

Exploring the Transactional Communication Model in Managing Work Responsibilities

Fatimah Hidayahni Amin*

fatimah.hidayahni@unm.ac.id

Universitas Negeri Makassar

*corresponding author

Andi Riswan Mohamad

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Muhammad Fahri Jaya Sudding

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Ashabul Kahfi Susanto

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Nurharsya Khaer Hanafie

Universitas Negeri Makassar

Abstract

This study aims to identify and determine the transactional communication model using Shockley-Zalabak's Organizational Communication Process Model used by the employees in delivering transactional utterances in workplace management. The research method was qualitative with a descriptive design. The subjects of this study are employees in the academic and broadcasting workplaces. Data on the transactional communication model were collected through transcripts of observations accompanied by audio recordings. The findings of the study reveal that communication within organizational settings is fundamentally transactional, interactive, and context-dependent. Across all extracts, communication emerges not as a simple transmission of information but as a co-created process shaped by hierarchical roles, organizational procedures, feedback loops, and interpersonal dynamics.

Keywords: *Transactional, Communication Model, Work, Responsibilities.*

INTRODUCTION

Communication is a speaking activity carried out by humans at all times. Communication serves as a channel for people to express their feelings and thoughts, and most importantly, as a means to fulfill their needs and interests. To this day, communication remains one of the social humanities disciplines that consistently offers compelling topics of discussion. Although effective communication is essential, the aspects involved in achieving good communication are broad, as they depend on the context of who the speaker is and who the interlocutor is. Usman (2011) states that communication is a method of transmitting messages from one person to

another, whether in written, spoken, verbal, nonverbal, direct, or indirect form. This statement is supported by Handoko (2013), who notes that communication involves the process of transferring ideas or concepts explained by one individual to another. Communication involves techniques or methods that enable the message to be understood by the interlocutor.

Furthermore, Mangkunegara (2017) asserts that in communication, individuals demonstrate techniques or strategies to convey information or understanding to their interlocutors so that both parties share the same comprehension. This is, of course, the intended goal of the speaker. Strategies in communication support the smooth and effective transfer of messages within the communication process. In any communication situation, speakers can deliver messages and intentions more effectively when they apply an efficient communication strategy. According to Hamali (2016), the benefit of effective communication within an organization is that employees or staff members can perform and complete their responsibilities smoothly. In addition, applying good communication strategies can influence the interlocutor—whether they become persuaded, agree, or take action based on the message conveyed by the speaker. Amin et al. (2024) state that the communication process can influence relationships and interactions between interlocutors in any situation. This communication process involves specific forms of language that can influence the atmosphere and shape the patterns of interaction between individuals.

One of the communication situations that occur daily is in the workplace. The workplace is a fundamental part of an organization's existence. Organizations in the professional world have management structures and personnel arranged to achieve certain goals. Thus, communication in the workplace has its own characteristics because the personnel share a common vision and mission and bear the responsibility to complete tasks according to organizational goals and targets. According to Morissan (2022), the characteristics of organizational communication lie in the following aspects: communication norms that regulate how communication is conducted in the workplace; roles that include positions and responsibilities in conveying information; information flow that is vertical and horizontal; alignment with organizational culture; and the use of communication media. It cannot be denied that workplace communication has dynamics that may affect personnel and task completion. Based on these characteristics of communication within various types of work organizations—whether in business, industry, government or private institutions, or other structured workplaces—the delivery of messages becomes a crucial factor in achieving good, effective, and reliable communication. Information delivery is rooted in the choice of language used to convey the intended message.

Language use in communication is dynamic, especially in workplace contexts where personnel have goals and targets to achieve. Amin et al. (2024) found in their study that the use of language functions such as asserting, instructing facts, informing certain conditions, issuing commands, providing orientation or initial descriptions, offering reassurance, expressing complaints when appropriate, making subtle remarks, answering questions and giving directions, and offering encouragement contributes to clarity in workplace communication.

Pasaribu et al. (2024) also found in their study the phenomenon of code-mixing in workplace communication. There are four factors that cause workplace personnel to engage in code-mixing: the influence of technological and social media developments, generational gaps—particularly between millennials and Generation Z, multicultural interactions, and insufficient knowledge of appropriate language use for specific situations.

