



مجلة البحث في التربية وعلم النفس

كلية التربية – جامعة المنيا

كلية مُعتمدة من الهيئة القومية لضمان جودة التعليم



## **Using a Differentiated Instruction Based Program for Enhancing Elementary School EFL Sixth Graders' Reading Comprehension Skills and Reading Engagement**

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### **Abstract**

The current study was carried out to investigate the impact of using a differentiated instruction based program for enhancing elementary school EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement. A quasi-experimental pre-posttest control group research design was employed. Participants of the study consisted of sixty four boys and girls students randomly selected from Shalby Primary School at Minia Governorate. They were divided into two groups; a treatment group (n=32) and a non-treatment one (n=32). A Differentiated Reading Instruction Program was developed by the researcher and used with the treatment group whereas, the non-treatment one received regular reading instruction. For grouping the participants of the treatment group, three questionnaires were developed to differentiate instruction according to their reading interests, learning styles, and grouping orientation. Instruments of the study included a reading comprehension inventory, a differentiated instruction program, a reading comprehension test and a reading engagement scale. Analysis of data revealed that the treatment group significantly outperformed the non-treatment one in the post-performance of the reading

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comprehension test and in the post administration of the reading engagement scale. Recommendations and suggestions for further research were presented.

**Key Words:** Differentiated Instruction- Reading Comprehension Skills- Reading Engagement

**المخلص العربي:**

استخدام برنامج قائم على التدريس المتميز لتحسين مهارات الفهم القرائي والاندماج في القراءة لدى تلاميذ الصف السادس الابتدائي الدارسين للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية

إعداد

د/ مروة جمال محمد شحاته

**مدرس بقسم المناهج وطرق تدريس اللغة الانجليزية – كلية التربية – جامعة المنيا**

هدفت الدراسة الحالية الى بحث أثر استخدام برنامج قائم على التدريس المتميز لتحسين مهارات الفهم القرائي والاندماج في القراءة لدى تلاميذ الصف السادس الابتدائي الدارسين للغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية. تم استخدام المنهج شبه التجريبي القائم على استخدام مجموعتين مجموعة تجريبية وأخرى ضابطة. تكونت عينة الدراسة من ٦٤ تلميذ وتلميذة من تلاميذ الصف السادس الابتدائي بمدرسة شلبي الابتدائية التابعة لإدارة المنيا التعليمية حيث تم اختيار فصلين عشوائيا ليمثل أحدهما المجموعة التجريبية (٣٢) والآخر يمثل المجموعة الضابطة (٣٢). وقد أعدت واستخدمت الباحثة برنامج قائم على التدريس المتميز لتحسين مهارات الفهم القرائي والاندماج في القراءة لتدريسه للمجموعة التجريبية بينما درست المجموعة الضابطة بالطريقة المعتادة. ومن أجل تقسيم المجموعة التجريبية الى مجموعات فرعية تم استخدام ثلاث استنبيانات وذلك لتنوع التدريس طبقا لتنوع اهتمامات القراءة، أساليب التعلم، والتوجه نحو العمل الجماعي. وقد اشتملت أدوات الدراسة على قائمة مهارات الفهم القرائي، برنامج قائم على التدريس المتميز، اختبار الفهم القرائي ومقياس الاندماج في القراءة. وقد أظهرت نتائج الدراسة تفوق المجموعة التجريبية على المجموعة الضابطة في اختبار الفهم القرائي



ومقياس الاندماج في القراءة. وقد اختتمت الباحثة دراستها بتقديم مجموعة من التوصيات ومقترحات لأبحاث مستقبلية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: برنامج قائم على التدريس المتميز- مهارات الفهم القرائي- الاندماج في القراءة

### **Introduction:**

Language plays an important role in enabling individuals all over the world to communicate with each other. English is one of the most important languages that help most of the countries communicate internationally. When children learn a foreign language, they develop skills that help to create opportunities in the future. They acquire the lifelong ability to communicate with others under diverse circumstances.

Tomlinson (2014) reported that teachers are faced with the challenge of teaching a group of learners with diverse abilities while using instructional methodologies developed for a whole-class approach. Around the same issue, Tomlinson, Brimijoin and Narveaz (2008) highlighted that it seems unrealistic to think that all students will thrive in classrooms that disregard their learning differences.

Therefore, teachers should focus on the diverse learning needs of their students to improve achievement (Rock, Gergg, &Gable, 2008). In this respect, there are new trends and instructional approaches that take into account the students' needs and give emphasis to their strength rather than to their weaknesses. One of these approaches is 'Differentiated Instruction'.

Differentiated Instruction is defined as an instructional approach used to meet the academic and behavioral needs of a wide variety of diverse learners within the classroom setting (Edwards, Carr &Siegal, 2006). Students in differentiated classroom setting become more engaged, motivated, and excited about learning if the curriculum is authentic and meaningful and if appropriate learning goals are provided. (Tieso, 2001).



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On the other hand, Champman and King (2009) stated that there are too many students who struggle to read and have difficulty completing literacy assignments. Struggling readers are students who exhibit long term reading challenges and are below average in recognizing letters, syllables, and words.

In this regard Mc Namara (2009) pointed out that reading achievement remains a detrimental factor of academic success or failure. Therefore, learners who have difficulty in reading at elementary school may struggle to read until the end of their school life or may have more difficulties to read. Reading is a major skill that has a significant effect on students' achievement at the elementary level (Kent, 2005). According to Hall and Piazza (2008), students' ability to develop and acquire well-grounded reading skills during this period may have great effect on their achievement long after their elementary school years.

Comprehension is the goal of reading without it, students cannot gain meaning from the text. Furthermore, the more students are engaged in what they are reading the more likely it is that their reading comprehension will be at or above grade level. Implementing differentiated instruction assists to engage disengaged readers. (Little, McCoach & Reis, 2014; Gambrell, 2011 & Block & Pressley, 2002)

In order to effectively implement differentiated instruction in reading and engage students throughout the learning process, an effective teacher needs to know each child's skill level and have an idea of where the child should be (Tomlinson, 2006). Moreover, Latz, Neumeister, Adams and Pierce (2009) assured that in order to successfully implement differentiated instruction in classrooms; teachers must be willing to invest extra planning time and preparation not only to create more work for students, but also create different types of work. As a result, students may participate in the content to the best of their ability.



