

## **ETHNIC STEREOTYPES AND THE OPPOSITION "ONE'S OWN, ALIEN, DIFFERENT" IN THE LANGUAGE CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE RUSSIANS AND THE SAKHA**

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### **Abstract**

This article presents the results of a psycholinguistic experiment. Through the instrumentality of semantic scaling, ethnic stereotypes regarding 30 nationalities, ethnic groups and ethnicities, formed in the everyday consciousness of young people, have been revealed. It was defined which ethnonyms were named "one's own" by the Russians and the Sakha, and which were rated as "alien", as well as which ethnic stereotypes are negative and can cause misunderstanding or interethnic, intercultural conflicts.

**Keywords:** linguistic consciousness, semantic scaling, ethnic stereotypes, opposition of one's own/alien/different, interethnic conflicts.

### **1. Topicality**

Ethnic stereotypes, as the elements of ethnic consciousness of the bearers of different languages and cultures, are the most important regulators of interethnic relations. In addition, they perform ethno-integrating, ethno-differentiating and adaptive functions, and are a means of preserving and protecting ethnic identity.

Negative stereotypes about other/foreign nations often cause interethnic intolerance and lead to intercultural conflicts. Defining the features of the "one's own-alien" opposition, O.V. Balyasnikova writes: "...if "one's own" is perceived as a norm, "alien" often implies its violation ... the notion of "alien" and its negative perception are possible even in the absence of or with few contacts with it..." [ 1 ].

The need to identify the essence of linguistic problems of interethnic conflicts and conduct early diagnostics of interethnic relations can be explained by the objective dictates of time: enhanced internal migration processes in the country; weaker civil identity; globalization, on the one hand, and growth of national identity, many ethnic groups' desire to preserve and strengthen their cultural identity, on the other hand; unstable foreign policy situation; reception and accommodation of refugees and labor migrants in the country.

### **2. Methodology**

In this research, we rely on the concept of culture and ethnic worldview proposed by S.V. Lurie [2]; the concept of linguistic consciousness defined by E.F. Tarasov [3], N.V. Ufimtseva [4]; works on intercultural communication by L.I. Grishaeva and L.V. Tsurikova [5]. Conflictogenic areas of the Russian nationals' ethnic consciousness are currently studied by N.V. Ufimtseva [4] and O.V. Balyasnikova [1] at the RAS Institute of Linguistics.

According to A.N. Leontiev, consciousness is understood "in its immediacy as a worldview, opening to a subject, in which he himself, his actions and states are included"[6].

Linguistic consciousness is understood as "a language-mediated world's image, representing a set of perceptual, conceptual and procedural knowledge of the bearer of culture about the objects of the real world" [3], and stereotype as "a fragment of linguistic consciousness with affectively colored content".

## 1.2. Lexicographic information about the concepts of own's own/alien/different

It is common knowledge that the interaction and mutual enrichment of languages and cultures is most well-expressed in vocabulary.

In the Russian-Sakha dictionary under the editorship of P.S. Afanasiev and L.N. Kharitonov [7], the oppositions "own's own, alien, different" are presented in the following meanings:

Own's own - 1. Бэйэ (гиэнэ); *to love one's homeland бэйэн ийэ дойдугун таптаа*; 2. noun: *your бэйэ гиэнэ; he knows where his own interests are кини бэйэтин гиэнин куоттарыа суоҕа*; 3. noun, meaning relatives: дьон, бэйэ дьоно; 4. adjective (original): бэйэ (туспа); *he has his own view кини бэйэтэ туспа өйдөбүллээх*; 5. adjective (proper) бэйэтин; *all will come in good time бэйэтин кэмигэр барыта буолан иһиэ*. (p.567)

Alien - adjective 1. (belonging to others) атын, атын киһи, туспа; *other people's things атын киһи маллара*; 2. Noun, meaning someone else's атын, атын киһи гиэнэ; *to take someone else's атын киһи гиэнин ыл*; 3. (stranger) туора, атын; 4. (not your homeland, etc.) туора; foreign land туора дойду. (p. 702)

Different (other) - adjective 1. (other) атын, туспа; *someone else ким эрэ атын киһи; no other атын ким даҕаны буолбатах*; 2. (second, next) иккис, нөнүө; *the next day иккис күнүгэр; one by one другим биир кэнниттэн иккис, утуу-субуу; the one and the other хайалара даҕаны; neither the one nor the other хайалара да буолбатах*; 3. noun, meaning different атын; *you say one thing, but he does a different one киниэхэ бири этэбин, кини буоллабына атыны онорор*; 4. noun, meaning other people, plural атын дьон, атыттар; *to take care of other people атын дьон туругар кыһан*. (p.148).

The theory of intercultural communication defines “own’s” as a positively charged image, when the subject of perception refers the knower to his/her own culture/subculture. “Different” is recognized as not belonging to the culture/subculture of the knower, but is interpreted as an equal alternative to “one’s own”. “Alien” is, as a rule, a negatively charged factor that does not belong to the culture/subculture of the knower [5].

