many noisy data pairs, we combined the Whisper outputs using ROVER (Fiscus, 1997) to refine the transcriptions. Furthermore, we employed forward translation from audio as data augmentation, using both ASR models and a base translation model. To select the best translation from multiple hypotheses of the models, we applied Minimum Bayes Risk decoding after Quality Estimation (Fernandes et al., 2022), incorporating scores such as COMET-QE, COMET, and cosine similarity by LaBSE. We explored three different reranking strategies to handle two types of candidates from sentence- and paragraph-level translation and employed a fusion method that integrates all three.

1 Introduction

This paper provides a system description of the NTTSU team's submissions to WMT 2024. We took part in the General Translation Task (Kocmi et al., 2024a) for English-to-Japanese (En-Ja) and Japanese-to-Chinese (Ja-Zh). This task has three tracks with different constraints on the use of training data and pre-trained models. For En-Ja, we participated in the constrained track, which provides sets specifically allow training data and pre-trained models. Additionally, for Ja-Zh, we participated in the open track, which allows the use of software and data under any open-source license.

Our team's submission leveraged several large language models developed through a training procedure (Guo et al., 2024; Kondo et al., 2024) that includes continual pre-training and supervised finetuning. For paragraph-level translation, we generated synthetic paragraph-aligned data and used these data for training.

In the task of translating Japanese to Chinese, we focused on speech domain translation. Specifically, we built Whisper models (Radford et al., 2022) for Japanese automatic speech recognition (ASR). We used the YODAS dataset (Li et al., 2024) for Whisper training. Since these data contained many noisy data pairs, we combined the Whisper outputs using ROVER (Fiscus, 1997) to refine the transcriptions. Furthermore, to enhance the robustness of the translation model against errors in the transcriptions, we performed data augmentation by forward translation from audio, using both ASR and base translation models.

To select the best translation from multiple hypotheses of the models, we applied Minimum Bayes Risk decoding after quality estimation (Fernandes et al., 2022), incorporating scores such as COMET-QE, COMET, and cosine similarity by LaBSE. We explored three different reranking strategies to handle two types of candidates from sentence- and paragraph-level translation and employed a fusion method that integrates all three.

2 System Overview

Our system had three main components: automatic speech recognition (ASR) models, translation models, and a reranking.

This year, speech domain translation was newly incorporated in the above task, and audio data, along with the organizer's transcription, were provided as input data. We were interested in the feasibility of speech translation from Japanese, so we created an ASR model for the Ja-Zh and used its transcription as the additional source text. Moreover, we used ROVER to refine the transcriptions.

For the translation model's architecture, we employed and trained the Transformer model and LLMs. To train the LLms, we carried out monolingual/parallel continual pre-training and supervised fine-tuning. The evaluation for this year was conducted at the paragraph level. To address this, we created sentence- and paragraph-level parallel data and utilized these data to build translation models for each level.

During the inference step, we used the translation models to independently translate at the sentence and the paragraph level, generating multiple candidates. We then selected the best translation candidate using a reranking that combines sentenceand paragraph-level reranking with MBR decoding after quality estimation.

3 Automatic Speech Recognition

For Ja-Zh speech translation, we fine-tuned various Whisper-based ASR models for the Japanese ASR task. We used the Japanese subset (ja100) of the YODAS dataset, which consists of approximately 3,000 hours of speech and transcriptions.

3.1 Dataset

During the dataset review, we found that the YO-DAS dataset contained many incorrect transcriptions (e.g., music and non-Japanese speech samples). To mitigate the negative impact of these incorrect samples, we refined the YODAS dataset. We integrated transcriptions of multiple hypotheses transcription generated from multiple ASR models to create a tuning dataset. Specifically, the following procedure was used to generate tuning data.

- 1. **Generation** We performed beam search decoding with multiple ASR models to generate multiple ASR hypotheses for each speech sample in ja100. This process yielded a set of hypotheses equal to the number of ASR models multiplied by the beam size. We set a beam size of 4.
- Language-based Filtering We applied multistep filtering for the YODAS dataset. First, we used Whisper to transcribe the speech; then, we applied the Compact Language Detector v3 (CLD3)¹ to filter non-Japanese language. Next, we excluded the transcriptions that did not contain Japanese-specific characters (i.e.,

hiragana or *katakana*). After language-based filtering, we filterd out uncertain transcription that contained repetition. Specifically, texts with bi-grams appearing more than six times were excluded.