## **Review of Literature:**

### **Differentiated Instruction:**

Differentiated instruction was defined by Tomilnson (2003) as " a pedagogical approach based on the fact that students learn best when their teachers actively accommodate their differences in background experience, culture, language, gender, interests, readiness to learn, modes and speed of learning, support systems for learning, self-awareness as a learner, confidence as a learner and numerous other differences that impact how they learn".

Morover, Heacox (2012) presented a more recent definition referring to it as "an alternative approach that changes the place, level, or kind of instruction provided in response to individual learners' needs, styles, or interests" .

Ankrum (2006) elaborated that students come to school with a range of literacy experiences and capabilities. Teachers ought to group children in an attempt to differentiate instruction to meet the differing needs that children possess as they learn to read and write. However, Donen (2012) stated that too many teachers and schools continued to treat students in the classroom as if they were a homogenous group.

Tomlinson (2006) illustrated that students in a differentiated classroom, differ in three important ways: readiness, interests, and learning profiles. Therefore, teacher should meet these differences in order to maximize the learning potential of each student in the classroom.

### **Strategies of Differentiated Instruction:**

There are varied differentiated instruction strategies for teachers to use in order to meet students' differences in levels, needs, learning styles, and interests while implementing their lessons. The use of varied and differentiated strategies provides different ways of processing information , and accommodates a wider degree of learning preferences (Optiz&Ford, 2008; Tobin&McInnes, 2008). The main strategies of differentiated instruction are compacting, cubing,



learning centers, interest groups, tiered assignments, flexible grouping, varying questions, independent projects, anchoring activities, and learning contracts. (Scott, 2012). The follow is an elaboration of the seven differentiated instruction strategies that are used in the study:

### **1. Interest Centers:**

Interest centers give students an enjoyable opportunity to pursue areas of special interest to them. Further, teachers can differentiate these centers and groups into different levels based on students' abilities. They can also be differentiated based on interest and they should be appropriately challenging for all students.(Bradfield,2012).

### **2.Flexible grouping:**

In this strategy, students do not belong to one group , but many groups. They may be grouped according to their interests, learning styles, or ability levels. Teachers also may create groups that are heterogeneous in readiness level (Tovani,2010).

### **3.Varying Questions:**

In this strategy, teachers, in class discussions and tests, vary the questions types based on the learners' readiness, interests, and learning styles. (Tomlison, 2014)

### **4.Reading Buddies:**

Reading buddies are work stations in which two students are paired together to read the same passage or text and then complete activities in order to help build reading fluency and comprehension, This strategy enables students to learn from each other. Teachers use this strategy for students as they work with smaller groups. (Diller, 2011)

### **5.Tiered Assignments:**

Tiered assignments is a strategy which provides different levels of an activity to meet the different levels of student readiness for the concept being taught (Differentiated Instruction Handbook,2015). Additionally, Smith(2015) stated that in tiered assignments strategy, students engage in leveled activities to explore ideas at a level that is



right for them based on their learning profiles. These activities are designed to build on what they know so that they can move on to higher levels.

### **6. Cubing:**

Cubing is an effective strategy for differentiation. It is defined as "a versatile strategy that allows teachers to plan different activities based on student readiness, learning styles, or interests." (Cox, 2008). In this strategy, teachers write different assignments on a six-sided cube. All of the cubes have the same content, but each activity is different. When students roll the cube, they would perform the assignment the cube displays. (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). In addition, Differentiation Instruction Handbook (2015) stated that "cube activities allow students to look at an idea from many different angles and perspective". (p.9)

### **7. Word Cycle:**

In this strategy, students read a list of words in the middle of the circle. They select one word and place it in a circle. In the next circle, they place another word that is related to the first. They could be synonyms, antonyms, steps in a process or examples of something. (Differentiated Instruction Handbook, 2015).

### **Reading Comprehension Skills:**

Comprehension is the "essence of reading" (Gibson, Judith & Charissa (2007). It is a complex thinking process that requires the reader to construct meaning from the text. Comprehension is better regarded as a process rather than a particular outcome or product in which a reader interacts with a text to construct meaning. Rica (2009) pointed out that the meaning a reader derives from a text is influenced by his or her own knowledge, experience, and perceived purpose for reading. The meaning-making process is what (Gibson et.al 2007) terms "the essence of reading". Therefore, Tompkins (2011) defined reading comprehension as the level of understanding a text/message. This understanding comes from the interaction between the words that are



written and how they trigger knowledge outside the text/message. Lenz (2005) clarified that like the performance of a symphony reading is a holistic art. Accordingly, in order to achieve comprehension, reading must employ and integrate certain sub-skills since each sub-skill does not stand alone, exactly like a symphony. In addition, teaching such sub-skills require: suitability to students' levels, systematic steps, responsiveness to students' needs, authenticity of materials, diversity of materials and others.

However, learners should develop these skills that help them effectively comprehend what they read. However, Millrood (2001); Harmer (2002); Faust (2002); Mifflin (2003); Mckown & Barnett (2007) recorded the following reading comprehension skills:

### 1- Skimming:

Hamer (2002) defined skimming as the ability "to take in a stream of discourse and understand the gist of it without worrying too much about the details. Identifying a main idea, which comes as a result of fast reading, helps readers achieve more comprehension. In order to identify a main idea, two questions should be asked: "*What is this about?*" and "*What does the writer want to say about this?*".

### 2- Scanning:

Beare (2012) stated that scanning is the ability of students to read a text for particular bits of information. It is the reader's brain to search for specific information such as words, names and answers to specific information

### 3- Knowing the meaning of words through context:

Faust (2002) highlighted that knowing the meaning of every single word is not the end. Therefore, dictionary is not always preferable as it consumes much of reading time, and thus makes readers forget what they have just read. Therefore, learners should be trained and encouraged to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words from context.





#### **4- Making Inferences and drawing conclusion:**

Farrell (2009) making inferences and drawing conclusions are also essential in the reading process. The difference between them is time; whereas making inferences takes place during reading, the latter takes place after a reader finishes reading.