Puspitasari et al. (2024) found that Indonesian is the primary language used for communication in the workplace. The Indonesian language skills required in business and industry include: comprehensive listening, intensive reading, formal and informal speaking, writing official letters, writing with courteous and communicative language, and creative writing.

Yani et al. (2018) found a relationship between foreign-language proficiency and career advancement in the field of Public Relations. In addition, there is a relationship between an individual's competence in foreign languages and the organization of public relations activities that support their career development.

Based on the above studies, the use of language encompasses language functions, code-mixing, Indonesian, and foreign languages, as well as the relationship between Indonesian and foreign language proficiency in workplace communication. However, further study is needed to identify communication models that can facilitate work processes through language use in the workplace. One type of communication considered capable of enhancing workplace communication is transactional communication. According to West and Turner (2013), the transactional communication model shows that speakers and interlocutors often switch roles, and meaning is co-constructed through ongoing interaction. This model also takes into account the factors of time and context, as well as the influence of each participant's experiences in past interactions and relationships. Thus, transactional communication can be understood as a complex and interactive communication process in which all participants are actively involved in creating shared meaning.

This study adopted the Shockley-Zalabak's Organizational Communication Process Model (2015), which views communication as a continuous and dynamic process shaped by the organizational environment. It is a transactional, workplace-specific approach which frames mutual message creation and interpretation influenced by culture, structure, relationships, and technology. The central goal of communication in this model is creating shared meaning, not simply transmitting information. Meaning emerges co-actively between speakers who interpret messages through their own experiences, values, and cultural norms.

Therefore, this study has analyzed the transactional communication in the workplaces using the Shockley-Zalabak's Organizational Communication Process Model. The output of this study was a communication model framework—particularly concerning the transactional communication model used by employees in workplace management—which was highly beneficial for personnel across various fields and organizations. This study also contributed to educators and learners in Pragmatics and Communication Studies, as well as to education practitioners regarding communication models used in the professional world.

METHOD

This study is a descriptive qualitative research that aims to identify and describe the transactional communication model used by employees in the workplace in managing work tasks. This research employs a holistic approach, wherein data are collected, analyzed, and described in the form of natural words and language, while also considering the specific context experienced by the research subjects. According to Moleong (2010), qualitative research produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed

behaviors. This approach is used to deeply understand social phenomena through the collection of descriptive data and analysis that does not employ statistical procedures.

The subjects of this study are employees from a government office within the Faculty of Languages and Literature, Universitas Negeri Makassar and from the public broadcasting institution, TVRI South Sulawesi. The subjects have been selected purposively by considering their readiness, availability, and high intensity of communication.

This research employs three instruments: data from transcriptions of audio recordings of communication among employees, and observation sheets containing lists of interaction and communication activities collected during the process of interaction and communication among employees in managing work materials, and the semi-structured interview asking the employees' responses towards the interaction and communication process in the management of work materials.

The data are analyzed in three stages according to Miles and Huberman (2014):

- a. Coding is the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, and categorizing data related to transactional communication model. Excessive or irrelevant data are reduced to focus on information that is important and relevant to the research objectives. The data are then coded based on emerging themes or categories.
- b. Data Display is conducted after coding. The reduced data are arranged in forms that are easy to read and understand, such as excerpt arrangements. The purpose of data display is to help the researchers analyze relationships among different parts of the data and to identify patterns or trends that emerge from the coded data.
- c. Conclusion Drawing and Verification occur when the researchers begin to draw conclusions from the displayed data. Conclusions may take the form of patterns, main findings, or hypotheses developed based on the available data. Verification is carried out to ensure that the conclusions drawn are valid and truly based on the data. This may involve rechecking or triangulating the data with other sources.

FINDINGS

Transactional communication in the two workplaces occurs across various situations, particularly in the management of work-related materials. The following are the situations that most frequently arise and constitute the primary focus of transactional communication among employees.

Extract 1: Meeting coordination

A: *"Bu, kapan agenda rapat revisi kurikulum?"*

B: *"Tunggu mi sampai ada surat penyampaiannya baru bisa kita laksanakan rapatnya."*

A: *"ok pale bu. Jadi ditunggu dulu penyampaiannya di."*

B: *"Iya."*

English translation:

A: "Ma'am, when is the curriculum revision meeting scheduled?"