- 3. **Combination** After filtering, we combined multiple ASR hypotheses using the Recognizer Output Voting Error Reduction (ROVER) (Fiscus, 1997).
- 4. CER-based Filtering To filter uncertain samples of ROVER results, we applied accuracybased filtering. We measured the character error rate (CER) between the ROVER results and the original subtitles in YODAS. A high CER indicates that either one or both may be significantly inaccurate. For the ASR training, we constructed a development set of 2k samples of CER < 0.3 data. No CER filtering was applied to the training set because no positive effect was observed in preliminary experiments. Finally, all ROVER results except the development set (1,614,110 segments) were treated as the training set. For the training of MT using the ASR data (described in §4.3), samples with CER ≤ 0.3 (693,304 segments) were used.

To compare the quality of the original subtitles and the ROVER results, we subjectively evaluated the two corresponding transcriptions of 100 randomly selected samples. As a result, we determined that the ROVER results were of higher quality.

3.2 Model

To create the tuning data, we used two pre-trained ASR models: Whisper large- $v3^2$ and kotoba-whisper- $v1.1^3$, a Japanese-specific ASR model.

3.3 Training

Using the tuning data created through the above procedure with the two ASR models, we separately fine-tuned each of these models. The training of the model was conducted using the AdamW optimizer, with parameters set as $\beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.999, \epsilon = 1e - 8$. We employed a linear decay learning rate scheduler and set the warmup steps to 500. The model's parameters were saved every 4000 steps.

²https://huggingface.co/openai/ whisper-large-v3

³https://huggingface.co/kotoba-tech/ kotoba-whisper-v1.1

¹https://github.com/google/cld3

The training was carried out with a batch size of 32 samples over a single epoch. We selected the best model based on the loss in the dev set.

3.4 Inference

During inference, we performed a beam search with a beam size of 4 and combined these four hypotheses using ROVER. For the post-processing of the ASR stage, we integrated punctuation and sentence segmentation into the transcription. We used the fine-tuned version of xlm-roberta⁴ and Bunkai (Hayashibe and Mitsuzawa, 2020)⁵ for punctuation insertion and sentence segmentation, respectively. Finally, the two types of hypotheses from the two ASR models were passed to MT.

In the data generation process for MT training (§4.3), ROVER was not performed and the top-1 hypothesis of the beam search was used.

4 Primary Translation Model

4.1 Dataset

We used two types of text corpora: monolingual and parallel data. Monolingual data are used for monolingual continual pre-training, while parallel data are used for parallel continual pre-training, sentence-level supervised fine-tuning (SFT), and paragraph-level SFT.

En-Ja We used the following monolingual corpora: Common Crawl (Kocmi et al., 2022), Leipzig Corpora (Goldhahn et al., 2012), News Crawl, and News Commentary (Kocmi et al., 2023). We also used JParaCrawl v3.0 (Morishita et al., 2022), News Commentary (Kocmi et al., 2023), the Kyoto Free Translation Task Corpus (KFTT) (Neubig, 2011), TED Talks (Barrault et al., 2020), and past WMT test data as the parallel data. Since JParaCrawl v3.0 is automatically created and contains a certain amount of noisy data, we filtered the corpus based on sentence embeddings. We employed LaBSE (Feng et al., 2022) to embed the source and target sentences and then filtered out the sentence pairs in which the similarities are not between 0.4 and 0.9.

Ja-Zh We used the following monolingual corpora: Leipzig Corpora (Goldhahn et al., 2012), News Crawl, and News Commentary (Kocmi et al.,

2023). In order to obtain parallel data for continual pre-training, we used JParaCrawl Chinese v2.0 (Nagata et al., 2024). Since this corpus also contains noisy data, we filtered them using the same method as in the En-Ja task. For sentencelevel SFT, we used ASPEC-JC (Nakazawa et al., 2016) and Flores-200 (NLLB Team et al., 2022) as training and development sets. In addition to the data for sentence-level SFT, we used News Commentary, WIT3 (Cettolo et al., 2012), Global Voice, and Neulab TedTalks (Tiedemann, 2012) as parallel corpora with context information for paragraph-level SFT.