#### **5- Prediction :**

Eileen (2019) asserted that prediction is linked to the strategy of activating prior knowledge. It creates anticipation and gets students to think about previous experiences that may have had about the topic before they read about it. Predictions get students to guess what will happen next (from the title, subheadings, photos and pictures).

#### **6- Sequencing Events:**

It is the ability to know in which order certain events happen. Such a skill helps readers make decisions about relationships in a text. Therefore, a good reader always pays attention to how a writer presents his passage and what clues he uses such as *first, then, next, later and finally*. (Mckown & Barnett 2007)

#### **7- Summarizing:**

According to Pearson Incorporation (2009), summarizing refers to a reader's ability to put a written or spoken text in a shortened version using his own words. To do this, a reader should focus on the main points of the text and some major supporting details as well. This skill also gives a clear indication that comprehension exists.

#### **Reading Engagement:**

If the reading material is much above students' level, it will be frustrating and disappointing as they will not comprehend it. On the other, if it is much easier and simpler, it will not add any new information to its readers; and thus it is a waste of time. Hence, reading materials should meet students' needs and interests as this enhances and develops their motivation and increases their



engagement in the reading text and participation in class.

Engagement in reading is the joint functioning of motivational processes and cognitive strategies during reading comprehension activities. (Guthrie&Wigfield , 2000). Furthermore, Framumeni-McBride (2017) elaborated that engaged readers are those who apply reading strategies and skills for comprehension and conceptual knowledge, are motivated to learn. They are not only able to decode and comprehend texts, but they value reading, believe they are good readers and choose to read. Reading engagement is not an attack on the cognitive importance of reading, it is rather a call for the integration between motivation, cognition, and social contributions so that students would become life-long successful readers.

Guthrie & Taboada (2004) perceive engaged readers as those who are intrinsically motivated , build knowledge, use cognitive strategies and interact socially to learn from texts. In this regard, Wigfield , Guthrei, Perpencivich, Lutzklauda , Amcrae &Barbosa(2008) asserted that there are at least four variables that can influence students' reading engagement (1)autonomy support and choice (2) use of interesting texts in classroom instruction, (3) having conceptual goal for reading instruction, and (4) supporting collaboration in reading.

For promoting reading engagement, Gambrell (2011) listed down seven rules as students are more motivated to read when :

1. The reading tasks and activities are relevant.
2. They have access to a wide range of reading materials.
3. They have ample opportunities to engage in sustained reading.
4. They have opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in and complete literacy tasks.
5. They have opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading.
6. They have opportunities to be successful with challenging texts.
7. The classroom reflects the value and importance of reading.
8. Teachers encourage peer-work as it promotes motivation and engagement as reading in this case becomes a social activity



## Related Studies:

### I. Studies related to Differentiated Instruction and Reading

#### Comprehension:

There is a limited number of studies that tried to investigate the use of differentiated instruction in developing learners' reading comprehension except the study conducted by (Boutelle 2008) and ankurum (2006) other studies such as Simmon(2015), Bradfield(2012), Gilbert(2011), Driskill(2010) studied the impact of using differentiated instruction on developing reading interest, reading fluency, reading achievement and other studies like Driskill (2010) investigated teachers' perception towards differentiated instruction. Such studies can be presented as follow:

Simmon (2015) carried out a study in order to show the importance for differentiated reading instruction throughout various settings in the Response to Intervention Model. The study provided a review of the literature that is current on the topic, and demonstrated possible strategies that could be used within the three tiers of reading intervention services. The study monitored the growth of five students made in regard to their reading level over the course of their sixth grade school year. All five students were identified as needing additional reading intervention services, yet only three students received these services. The results of the study showed the positive effect that differentiation throughout the RTI model has on students reading interest and reading level.

Bradfield (2012) proposed a study to investigate the effectiveness of differentiated instruction on improving reading for students who had difficulty in learning to read. The study question compared the impact of differentiated instruction to traditional instruction on students' ability to meet reading fluency standards. The study used a quasi-experimental, comparative design where in 40students received differentiated instruction while 20 students received whole-group traditional instruction. The study revealed that students who



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differentiated instruction scored significantly higher on their reading fluency test; however, there was no significant difference in the scores of nonsense word fluency tests. The study also recommended educators to apply differentiated instruction instead of traditional instruction for improving their students' reading performance.

Gilbert (2011) carried out a study to compare and analyze the instruction of second grade teachers and to examine the effects of differentiated instruction on students' reading achievement. The study also analyzed the degree of traditional instruction used during reading. The study sample was two classes of second grade students of a small rural elementary school in Georgia. Besides, qualitative data was collected by conducting classroom observations and teacher interviews to determine perceptions of current instructional practices used by teachers. The findings of the study indicated that the student's reading achievement in the differentiated classroom was significantly higher than the students in the conventional classroom.

Morover, Driskill (2010) conducted a research study with fourth grade general education teachers in an urban school at New York district, where students' needs were highly diverse and to ascertain teachers' perceptions of differentiated instruction. In addition, the study was conducted to collect examples of practical application of differentiated instruction strategy. For collecting data, interviews were conducted with participants. The study findings indicated that teachers perceived how to tailor reading instruction to the individual needs of students. The results also showed that a wide range of tasks, activities, and products were used as well as the use of flexible groupings in order to reach the diverse needs for all learners.

Boutelle (2008) aimed to recognize and discuss the results of using one hour of direct differentiated instruction for six grade students in student instruction using flexible grouping on a daily basis. Students that were below grade level were given sufficient instruction for more improvement. Students that were on grade level received instruction to help them achieve a higher level, and students that were above grade



level received challenging, enriching instruction. The results of the study revealed that students English language assessments improved as well as comprehension, fluency, spelling and grammar tests.

Ankrum (2006) carried out a case study to investigate and describe the nature of small group differentiated reading instruction in one exemplary second grade classroom. Direct explanation, explicit modeling, invitations to participate, clarification, verification, and telling were the categories used to define the different types of talk used by the teacher to promote the independent use of strategies in reading. The study results revealed that the needs of the students created changes in the way the teacher interacted with group members. Accordingly, student reading skills were improved.