B: "We need to wait until the official notification letter is issued before we can hold the meeting."

A: "Alright then, ma'am. So, we'll wait for the notification first."

B: "Yes."

The analysis of the transactional communication model in Extract 1 is presented as follows:

The organizational context

This conversation takes place within an educational institution, among staff. Two contextual elements shape the exchange:

- a. Organizational structure. The use of honorifics ("*Bu*") indicates hierarchical roles. A appears to be seeking information from B, who likely holds authority or responsibility over scheduling.
- b. Organizational procedures. The need for an official notification letter ("*surat penyampaiannya*") reflects procedural norms for holding formal meetings.

Message flow direction

These kinds of communication form a transactional loop where communication flows in both directions and influences mutual understanding.

- a. Downward communication (B → A): B provides procedural information and implicitly sets conditions for when the meeting can occur. This indicates authority or gatekeeping of organizational processes.
- b. Upward communication (A → B): A is requesting clarification regarding the meeting schedule. This is typical upward communication where employees seeking direction or confirmation.

Message creation, interpretation, and shared meaning

The participants co-construct meaning through short, direct exchanges. This shows successful creation of shared meaning, where both parties align their understanding of the next step.

- a. A's initial question seeks a specific operational detail (meeting schedule).
- b. B's response reframes the issue: the meeting depends on the arrival of an official letter.
- c. A demonstrates shared understanding by restating B's point ("*ditunggu dulu penyampaiannya*").
- d. B affirms with "*Iya*."

Feedback loops

Feedback occurs continuously throughout the exchange. It aims at ensuring clarity about the procedural requirement, reducing uncertainty about task timing, and confirming mutual understanding before any action is taken.

- a. A acknowledges B's explanation ("*ok pale bu*") and reiterates understanding.
- b. B provides a confirming response ("*Iya*"), signaling agreement and closure.

Communication climate and relational tone

The conversation maintains a supportive and cooperative climate. This positive climate supports smooth task coordination. They use polite forms which reflects respect. No conflict or misunderstanding arises; both speakers remain aligned. The tone suggests a workplace culture that values clarity and procedural correctness.

Extract 2: Task review

A: *“Yuk, apa sudah dibuatkan daftar validator instrumen penelitian?”*

B: *“Sementara toh bu, baru tiga orang yang isi GForm.”*

A: *“Kenapa sedikit sekali?” Na sudah mi saya sebar GForm-nya.”*

B: *“Saya cek lagi bu sebentar.”*

A: *“Ok, kabarika nah.”*

B: *“Siap bu.”*

English translation:

A: “Hey, has the list of research instrument validators been prepared?”

B: “It’s still in progress, ma’am. Only three people have filled out the Google Form so far.”

A: “Why so few? I already distributed the Google Form.”

B: “I’ll check again, ma’am, just a moment.”

A: “Okay, let me know the update.”

B: “Yes, ma’am.”

The analysis of the transactional communication model in Extract 2 is presented as follows:

Organizational context

This conversation occurs in an academic or research setting, among colleagues working on a research project.

- a. Organizational structure. A appears to be in a supervisory or coordinating role, as indicated by directive language and honorifics used by B (“*bu*”). B functions as the task executor or data collector.
- b. Organizational procedures. The task involves preparing a list of research instrument validators using a Google Form for data collection. Procedures rely on digital tools, typical of contemporary academic workflows.

Message flow direction

The two directions create a transactional exchange, where messages flow in both directions and shape mutual understanding.

- a. Upward communication (A → B). A initiates communication by requesting information about task progress (“has the validator list been prepared?”). This is upward in the sense that A is checking on the status of a delegated task.
- b. Downward communication (B → A). B reports task progress back to A (“only three people have filled out the form”). B later also commits to follow-up actions (“I’ll check again, ma’am”).

Message creation, interpretation, and shared meaning

The conversation displays active construction of shared meaning:

- a. A seeks clarity on the task's completion status.
- b. B interprets A's concern and provides an update.
- c. A expresses surprise at the low response ("Why so few?").
- d. B interprets this concern as a need for further checking and commits to re-evaluating the form responses.
- e. A acknowledges and requests follow-up communication ("let me know").

Feedback loops

Feedback is immediate and continuous, demonstrating the transactional nature of the exchange.