4.2 Model Selection

For the En-Ja task, we used the largest available LLM in the constrained track, $L1ama-2-13b^6$ (Touvron et al., 2023). For the Ja-Zh task, we used TowerBase-13B-v0.1⁷ (Alves et al., 2024), a model based on Llama-2-13b that has been continually pre-trained with monolingual and parallel data.

Additionally, we developed and deployed a Transformer (Vaswani et al., 2017) model trained from scratch. As training data, we used JParaCrawl v3.0 for the En-Ja task and JParaCrawl Chinese v2.0 for the Ja-Zh task. The model configuration and hyperparameters are detailed in Table 1.

4.3 LLM Training Procedure

We conducted a three-stage training process based on research conducted on translation models using LLMs (Guo et al., 2024; Kondo et al., 2024). In the first stage, we performed continual pre-training with monolingual data. In the second stage, we conducted continual pre-training with parallel data. Finally, in the third stage, we carried out supervised fine-tuning. The detailed model configuration and hyperparameters are given in Table 1.

Monolingual Continual Pre-Training It has been reported that LLMs primarily pre-trained in English, such as Llama-2, have lower translation accuracy for languages other than English (Xu et al., 2024). Therefore, we performed continual pretraining using monolingual data to enhance the

TowerBase-13B-v0.1 ⁸https://github.com/

⁴https://huggingface.co/1-800-BAD-CODE/

xlm-roberta_punctuation_fullstop_truecase

⁵https://github.com/megagonlabs/bunkai

⁶https://huggingface.co/meta-llama/ Llama-2-13b-hf

⁷https://huggingface.co/Unbabel/

⁸https://github.com/facebookresearch/fairseq ⁹https://github.com/huggingface/transformers

Transformer Enc-Dec model			
Subword Size Architecture Optimizer	32,000 Transformer (big) Adam $(\beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.0, \beta_2 = 0.00, \beta_2 = 0.00,$		
LR Scheduler Warmup Steps Max Learning Rate Dropout Gradient Clipping Label Smoothing Batch Size Number of Updates	$0.98, \epsilon = 1e - 8)$ Inverse Square root decay 4,000 1e-3 0.3 1.0 0.1 512,000 tokens 50,000 steps		
Implementationfairseq ⁸ (Ott et al., 2019)Common Settings for All LLMs Training Phases			
Warmup Ratio Gradient Clipping Weight Decay Implementation	1% 1.0 1.0 transformers ⁹ (Wolf		
Continual Pre-	-Training Settings		
Optimizer LR Scheduler	AdamW ($\beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.95, \epsilon = 1e - 5$) Cosine		
Max Learning Rate (full / LoRA) Batch Size Epoch Context Length	1.5e-4 / 2.0e-4 1,024 samples 1 2,048		
Supervised Fin	ne-tuning Settings		
Optimizer	AdamW ($\beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.999, \epsilon = 1e - 8$)		
LR Scheduler Max Learning Rate Batch Size Epoch	Inverse Square root decay 2.0e-4 1,024 samples 3		
LoRA Settings			
Rank / Alpha Dropout Target Modules	16 / 32 0.05 QKVO, FFN		

Table 1: Model configuration and hyperparameters.

generation capabilities in languages other than English.

We used randomly sampled data from the monolingual corpora described in §4.1. For the En-Ja task, we created two models, ver1 and ver2, and trained them using randomly sampled data of 1B and 4B tokens, respectively. In contrast, for the Ja-Zh task, we trained only a single model with randomly sampled data of 1B tokens due to the lack of time and GPU resources.

Parallel Continual Pre-Training After completing monolingual continual pre-training, we performed continual pre-training using parallel data. Based on the findings of (Kondo et al., 2024), we used data where the source text is followed by its translation.

For the En-Ja task, the ver1 model was trained using LoRA (Hu et al., 2022), while the ver2 model was trained with full weights. Additionally, ver1 was trained using only the sentence-level parallel data from JParaCrawl v3.0, whereas ver2 utilized JParaCrawl v3.0 along with TED and News Commentary as pseudo-paragraph data.