## **II. Studies related to Differentiated Instruction and Reading Engagement:**

To the researcher's knowledge there are only two studies that investigated the effect of using differentiated instruction on developing students' reading engagement. They are the studies conducted by Pastein (2017) and Servilio (2009).

Pastein(2017) carried out a qualitative study that addresses the topics of differentiated instruction in literacy, especially allowing students to self-select their own texts . The literature that was presented in the study suggested that when students are provided with choice in what they are reading, they are more likely to be engaged in the text, be motivated to read, and to comprehend better when texts are chosen by them.

Whereas, Servilio(2009) conducted a case study on a fifth grade student called Malissa . She concluded that one way to improve motivation and engagement for students with disabilities in academic areas is to teach at their level and increase their interest in the instruction and activities. Embedding these interests through offering students options within the curriculum can motivate students who were previously having difficulty or not interested in school. In her study, she highlighted how an elementary teacher and a special



education teacher improved student engagement and increased grades in reading through differentiated instruction and student choice.

### **III. Studies related to Reading Comprehension and Reading Engagement:**

Research has found that there is a strong link between reading comprehension and reading engagement such as the studies conducted by Abdelhalim (2017) and Wigfield, Guthrie, Percpenvich, Lutz, Amcrae & Barbosa (2008).

Abdelhalim (2017) conducted a study to identify the effectiveness of a proposed strategy based on habits of mind and shared inquiry in developing reading comprehension and reading engagement among EFL learners at a KSA university. Instruments included a reading comprehension test and a reading engagement survey. The experimental group received reading strategy and reading engagement activities in addition to general reading practice, while the control group focused on developing general reading comprehension skills. Findings revealed support for the proposed pedagogy as the experimental group achieved higher levels in reading comprehension skills and engagement.

A research team consisted of Wigfield et.al (2008) developed an engagement model of reading development. They compared how Concept-Oriented Reading instruction (CORI) (support for cognitive and motivational process in reading), strategy instruction (support for cognitive strategies in reading), and traditional instruction in fourth-grade class classrooms differently influenced students' reading comprehension, strategy use, and engagement in reading. Students experiencing CORI were significantly higher than both comparison groups on reading comprehension, reading strategies, and reading engagement. They inferred that the level of students' reading engagement during classroom work mediated the instructional effects on reading outcomes.



### **Conclusion:**

The above review shows that differentiation has a powerful impact on students' reading performance, motivation and engagement. However, the previous studies focused and measured different areas in reading such as reading achievement, reading difficulties, reading fluency and reading interests whereas the current study attempts to measure the impact of using a differentiated instruction based program in enhancing elementary school EFL six graders' reading comprehension skills and Reading Engagement through the use of a differentiated Instruction based program.

### **Context of the problem:**

Throughout the researcher's observation as a staff member as for being an external supervisor at different primary schools at Mina Governorate, it has been noticed that the majority of EFL sixth graders lack reading comprehension skills and they are not engaged in what they read as most of them do not show interest in reading activities. To ensure the researchers' observation, two surveys were administered (See Appendix B). First, A four-question survey was conducted on 20 EFL teachers of elementary school investigating: a )which method they use to teach English reading; b) how they meet students' classroom diversity in terms of learning styles, their reading interests and their knowledge of differentiated instruction as a new teaching approach in the Field of TEFL. Second, an oral survey of only two questions was conducted on 20 sixth graders to investigate: 1)how they are taught English reading lessons, and 2) if English teachers meet their ability levels, needs and/ or their learning preferences or not. Through the responses and opinions of both teachers and students, it was noticed that:

- The majority of English teachers (79%) read words, sentences and /or passages, and then the students chorally repeat regardless of the accuracy of reading comprehension and engagement.
- Most of English teachers depend on talented students or



students who normally volunteer during reading activities.

- The majority of teachers cannot cope with different proficiency levels and/or learning preferences of most of the students for some reasons: (a) The limited time of English period, (b) The large number of students within the class, and (c) The lack of reading activities that meet all students' levels.
- Most teachers recognized the literal meaning of differentiated instruction, but they did not know how it is implemented in teaching.

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that teaching reading is still problematic for EFL teachers. Further, differentiated instruction may be an effective method in developing students' reading comprehension and reading engagement it may also increase teachers' awareness to plan instruction that suits students' diversity inside EFL classroom. Accordingly, this study attempts to investigate the effect of using a differentiated instruction based program for enhancing EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement.

#### **Statement of the Problem:**

Based on the researcher's observation, the results of the two questionnaires , the oral survey and the pertinent literature on the powerful influence of using differentiated instruction strategies inside EFL classrooms it became evident that EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension skills and engagement needed to be promoted and enhanced.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

**The present study was conducted to achieve the following objectives:**

- 1- Enhancing EFL sixth graders' reading comprehension skills.
- 2- Enhancing EFL sixth graders' reading engagement.

#### **Questions of the Study:**

**The study attempted to answer the following questions:**

- 1-What is the impact of using a differentiated instruction based program in enhancing elementary school EFL sixth graders'





reading comprehension skills?

2-What is the impact of using a differentiated instruction based program in enhancing elementary school EFL sixth graders' reading engagement?

### **Hypotheses of the Study:**

**Based on reasoning and evidence from reviewing literature, the researcher could formulate the following hypotheses:**

- 1- There would be a statistically significant difference between mean scores obtained by the participants of the treatment and the non-treatment group in the post testing of the reading comprehension skills test (favoring the treatment group).
- 2- There would be a statistically significant difference between mean values obtained by the participants of the treatment and the non-treatment group in the post administration of the reading engagement scale (favoring the treatment group).

### **Significance of the Study:**

**The importance of the current study emerged from the following points:**

1. The study might help EFL teachers to apply differentiated instruction practices in their EFL classrooms based on students' learning preferences and reading interests.
2. The EFL Differentiated Instruction program might help other researchers and specialists in TEFL to conduct other studies in different language areas.
3. The study might help in increasing students' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement so that their academic success and progress in English might be increased throughout the school years.
4. The shortage of research addressing the use of differentiated instruction in the Egyptian EFL classrooms enhances the significance of the study.
5. The study might help curriculum designers to enrich English curriculum and the teacher's guide of sixth graders with a



variety of activities and practices using Differentiated Instruction.