- a. Informational Feedback: B informs A about the number of responses.
- b. Corrective/Action-Oriented Feedback: A expresses concern, prompting B to take corrective action (checking the form again).
- c. Relational Feedback: Polite and respectful language reinforces a cooperative working relationship.

Communication climate and relational tone

The tones of the conversation are: Respectful (Honorifics and polite forms maintain professionalism), Cooperative (B responds promptly and takes responsibility for follow-up tasks), and Task-oriented (The exchange is focused on achieving a specific project requirement). The climate appears supportive, contributing to smooth coordination.

Extract 3: Work allocation

A: "Baik bapak ibu, kita bagi memang siapa-siapa yang akan mengerjakan apa. Harap berterima dan segera kita eksekusi dokumennya."

BCDE: "Ok mam. Kira-kira kapan deadline-nya mam?"

A: "Tahan dulu, kita bagi tugas dulu. Segera deadline-nya supaya bisa cepat selesai."

BCDE: "Ok mam."

A: "Untuk bagian pertama saya dan bu Citra. Bagian kedua, Fahri dan Surya. Terus bagian C bagiannya Ari dan Abul." Jelas mi?

BCDE: "Ok mam. Jadi bisa mi dikerja sekarang?"

A: "Ok, mainkan. Kita selesaikan dokumen ini paling lambat Rabu depan. Bisa dicicil-cicil dan kalau tidak jelas, kita chat di grup WA mi."

BCDE: "Ok mam."

English Translation:

A: "Alright everyone, we'll divide who will handle which tasks. Please take note so we can start executing the documents immediately."

BCDE: "Okay, ma'am. Approximately when is the deadline, ma'am?"

A: "Hold on for now; let's assign the tasks first. We'll set the deadline soon so it can be completed quickly."

BCDE: "Okay, ma'am."

A: "For the first part, it will be me and Mrs. Citra. The second part, Fahri and Surya. Then for Part C, it will be Ari and Abul. Clear?"

BCDE: "Okay, ma'am. So can we start working on it now?"

A: "Yes, go ahead. We need to finish this document by next Wednesday at the latest. You can work on it in parts, and if anything is unclear, we'll discuss it in the WhatsApp group."

BCDE: "Okay, ma'am."

The analysis of the transactional communication model in Extract 3 is presented as follows:

Organizational context

This interaction takes place in a collaborative workgroup, within an academic where members are preparing a document.

- a. Organizational structure. A function as the leader or coordinator, evidenced by instructions, task assignment, and deadline setting. BCDE function as team members who respond to instructions and seek clarification.
- b. Organizational procedures. The team is preparing a formal document following a structured workflow: division of tasks, deadlines, and follow-up communication. Use of digital communication tools (WhatsApp group) reflects technological integration typical in modern workplaces.

Message flow directions

- a. Downward communication (A→BCDE). A provides task instructions ("*kita bagi siapa yang mengerjakan apa*"), task assignments, deadlines ("*paling lambat Rabu depan*"), and process guidance ("*kalau tidak jelas, kita chat di grup WA*"). This demonstrates managerial or supervisory communication, guiding team workflow.
- b. Upward communication (BCDE → A). BCDE ask for clarification ("*kapan deadline-nya?*") and confirm understanding ("Ok mam"). This shows team members providing feedback, seeking information, and aligning their actions with the leader's instructions.

Messages creation, interpretation, and shared meaning

The conversation shows active meaning-making. Shared meaning is co-constructed by team members understand what to do, who does what, and by when.

- a. A set the agenda (task division and document execution).
- b. BCDE interpret and respond by asking a relevant operational question about deadlines.
- c. A reframes the process ("*Tahan dulu... kita bagi tugas dulu*"), guiding how the group should think about the workflow.
- d. A then clearly assigns specific roles, enabling shared understanding of responsibilities.
- e. BCDE's repeated confirmations ("Ok mam") show alignment and agreement.
- f. A provides final clarification on timelines and communication channels.

Feedback loops

Feedback is continuous throughout the interaction, demonstrating the model's transactional emphasis.