Supervised Fine-Tuning After completing continual pre-training in monolingual and parallel data, we performed supervised fine-tuning using LoRA. The prompts applied to the training data were the same as those used in ALMA (Xu et al., 2024), and the same prompts were used during inference. Note that loss in the prompt outputs was excluded during training (Xu et al., 2024; Kondo et al., 2024).

Additionally, for domain adaptation, we performed SFT using data from each specific domain. For the En-Ja task, the ver1 model was fine-tuned using TED Talks, KFTT, and past WMT test data. In contrast, the ver2 model was fine-tuned with the same three datasets as ver1, plus two additional settings: using only the news domain data and using only the social domain data each from past WMT test data. Note that the past WMT test data used for SFT training consisted of the WMT20 development and test data, with the other test data from WMT21 to WMT23. For WMT21, both En-Ja and Ja-En directions were included, while WMT22 and WMT23 were composed only of the Ja-En direction. Additionally, the development data for all SFT were the WMT22 En-Ja data. As a result, we obtained a total of eight fine-tuned models for En-Ja. For Ja-Zh, we also performed SFT with synthetic data to enhance robustness against errors in the transcription for the speech domain. These data were constructed by forward translation from audio data using ASR and Transformer models.

5 Reranking

To enhance translation quality, we applied reranking to the candidate sentences. We conducted a comparative analysis of various methods and strategies, as described in §5.1 and §5.3, on the candidate generated by the methods described in §5.2.

5.1 Methods

The reranking approach is used to obtain the final output \hat{y} from the set of candidate sentences Cgenerated by the methods described in §5.2. **Quality Estimation (QE)** This approach involves evaluating the candidates using referencefree quality estimation techniques, such as COMET-QE (Rei et al., 2021, 2022, 2023) and sentence embedding-based similarity, and subsequently selecting the candidate with the highest score, as follows:

$$\hat{y} = \operatorname*{argmax}_{c \in \mathcal{C}} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \lambda_i \operatorname{QE}_i(x, c), \tag{1}$$

where $QE_i(\cdot, \cdot)$ is a reference-free quality estimation function and λ_i represents its weight, subject to $\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i = 1$.

Minimum Bayes Risk (MBR) decoding MBR decoding (Fernandes et al., 2022) employs reference-based metrics to rank translation candidates. It aims to identify the translation that maximizes expected utility while equivalently minimizing the risk (Meister et al., 2020; Eikema and Aziz, 2020) as follows:

$$\hat{y}_i = \operatorname*{argmax}_{c_i \in \mathcal{C}} \frac{1}{|\mathcal{C}|} \sum_{j=1}^{|\mathcal{C}|} \operatorname{RefMetric}(c_i, c_j), \quad (2)$$

where $\operatorname{RefMetric}(\cdot, \cdot)$ is a reference-based metric. Note that MBR decoding scores the candidate using reference-based metrics by treating all candidates as reference texts without using an actual reference text.

MBR after QE (**QE** \rightarrow **MBR**) This approach integrates QE with MBR decoding (Fernandes et al., 2022). The scores produced by the quality estimation procedure determined the top-n sample set from candidate set C as C_{top-n} . Subsequently, MBR is applied to C_{top-n} .

5.2 Candidate Generation

We generated five candidates for each model by varying the sampling methods during generation. For the speech domain in Ja-Zh, we had two extra transcriptions from our ASR models in addition to the official one. As a result, we generated five candidates for these two transcriptions and LLM models in the same manner. For models based on Llama-2-13b and TowerBase-13B-v0.1, the five methods were as follows: 1. greedy decoding (no sampling), 2. beam search with a beam size of 4, 3. temperature of 0.9, 4. temperature of 0.5, and 5. temperature of 0.3. For methods 3, 4, and 5, parameters other than temperature were set with

top_p at 0.6 and top_k at 50. We also used the top-5 candidates from beam search for the Transformer with a beam size of 6. As a result, a total of 45 candidate sentences were generated for the En-Ja task using the eight SFT models described in §4.3, along with the Transformer model, making a total of nine models.