6. The study offered a reading comprehension test and a reading engagement scale.

### **Delimitations of the Study:**

#### **The Study was delimited to:**

1. **Two intact classes** from six graders classes were randomly selected from Shalaby elementary school at Minia Governorate as this grade is considered a crucial one as it is the bridge to the preparatory stage so that students can have the opportunity to develop these skills in the upcoming grades.
2. **Five units** of the Egyptian sixth graders' textbook "*Time for English*"; (1) *At the Museum*, (2) *In the Restaurant*, (3) *Daily Activities*, (4) *Visiting a Film Studio* and (5) *In Town* were reformulated using the differentiated instruction strategies.
3. **Reading Comprehension Skills:** Six reading comprehension skills were developed and measured in the current study (skimming for general ideas-scanning specific information-guessing the meaning of a word from context-making inferences and drawing conclusion-prediction-sequencing events).
4. **Seven strategies of Differentiated instruction** were used in the differentiated instruction program (interest centers, cubing, and flexible grouping, reading buddies, varying questions, tiered assignments and word cycle).
5. The study was conducted in the first term in the academic year 2018-2019.

### **Definitions of Terms:**

#### **Differentiated Instruction:**

Differentiated instruction is operationally defined in this study as an instructional approach in which EFL teachers adapt English curriculum and the teaching method to meet six graders' levels , interests, needs and learning preferences in an appropriate learning



environment to enhance learners' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement.

### **Reading Comprehension skills:**

Reading comprehension is operationally defined as the ability of EFL sixth graders to read and get meaning from a written text and make use of six reading comprehension skills. They are (Skimming for general ideas-scanning specific information-guessing the meaning of a word from context-making inferences and drawing conclusion-prediction-sequencing events).

### **Reading Engagement:**

The researcher operationally defines reading engagement in her study as students' ability to seek understanding in depth with much enjoyment when interacting with a reading text.

### **Material and Method:**

#### **Research Design:**

The present study adopted the quasi-experimental research design; "pretest-posttest equivalent groups" design. Before implementing the study, two classes were randomly assigned as a treatment group and a non-treatment one.

#### **Participants:**

The participants of the present study were chosen from six graders enrolled at Shalby Elementary school at Minia-Governorate. Two intact classes were randomly chosen. One class represented the treatment group and the other represented the non-treatment one. Each consisted of 32 EFL students. They have studied English for five years. The average chronological age of the participants was 11.96.

#### **Duration of the Study:**

The Duration of The experimentation lasted for one semester. The study was conducted in the first term of the academic year 2018-2019. 10 sessions were applied each session lasted for 45 minutes. Besides the two sessions that were devoted to the pre and post testing of the instruments.



### **The Instructors:**

The treatment group was taught by an EFL teacher who received two orientation sessions about the way of conducting the differentiated instruction program and to make sure that he had sufficient knowledge about the program's general objectives. He was trained to classify students according to their ability level, learning styles, group orientation and learning profile. The researcher attended most of the sessions to take notes and make sure that the experimentation was precisely conducted. Another teacher taught the non- treatment group using the regular way of instruction.

### **Variables of the Study:**

#### **The variables of the study were:**

##### **1- Independent Variable:**

The use of a Differentiated Instruction based Program.

##### **2- Dependent Variables:**

- 1-Enhancing EFL sixth graders' Reading Comprehension Skills .
- 2-Enhancing EFL sixth graders' Reading Engagement.

##### **3- Control variables:**

- 1-Students' age.
- 2-Years of learning English.
- 3-Entry level of Reading comprehension and reading engagement

### **Material and Instruments:**

**The researcher developed the following instruments: (See Appendix B)**

1. Establishing Students' learning profile
  - a. Participants' Ability Level (PAL).
  - b. Reading Interest Questionnaire (RIQ).
  - c. Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ).
2. A Reading comprehension skills Inventory
3. A Reading Comprehension Test
4. A Reading Engagement Scale.

#### **I. Students' Learning Profile:**

Learning profile refers to the ways in which student learn best as



individuals. Based on their English ability level, participants were grouped into differentiated groups, advanced, intermediate, and poor learners. Moreover, three questionnaires were designed to identify the participants' reading interest, learning interests, learning styles and group orientation. Participants' grouping based on their learning profile can be detailed as follow:

#### **A. Participants' Ability Level (PAL):**

For grouping participants' on their ability level, participants' grade of the final fifth year English exam were used. To identify the participants' ability level, their English grades were rearranged in a descending order on a scoring sheet. The highest grade was at the top and the lowest one was at the bottom.

#### **B. Reading Interest Questionnaire: (RIQ)**

The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify participants' interests. The RIQ consisted of 15 statements. The items were written in English and translated in Arabic. A three-likert scale was used starting from (Always) then (Often) ending with (Never). The content validity of the questionnaire was established through having it validated by a nine TEFL staff members.

#### **Scoring the RIQ:**

Positive statements were scored from 2 (Always) to 0 (Never) while the reverse scoring was used for the negative items.

#### **Results of the RIQ scoring indicated the following values:**

13 participants were with a high level of reading interest.

10 participants were with an average level of reading interest.

9 participants were with a low level of reading interest.

#### **Time Allotted for the RIQ:**

To determine the time for RIQ, the average time needed for the participants to respond to the questionnaire's items was calculated .The total time was fifteen minutes.

#### **C. Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ).**

The purpose of the learning style questionnaire was to identify



the preferred learning style of the participants, visual, auditory, or kinetic. The questionnaire consisted of 18 statements. It was submitted to 9 TEFL staff member to judge its content validity Items were written in English and translated into Arabic. Participants were required to read carefully each statement and indicate their responses by putting a tick (√) under the column, Yes or No. There is no right or wrong answers. For the LSQ scoring, participants' yes responses were added up. No's responses were excluded. For calculating participants' Yes responses, the following values were used:

Statements: 3, 5, 8, 11, 14 and 16 (Visual learners)

Statements: 1, 4, 7, 10, 17 and 18 (Auditory learners)

Statements: 2, 6, 9, 12, 13 and 15 (Kinetic learners)

**Results of the LSQ indicated that:**

13 participants were visual learners, 8 of the were auditory learners while 11 students were kinetic learners.