- a. Informational Feedback. BCDE ask about the deadline, seeking clarity. A respond by providing clear instructions and timeline.
- b. Corrective Feedback. A adjusts the flow of the discussion ("*Tahan dulu*"), signaling that task division must occur before discussing deadlines.
- c. Relational Feedback. Polite confirmations ("Ok mam") maintain interpersonal respect and reinforce a cooperative working environment.

Communication climate and relational tone

The communication climate is:

- a. Supportive and task-oriented. The conversation is efficient, focusing on achieving shared goals. Team members respond positively and respectfully to the coordinator. A uses clear and direct language to maintain structure and group coordination.
- b. Collaborative. Despite a hierarchical tone, the team shows readiness to work together. A encourages ongoing collaboration through WhatsApp, indicating openness and accessibility.

Extract 4: News content preparation

A: "*Bu, materi liputan untuk berita siang sudah lengkap?*"

B: "*Sudah ada tiga paket video. Tinggal voice-over dari tim redaksi.*"

A: "*Baik, nanti saya proses di ruang editing.*"

English translation:

A: "Ma'am, is the coverage material for the noon news complete?"

B: "We already have three video packages. Only the voice-over from the editorial team is pending."

A: "Alright, I'll process it later in the editing room."

The analysis of the transactional communication model in Extract 4 is presented as follows:

The organizational context

This exchange occurs in a media or broadcasting workplace, specifically within the news production process.

- a. Organization structure. A and B are colleagues involved in producing a news segment. B appears responsible for gathering or preparing news material, while A handles post-production (editing).
- b. Organizational procedures. The conversation fits into a structured newsroom workflow involving: content gathering, video packaging, editorial voice-over, and editing and final assembly. These established procedures define the expectations each person brings to the communication.

Message flow direction

- a. Downward communication (A → B). A's initial question checks the readiness of materials needed for editing. This is coordinative, as A and B depend on each other's work to complete the news production process.
- b. Upward communication (B→A). B reports progress ("three video packages" and the pending voice-over). B provides essential feedback that allows A to plan the next production step.

Message creation, interpretation, and shared meaning

Meaning is constructed collaboratively:

- a. A's question sets the communicative frame: readiness of materials for the noon news.
- b. B interprets this as a status update request and provides concise information about what is complete and what remains.
- c. A interprets B's update as sufficient to proceed and states the next action ("I will process it in the editing room").

Feedback loops

The conversation includes clear, immediate feedback. This feedback ensures synchronous coordination between departments, which is essential in a time-sensitive environment like news production.

- a. Informational feedback. B updates A on the status of the content ("three video packages... voice-over pending").
- b. Action-oriented feedback. A respond by stating a concrete next step: "I will process it in the editing room."

Communication climate and relational tone

The tones are:

- a. Task-focused and professional. The conversation is brief and objective, centered on task completion. Politeness markers ("*Bu*," "*Baik*") maintain a respectful working relationship.
- b. Cooperative. Both parties contribute information that helps move the production forward. The exchange demonstrates mutual reliance and smooth teamwork.

Extract 5: Daily broadcast evaluation

A: "*Bagaimana ji hasil siaran tadi malam?*"

B: "*Bagus, sementara dirampungkan.*"

A: "*Baik, tolong selesaikan laporan harian.*"

B: "*Siap.*"

English translation:

A: "How was last night's broadcast?"

B: "Good, it's currently being finalized."

A: "Alright, please complete the daily report."

B: "Alright."

The analysis of the transactional communication model in Extract 5 is presented as follows

Organizational structure

This conversation takes place in a broadcasting division where routine evaluations of aired programs are part of the workflow.

- a. Organizational structure. A appears to hold a supervisory or coordinating role, asking for an evaluation report and instructing follow-up action. B functions as a staff member responsible for monitoring broadcasts and reporting issues.
- b. Organizational procedures. The evaluation of nightly broadcasts is a standard internal procedure. Situation (e.g., being finalized) is identified. These procedures shape how both A and B communicate and interpret actions.

Message flow direction

- a. Upward communication (B →A). B provides an evaluation update, reporting a recent condition. This reflects upward communication, where subordinates provide information to supervisors.
- b. Downward communication (A→B). A instructs B to record the issue in the daily report. This is directive communication typical of a managerial role.