Furthermore, for each SFT model, we employed two approaches to generate candidates.

Sentence-Level Generation First, we used pySBD¹⁰ (Sadvilkar and Neumann, 2020) to split the original paragraph-level test data into sentences, and then we performed sentence-level inference to generate sentence candidates C_{sent} .

Paragraph-Level Generation We used the paragraph data directly as model input for generating paragraph candidates C_{para} .

5.3 Reranking System

For the two types of candidates mentioned in §5.2, we used three reranking strategies and one fusion method that integrates all three.

Synthesized Paragraph Reranking In each sentence-level inference result, we concatenated the sentences that originally belonged to the same paragraph in order and then performed reranking on the synthesized paragraph.

Individual Sentence Reranking We performed sentence-level reranking on the sentence candidates C_{sent} and then reconstructed the paragraphs from the final reranked results.

Full Paragraph Reranking The paragraph candidates C_{para} were used as the objects of reranking, directly generating paragraph-level results.

Multi-Attribute Candidate Reranking We established a larger set of multi-attribute candidates C_{mac} according to the three reranking strategies mentioned above:

- Synthesized paragraph candidates by concatenating the sentences in order from sentence candidates C_{sent} .
- Paragraph data reconstructed on the results obtained by different reranking methods from Individual Sentence Reranking.
- Paragraph candidates C_{para} generated by Paragraph-Level Generation.

¹⁰https://github.com/nipunsadvilkar/pySBD

	CER (YODAS)	COMET (WMT test)
Whiper large-v3	7.7	0.4598
+ FT	4.8	0.4601
kotoba-whisper-v1.1	12.6	0.4407
+ FT	5.0	0.4518
Official transcription	-	0.7278

Table 2: ASR performances and their translation accuracies. Second column is CER results on the evaluation data of the YODAS dataset. Third column is COMET results on the speech domain of this year's WMT test set.

Then, C_{mac} was used for paragraph-level reranking.

6 Experiment and Analysis

6.1 Results of ASR

The second column of Table 2 shows the ASR results (with and without fine-tuning on the YODAS dataset) for the Ja-Zh speech translation. Note that this evaluation was not done in combination with the ROVER system. We confirmed that finetuning improved the recognition performance on the YODAS dataset. The third column of Table 2 shows the translation results¹¹ for the WMT test set. Fine-tuning resulted in a relative improvement of 2.5% for kotoba-whisper-v1.1, but no significant improvement was observed for Whisper-largev3, even through it demonstrated high ASR performance before fine-tuning. Moreover, our models performed worse than the official transcriptions. We trained the ASR models using relatively short audio samples, whereas the audio samples in the test set were longer than 30 seconds. This gap between the training and test conditions likely contributed to the degradation in speech recognition accuracy. In addition, we prepared ASR models for a wide range of topics, domains, and noise levels for open-domain speech input. For this purpose, we used the YODAS dataset instead of datasets such as TED, CSJ, and Libri, which contain clean speech with human transcriptions. However, this strategy did not turn out to be suitable for the WMT test set. In fact, when we listened to the speech from the test set, the SNR was high and clean. This gap may have also contributed to the degradation. These findings will be leveraged for future improvements.

Model	Input	COMET22
Ver1	Sentence Paragraph	0.8218 0.7666
Ver2	Sentence Paragraph	0.8352 0.8349

Table 3: COMET Scores of Sentence-Level andParagraph-Level SFT on WMT23 En-Ja test data

Scoring Function	COMET22
LaBSE-cos	0.8364
Comet-QE20	0.8797
Comet-QE21	0.8837
CometKiwi22	0.8821
CometKiwi23-xl	0.8819
$0.5 \times \text{Comet-QE20} + 0.5 \times \text{LaBSE-cos}$	0.8835
0.8×Comet-QE21 + 0.2×LaBSE-cos	0.8856
0.9×CometKiwi22 + 0.1×LaBSE-cos	0.8824
0.9×CometKiwi23-xl + 0.1×LaBSE-cos	0.8830
MBR ratio	COMET22
QE (Top 10%)	0.8911
QE (Top 20%)	0.8940
QE (Top 30%)	0.8949
QE (Top 40%)	0.8950
QE (Top 50%)	0.8955
QE (Top 60%)	0.8955
QE (Top 70%)	0.8954
QE (Top 80%)	0.8953
QE (Top 90%)	0.8953
100%	0.8953

Table 4: COMET Scores of QE and MBR decoding on WMT23 En-Ja test data. The 45 candidates used were generated by the methods in §5.2. MBR decoding was performed after QE with the best scoring function, $0.8 \times \text{Comet-QE21} + 0.2 \times \text{LaBSE-cos}$.