**Time allotted:**

To determine the time for RIQ, the average time needed for the participants to respond to the questionnaire's items was calculated .The total time was fifteen minutes.

**D. Group Orientation Questionnaire (GOQ):**

The purpose of this questionnaire was to identify the participants' group orientation and how they would like to practice reading. The questionnaire consisted of 10 items with three choices each. It was submitted to 9 TEFL staff members to judge its content validity. There is no right or wrong answer. Statements of the questionnaire are written in English and translated into Arabic.

**Scoring of the GOQ:**

In order to identify participants' preferred group orientation, their responses were calculated. Items were scored from 0 to 10. Thus, the highest score indicated the participant's preferred grouping orientation whether individual, in pairs or in groups. Results of the GOQ scoring indicated that 7 students preferred working individually, 10 liked to work in pairs, while 15 students preferred group work.



### **Time allotted for the GOQ:**

To determine the time for GOQ, the average time needed for the participants to respond to the questionnaire's items was calculated .The total time was fifteen minutes.

## **II. The Reading Comprehension Skills Inventory:**

### **Objectives of the Inventory:**

The main objective was to determine the mostly needed comprehension skills for six graders.

### **The Content of the Reading Comprehension Inventory:**

The inventory in its preliminary form consisted of sixteen reading comprehension skills. It was administered on nine TEFL staff member to decide upon the mostly needed reading comprehension skills for six graders. The skills which took 85% and more were selected. Thus, the reading comprehension skills that received the agreement from the jury members were six.

## **III. The Reading Comprehension Skills Test (RCST):**

### **- Test Objective:**

The objective of the test was to measure six reading comprehension skills (1)skimming for general idea (2) scanning for specific information (3)making predictions (4)making inferences and drawing conclusion, (5) guessing the meaning of words from context,(6) sequencing events and incidents.

### **- Test Construction:**

1. The test consisted of four reading comprehension passages. Each passage is followed by 6 MCQ questions.
2. The test measured six different reading comprehension skills each skill is measure by four questions.
3. A table of specification was designed to ascertain that the six skills were equally represented in the test.

### **- Piloting the Test:**

The test was piloted on a group of sixth graders (n=30) at Shalaby Elementary School other than those assigned to the experiment. The pilot study was conducted to (1) determine the



validity and the reliability of the test (2) calculate the item difficulty and discrimination index (3) estimate the time allotted for the test.

- **Test Validity:**

**A. Content Validity:**

To establish the content validity of the test it was submitted to nine jury members. The jury members examined the test besides the table of specifications. They examined the test in the light of its clarity, adequacy, difficulty level and relevance to the basic reading sub-skills.

**B. Internal Consistency:**

- Pearson correlation formula was used to determine the internal consistency of the reading comprehension skills test. Table (1) shows the internal consistency between each MCQ item and its reading sub-skill which is acceptable as it ranged from 0.65 to 0.91. Table (2) shows the internal consistency between each MCQ item and the whole test while Table (3) shows the internal consistency between each reading sub-skill and the whole test.

**Table (1) Internal Consistency between Each Item and Its Reading sub-skill.**

Skimming for a general idea in the context		Scanning for specific Information		Making Predictions		Making Inferences and drawing conclusions		Guessing The meaning of words from context		Sequencing events and incidents	
N0.	R	N0.	R	N0.	R	N0.	R	N0.	R	N0.	R
1	*0.85	2	*0.97	5	*0.84	20	*0.75	3	*0.86	6	*0.91
7	*0.93	8	*0.97	11	*0.64	4	*0.92	9	*0.65	12	*0.82
13	*0.76	18	*0.74	14	*0.73	10	*0.85	15	*0.85	17	*0.91
19	*0.94	21	*0.88	23	*0.84	16	*0.87	22	*0.78	24	*0.91

\*Significant at 0.05

**Table (2) Internal Consistency between Each Item and the Whole Test**

N0.	R	N0.	R
1	*0.59	13	*0.93
2	*0.68	14	*0.69
3	*0.72	15	*0.63
4	*0.93	16	*0.71





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N0.	R	N0.	R
5	*0.72	17	*0.72
6	*0.70	18	*0.61
7	*0.72	19	*0.81
8	*0.68	20	*0.65
9	*0.70	21	*0.78
10	*0.78	22	*0.72
11	*0.57	23	*0.71
12	*0.63	24	*0.72

\*Significant at 0.05

Table (3) Internal Consistency between each Reading sub-skill and the Whole Test

No.	Reading Sub-Skills	R
1	Skimming for general idea	*0.88
2	Scanning for specific Information	*0.77
3	Making Predictions	*0.88
4	Making Inferences and drawing conclusions	*0.90
5	Guessing The meaning of words from context	*0.89
6	Sequencing events and incidents	*0.78

\*Significant at 0.05

#### - Test Reliability:

To ensure the reliability of the test Alpha-Cronbach formula was used as shown in table (4) and as it was (0.96) which indicated that the test is reliable.

Table (4) Alpha's Reliability of the Reading Comprehension Skills Test

No.	Domain	Mean	Varian ce	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
1	hing for a general idea in the context	2.3846	3.090	1.75777	*0.89
2	Scanning for specific Information	1.8462	3.308	1.81871	*0.92
3	Making Predictions	2.1538	2.308	1.51911	*0.76
4	Making Inferences and drawing conclusions	2.1538	2.974	1.72463	*0.87



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No.	Domain	Mean	Varian ce	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
5	Guessing The meaning of words from context	2.0769	2.577	1.60528	*0.79
6	Sequencing events and incidents	2.2308	3.359	1.83275	*0.91
	Total	12.8462	75.474	8.68760	*0.96

\*Significant at 0.05

#### - Item Difficulty:

Responses to individual items were analyzed and the difficulty index of the item ranged from 30.77 to 61.54. Hence, the difficulty index of the items is quite acceptable.

#### -Item Discrimination Power:

Item Discrimination was calculated to determine how well each item discriminates between high and low achievers. To achieve this purpose, the researcher separated the highest and the lowest scores on the test. The discriminating items are those answered correctly by more of the higher group than of the lower one. The discrimination power ranged from 42.86 to 100 and this indicates that the test has a discriminating power.