Message creation, interpretation, and shared meaning

Meaning is co-created through the short exchange:

- a. An initiate by requesting evaluation results, setting the context for the interaction.
- b. B interprets this as a request for a performance summary and reports the condition.
- c. A interprets the update as valid but incomplete without documentation, and directs B to finish the daily report.
- d. Both arrive at shared understanding about: what the issue was, that it has been fixed, what follow-up action is required (documentation)

Feedback loops

The feedback is immediate and effective, showing a transactional, interactive communication process.

- a. Informational feedback. B provides evaluation details: a recent condition occurred but has been fixed.
- b. Corrective feedback. A respond with instruction to complete the document.

Communication climate and relational tone

The communication climate supports efficiency and accuracy in a time-sensitive industry. The tones of the exchange are:

- a. Professional and task-oriented. Each message focuses directly on the broadcast evaluation and necessary actions. There are no relational or emotional complications—only concise work-related information.
- b. Supportive and clear. A's "*Baik*" indicates acknowledgment and maintains a positive climate. Instructions are given clearly and respectfully.

DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the conversations using Shockley-Zalabak's Organizational Communication Process Model illustrates how organizational communication is inherently transactional, contextual, and relational. As demonstrated in the workplace interactions, communication is not simply the transfer of information but a dynamic, co-created process shaped by roles, procedures, relationships, and organizational expectations. This aligns with Shockley-Zalabak's (2015) conceptualization that communication within an organization occurs through continuous message exchange, influenced by both formal structures and informal interactions.

Across the extracts, the communication reflects the model's emphasis on shared meaning, which is central to transactional processes. Meaning is negotiated in real time as participants interpret messages based on their tasks, responsibilities, and mutual interdependence. This is consistent with the view that communication is not linear but interactive and mutually influential (Barnlund, 1970). For example, when employees clarify task assignments or respond to procedural queries, each utterance modifies the next, producing a coordinated understanding necessary for task completion.

The interactions also reveal strong feedback loops, which Shockley-Zalabak's argues are essential for organizational effectiveness. Feedback—whether informational, corrective, or relational—functions as a regulatory mechanism that ensures accuracy, alignment, and clarity. This supports Men's (2014) assertion that timely and transparent feedback improves organizational trust and communication climate. In each analyzed extract, feedback facilitates rapid adjustments and confirms understanding, demonstrating high communication competence as described by Spitzberg and Cupach (1984).

Furthermore, the analyses highlight the importance of organizational context—including hierarchy, culture, and procedures—in shaping communicative behavior. Structural elements such as supervisory roles, deadlines, or standard reporting processes influence how messages are framed and interpreted. This is consistent with Katz and Kahn's (1978) systems theory, which explains that organizational communication is embedded within interdependent subsystems that guide employee actions.

The conversations also reflect the role of organizational climate, particularly respect, cooperation, and responsiveness. Such climate characteristics contribute to effective task coordination and are essential for maintaining positive employee relationships (Putnam & Nicotera, 2009). The respectful tone, use of honorifics, and willingness to respond promptly indicate a supportive climate that facilitates smooth information flow.

Finally, the importance of task coordination, especially in time-sensitive and collaborative work environments such as broadcasting and education, reinforces the model's relevance. Organizational communication scholars note that effective coordination emerges when communication is clear, timely, and grounded in shared understanding (Shockley-Zalabak, 2015; Daft, 2016). The extracts show communication functioning as a mechanism through which collective work is organized, problems are solved, and goals are achieved.

Overall, these analyses affirm that Shockley-Zalabak's model provides a comprehensive lens for understanding how communication processes operate within real workplace settings. By recognizing the dynamic interplay of messages, feedback, context, and interpersonal relationships, the model offers valuable insights into the mechanisms that sustain organizational functioning.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the workplace conversations using Shockley-Zalabak's Organizational Communication Process Model demonstrates that communication within organizational settings is fundamentally transactional, interactive, and context-dependent. Across all extracts, communication emerges not as a simple transmission of information but as a co-created process shaped by hierarchical roles, organizational procedures, feedback loops, and interpersonal dynamics. The conversations reveal that shared meaning is continuously negotiated through immediate responses, clarifications, and adjustments, allowing employees to coordinate tasks, solve problems, and maintain workflow efficiency. The findings also emphasize the importance of organizational context, including structure, culture, and workflow norms, in shaping communicative behavior.

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