6.2 Sentence-Level versus Paragraph-Level in SFT

In the SFT experiments using past WMT test data, we evaluated whether sentence-level or paragraphlevel source texts achieved better accuracy by assessing them with COMET (wmt22-comet-da) on the WMT23 En-Ja test data. For paragraph-level training, the data were reconstructed from sentencelevel to paragraph-level based on the .xml files provided by WMT. Table 3 shows the results, indicating that sentence-level inputs achieved higher accuracy than those of paragraph-level inputs. Therefore, for subsequent SFT, we used only sentencelevel inputs.

6.3 **Results of Quality Estimation**

To identify the scoring function in Eq.(1) that yields the highest translation accuracy, we compared ten

¹¹We used wmt22-comet-da. During this evaluation, we used the official transcription as the source text for all hypotheses because it would be the most accurate transcription. https: //huggingface.co/Unbabel/wmt22-comet-da

ID	System	$MetricX\downarrow$	CometKiwi ↑
(a)	Synthesized Para	2.8830	0.7260
(b)	Individual Sent	2.8100	0.7273
(c)	Full Para	2.7263	0.7260
(d)	Multi-Attribute	2.6321	0.7310

Table 5: Results of Reranking Systems on WMT24 En-Ja test data. Systems (a)~(c) used 45 candidates, while System (d) used 100 candidates, consisting of 45 from C_{sent} , 45 from C_{para} , and 10 results obtained by Individual Sentence Reranking using the 10 methods listed in Table 4. All of the system results are based on Top 50% MBR decoding after QE with the best scoring function, $0.8 \times \text{Comet-QE21} + 0.2 \times \text{LaBSE-cos}$.

different scoring functions based on the findings in the paper. We used COMET-QE and LaBSE cosine similarity for scoring functions and evaluated them with COMET on the WMT23 En-Ja test data. Since the WMT23 test data are sentence-level, we used the 45 candidate sentences generated through paragraph-level generation, where each sentence was directly input, as described in §5.2. Additionally, the reranking system utilized Full Paragraph Reranking, as described in §5.3. Table 4 shows the results, indicating that $0.8 \times wmt21$ -comet-qe + $0.2 \times LaBSE$ -cos achieved the highest accuracy. Therefore, this scoring function was adopted for subsequent experiments and finally the submitted system.

6.4 Resluts of MBR after QE

We investigated the proportion of MBR that achieved the highest accuracy under the same conditions as in §6.3. Table 4 shows the results, indicating that accuracy was maximized at 50%. Therefore, in subsequent experiments and the submitted system, the proportion of MBR was set to 50%.

6.5 Results of Reranking Systems

Table 5 shows the results of the reranking system on WMT24 En-Ja. We used MetricX-23-XL (Juraska et al., 2023) and CometKiwi-DA-XL (Rei et al., 2023) as evaluation metrics, consistent with the WMT24 preliminary report (Kocmi et al., 2024b). From these results, it was found that the Multi-Attribute Candidate Reranking achieved the highest accuracy. Therefore, we adopted Multi-Attribute Candidate Reranking for the submitted system.

7 Conclusion

In this paper, we described our system for the WMT'24 General Translation Task. We developed

ASR models for the speech domain in Ja-Zh and used Transformer and LLMs for the translation models. We trained LLMs using a three-stage training process: Monolingual Continual Pre-training, Parallel Continual Pre-Training, and Supervised Fine-Tuning. Finally, we applied reranking method and strategies to the translation candidates generated by the translation models. Our analyses confirmed the effectiveness of our reranking method and strategies for paragraph-level translation.

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