#### - Time allotted for the test:

To determine the time for Reading Comprehension test, the average time needed for the participants to respond to the questionnaire's items was calculated. The total time was 90 minutes.

#### - Scoring of the (RCST):

The total score of the RCST was twenty four marks; one mark for each MCQ item.

#### IV. The Reading Engagement Scale:

##### - Scale Objective:

The scale aimed to measure how far six graders' are engaged in reading.

##### - Scale construction:

The scale consisted of 20 statements. It was a three- likert scale.

##### - Scale Validity:

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#### A. Content Validity:

The scale was submitted to 9 TEFL staff members to determine its content validity. Most of the panel approved its content validity.

#### B. Internal Consistency:

Internal consistency between each statement compared to the scale as a whole is shown below in table (5)

Table (5) Internal Consistency of the Reading Engagement Scale

No.	R	No.	R
1	0.76	11	0.69
2	0.59	12	0.66
3	0.67	13	0.67
4	0.69	14	0.63
5	0.69	15	0.67
6	0.69	16	0.69
7	0.76	17	0.67
8	0.67	18	0.67
9	0.76	19	0.67
10	0.76	20	0.67

\*Significant at 0.05

#### C. Scale Reliability:

Cronbach Alpha'a Reliability Coefficient of the reading engagement Scale was 0.96 and was found acceptable as seen in table (6).

Table (6)

Alpha's Reliability Coefficient of the Reading Engagement Scale

Variable	Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	Cronbach's Alpha
Reading engagement Scale	18.54	58.77	7.67	*0.964

\*Significant at 0.05

#### D. Time allotted:

Forty five minutes were the time devoted to the reading engagement scale.



### **The Differentiated Instruction Program:**

The differentiated Instruction program was developed by the researcher to improve the participants' English reading comprehension skills; skimming for general idea, scanning for specific information, making predictions, making inferences and drawing conclusion, guessing the meaning of words from context, sequencing events and incidents. The program consisted of 10 lessons (See Appendix A). They were designed in the light of students' textbook (Time for English, primary six, first term). It consisted of five units; Places we go, In the Restaurant, Daily Activities, Visiting a Film Studio, and In Town. Each Unit consisted of two lessons.

#### **- Objectives of the Program :**

1. Skimming the text for a general idea.
2. Scanning the text for specific information.
3. Making predictions.
4. Making Inferences
5. Guessing the meaning of words from context.
6. Sequencing events and incidents.
7. Read English passages fluently with comprehension.
8. Identify the words and sentences through their graphic presentation.
9. Indicate sentences through pictures.

#### **- Principles of the Differentiating Instruction Program:**

1. Participants were provided with opportunities to connect their new knowledge with their previous knowledge.
2. Participants were given practice and explanation for each step or a combination of steps.
3. Participants worked alone, in pairs, and or in groups based on their ability
4. Participants experienced additional opportunities to practice differentiated activities and learning that promote increasing responsibility and independence.
5. Participants were given the opportunities to practice interactions



with each other and with the teacher. They were also provided with corrections and feedback.

### **The Instructional Strategies Used in the Program:**

To differentiate reading instruction, the following strategies were used:

1. **Interest Centers:** To differentiate reading instruction, participants were grouped based on their interests, Reading activities were developed accordingly.
2. **Flexible grouping:** Participants were given the opportunity to move to the group that best meets their needs and learning preferences. They do not belong to a definite group.
3. **Reading Buddies:** In this strategy, students were assigned to work and practice reading in pairs. Each pair had the same ability level.
4. **Varying Questions:** The differentiated reading instruction model contained varied questions to give the participants the chance to choose the reading exercise they like to do based on their reading interests and learning styles.
5. **Tiered Assignments:** Reading activities and tasks were tiered to give students the opportunity to choose the activity that helps them to move to a higher reading level.
6. **Whole class:** Based on the content of the course, some reading topics and activities were developed to suit the whole class reading abilities.
7. **Cubing:** To develop participants' reading skill, a six –sided cube was designed to help the participants' reading effectively.

### **- Basics of the Differentiated Reading Instruction Program:**

#### **1. Differentiation of the Content:**

#### **The Content of the program included:**

1. Ten differentiated lessons in five units.
2. Differentiated reading passages and activities to reinforce and develop participants' reading comprehension skills.



3. Differentiated practice worksheets to meet the participants' individual differences and to measure their development of reading.

## **2. Differentiation of the Process:**

**To implement the content of the Differentiated Reading Instruction Program, these processes were considered:**

1. Differentiating teaching practices and methods to meet students' interests, learning styles and needs to best develop their reading comprehension skills.
2. Grouping students based on their reading interests, learning styles, grouping orientation, and or ability levels, so that they work individually, in pairs, or in groups.
3. Implementing some teaching techniques: explanation, modeling, acting guided and independent practices.
4. Differentiating learning materials and teaching aids; worksheets, picture cards, word cards, wall posters, realia, and etc.

## **Differentiation of the Product:**

During the implementation of the reading instruction program, there were two kinds of evaluation, formative evaluation which was conducted after each lesson summative evaluation at the end of the experiment.

## **The Content validity of the Differentiated Instruction Program:**

To establish the content validity of the Differentiated Instruction Program it was submitted to nine TEFL Staff members and five EFL senior teachers at the primary stage. The jury members examined the differentiated instruction program and provided valuable comments and suggestions regarding the program and its learning objectives; content, process, and product differentiation; reading activities; teaching and grouping techniques; materials and aids and criteria for evaluation.

## **Findings:**

### **Testing hypothesis (1) :**

**Hypothesis (1)** predicted that there would be a statistically significant



difference between mean scores obtained by the participants of the treatment and the non-treatment group in the post testing of the reading comprehension skills test (favoring the treatment group). Statistical analysis shown in table (7) indicated that this hypothesis was accepted as the treatment group out-performed the non-treatment one in the reading comprehension skills test. This is quite obvious from viewing the 't' value and the effect size of the program in each skill of the reading comprehension test.

**Table (7) Means, Standard Deviation and 't'-values, Degree of Freedom & Eta Squared Value Obtained by the Treatment and The Non-treatment Group on the Post Test of Reading Comprehension**

No	Reading Comprehension Skills	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	't' Value	D.f	Sig. (2-tailed)	Eta-Squared
1	Skimming for general Idea	Non-Treatment	2.5313	.80259	*7.533	62	.000	0.478
		Treatment	3.7500	.43994				
2	Scanning for Specific Information	Non-Treatment	1.6563	1.00352	*8.451	62	.000	0.535
		Treatment	3.5000	.71842				
3	Making Predictions	Non-Treatment	1.6875	.64446	*9.059	62	.000	0.570
		Treatment	3.2188	.70639				
4	Making Inferences and Drawing Conclusion	Non-Treatment	1.5625	.91361	*11.038	62	.000	<b>0.663</b>
		Treatment	3.5938	.49899				
5	Guessing the meaning from context	Non-Treatment	1.5625	.75935	*7.422	62	.000	0.471
		Treatment	3.0313	.82244				
6	Sequencing Events and Incidents	Non-Treatment	2.2188	.79248	*4.146	62	.000	0.217
		Treatment	3.0938	.89296				
Total		Non-Treatment	11.2188	2.64861	*15.403	62	.000	0.793
		Treatment	20.1875	1.95823				

\*Significant at 0.05



## Testing Hypothesis (2)

**Hypothesis two predicted that there would be a statistically significant difference between mean values obtained by the participants of the treatment and the non-treatment group in the post administration of the reading engagement scale (favoring the treatment group). Statistical analysis in table (8) indicated that this hypothesis was accepted as the treatment group surpassed the non-treatment one in the post administration of the reading engagement scale. This is obviously concluded from viewing the 't' value and the effect size of the program.**

**Table (8)**  
**Means, Standard Deviation and 't'-values, Degree of Freedom & Eta Squared Value obtained by the treatment and the non-treatment group on the post administration of the Reading Engagement Scale**

Variable	Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	't'-value	D.F	Sig. (2-tailed)	Eta-Squared
Reading Engagement	Non-Treatment	33.25	5.76	*11.631	62	0.000	0.7
	Treatment	46.81	3.21				

\*Significant at 0.05

### Discussion:

The present study found that using a differentiated instruction based program was highly effective in enhancing elementary school EFL six graders' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement. It was evidently found that the treatment group surpassed the non-treatment one in the post testing of the reading comprehension test and the post administration of the reading engagement scale.

The treatment group showed a clear progress in the overall six reading comprehension skills. These skills are arranged discerningly according to their improvement and effect size as follow (Making inferences and drawing conclusion, making predictions, scanning for specific information, skimming for general idea, guessing the meaning from





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context and sequencing events and incidents). Consequently, they were described as good readers. Participants possessed the ability to ask questions about the text, draw inferences during reading, synthesize information across and visualize images while reading. The improvement obtained by the treatment group in their reading comprehension skills on the posttest could be attributed to the well-construction of the differentiated reading instruction program. The program consisted of leveled reading passages that suited all the participants, for example, passages with pictures for visual learners, jumbled reading stories for kinetic learners, and passages read by the class teacher for auditory learners. These varied activities aimed to develop and measure participants' reading comprehension based on their learning styles, reading interests, and or ability level. Furthermore, using a variety of differentiated reading instruction strategies used in the program such as (Interest Centers, Flexible grouping, Reading Buddies, Varying Questions, Tiered Assignments, Whole class, Cubing) managed to raise participants' reading comprehension skills. Throughout the lessons participants were engaged in a variety of reading activities that helped them to move towards a higher reading level unlike the non-treatment group who received regular instruction that did not meet their reading interests, ability level, learning profile, group orientation and learning styles. The findings of the present study comes in accordance with Simmon (2015), Bradfield (2012), Gilbert (2011), Driskill (2011), Boutelle (2008) and Ankrum (2006). In addition, the findings of the present study revealed that the differentiated instruction program managed to raise participants' reading engagements. Throughout the experiment participants exhibited more confidence, motivation, and they became independent learners. They have choices about what they read. This in turn, increased their intrinsic motivation and hence their self-efficacy. By the time they value reading and become good readers. This conclusion comes in accordance with the studies conducted by Pastein (2017) and Servilio (2009).



It is noteworthy that reading students' high level in comprehending reading texts has led to more engagement in reading. This conclusion comes in agreement with the studies conducted by Abdelhalim (2017) and Wigfield et.al (2008). Moreover, the suitable selection of the differentiated strategies used with the participants and the ample types of activities that were used as well as the immediate feedback provided by the instructor had led to raise participants reading comprehension and reading engagement.

### **Conclusion:**

To conclude, the researcher could say with evidence that differentiating instruction had a significant effect in enhancing elementary school EFL six graders' reading comprehension skills and reading engagement. Participants showed positive feelings and enthusiasm during the experiment. However, the next step is for the teachers to successfully plan and incorporate differentiated instruction inside classroom.

### **Recommendations:**

**In the light of the results obtained in the present study, a number of recommendations can be drawn:**

1. Differentiated instruction could be used as an effective teaching method in EFL classrooms.
2. Several strategies of differentiated instruction are to be incorporated in teaching oral communicative activities.
3. Students' interests, learning styles, and ability levels should be taken into consideration in the implementation of differentiated instruction.
4. Opportunities should be provided for students to learn individually, in pairs, or in groups according to their grouping orientation.
5. It is recommended to offer training for EFL teachers in planning, implementing and assessing differentiated instruction.
6. Curriculum designers are recommended to prepare materials for primary school students that can be perceived by differentiated instruction.



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7. EFL teachers have to use appropriate prompts in the classroom to enhance students' self-efficacy.

**Suggestions for further Research:**

1. Further research is needed to investigate students' attitudes towards differentiated instruction.
2. Conducting studies to investigate the use of differentiated instruction to teach EFL students at various educational levels.
3. A study is required to investigate the relationship between differentiated instruction and gender
4. Investigating the impact of using differentiated Instruction in developing students' oral communication.
5. Investigating the use of differentiated instruction in developing students' writing skills.
6. Developing a program for training pre-service and in-service teachers to use differentiated instruction strategies inside EFL classrooms.



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