In most cases, “one’s own” corresponds to the autostereotype and is evaluated positively. “Alien” and “different” are the markers of heterostereotypes, which most often have negative characteristics and are associated with interethnic intolerance, with the factors complicating and/or disrupting the understanding and interaction of the carriers of different cultures.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Semantic scaling**

To identify the connotative meanings associated with the perception of a person from own’s own/different/alien ethnic group, semantic scaling was applied in this scientific study. It is known that this method is effectively used to identify connotative meanings associated with emotions, personal sensual experience, social attitudes, stereotypes and other emotionally saturated, poorly structured and barely realized forms of generalization [8]. To reveal the connotative meanings of oppositional categories “one’s own”/“alien”/“different”, the experiment also involved the scales of affective-social characteristics: “relative”/“close”/“stranger”; “friendly”/“neutral”/“threatening”. It became possible to judge about the nature of the studied oppositions due to the use of five-grade scales, that made it possible to reveal not only the most significant definitions of the scaled objects “one’s own”, “alien”, “different”, “relative” for the tested subjects, but also the intensity of the significance of these characteristics. For example, 96,8% of the ethnically **Sakha** tested subjects identified the *Russians* as “one’s own”, giving an average rating of 4,4; 90,6% of the **Sakha** named the Evenks “one’s own” with an average of 3,2; and the *Yukagirs* are “one’s own” to 50% of the ethnically **Sakha** respondents, but with 2,7. In this article, we will indicate only the percentage of the tested subjects who have marked a particular category (scale) in relation to the object of research (the object of research is printed in italics, the group of the tested subjects is in bold type).

#### **3.2 Research subjects and procedure**

The experiment was conducted in January-February 2017. It involved two groups of the research subjects: Russian and Sakha first year students of Ammosov North-Eastern Federal University and high school students from Yakutsk, aged 15-19.

The respondents were given a form, featuring a table with a vertical list of 30 ethnonyms on the left and the definitions of one's own/alien/different, etc., horizontally on the top. In addition, the form included the instructions for the respondents and requested information on nationality, gender, age, and a language of communication.

30 ethnonyms (Sakha, Russian, Even, Evenk, Dolgan, Yukagir, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Buryat, Tatar, Kirghiz, Chukchi, Eskimo, Koryak, Kazakh, Armenian, Georgian, Uzbek, Tajik, Mongol, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Turk, American, English, German, French, Spanish, Italian) were offered to the research subjects as the scaled objects.

The list of the scaled objects intentionally included nationalities/ethnic groups/ethnicities living both in the Russian Federation and beyond, as well as those living in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia), according to the 2010 All-Russian Census, including the indigenous peoples of the North.

The respondents had to evaluate each ethnonym from 1 to 5, determining its place in a certain column.

#### **4. Results of the experiment. Discussion.**

##### One's own/Alien/Different

The experiment demonstrated that most of the tested subjects attributed the representatives of their own nationality to "one's own". Representatives of other ethnic group were also attributed to "one's own".

It turned out that the **Russians and Sakha** determined each other as "one's own" more often than the representatives of other nationalities/nations: this is explained by a longtime interaction and mutual influence of Russian and Sakha cultures in a single polyethnic space.

**The Russians** did not name the *Americans, Germans, Eskimos and Turks* "one's own".

None of the **Sakha** tested subjects rated the *Germans, French, Spanish and Italians* as "one's own".

Most often, the **Russians** attributed the *Sakha (66,6%), Belarusians (43,3%), Buryats (36,6%), Tatars, Evenks (33,3%); Evens (33,3%); Kazakhs, Chukchi, Ukrainians (23,3%)* to "one's own".

It was fairly noted by V.B. Kashkin, that "the markers of "one's own" and "alien" are not established once and for all, they demonstrate territorial, individual and historical heterogeneity" [8].

The oppositions "one's own/alien/different" also transform under the influence of political and sociocultural changes. Judging by the results of the experiment, the statement of "Slavic brotherhood" of the Russians towards the Ukrainians is losing its relevance. The Russians called the *Ukrainians* "alien" (33,3%), "stranger" (63,3%) and "threatening" (26,6%).

Most **Russians** named the *Americans (66,6%), Tajiks (50%), Spanish (46,6%), Turks, Georgians (40%), Germans, Armenians (36,6%), Ukrainians and Koryaks (33,3%)* “alien”.

Most often, the **Sakha** described *Russians (98,8%), Evenks (90,6%), Evens (78,1%), Mongols (53,1%), Yukagirs (50%), Kazakhs, Dolgans (46,9%), Buryats and Chukchi (43,7%)* as “one’s own”.

The **Sakha** named the *Uzbeks, Georgians (71,8%); Germans (68,7%), Tajiks, Armenians (65,6%); Tatars, Italians (59,3%); French, English (53,1%); Americans, Japanese, Kyrgyz (50%)* “alien”.

Heterostereotypes can, in particular, change under the influence of the media, and changes in the social, political or cultural contexts.

Scaling results are presented in Table 1, featuring the percentage of the tested subjects marking each of the presented ethnic groups as “one’s own”, “alien” or “different”.

“Different” marker was the most common. Most often, the tested subjects identified so those ethnic groups, which were later marked as “close”, “neutral” or “friendly”. The experiment’s results showed that the **Russians**, unlike the **Sakha**, more rarely gave a characteristic of “one’s own”, but they also more rarely identified the offered ethnonyms as “alien”, preferring the “different” evaluation.

**Table 1**

Scaling object	Your		Alien		Different	
	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha
Russian	100%	<b>96.8%</b>	0	0	0	3.1%
Sakha	<b>66.6%</b>	96.8%	6.6%	0	26.6%	3.1%
Evenk	33.3%	90.6%	23.3%	0	43.3%	9.3%
Even	26.6%	78.1%	13.3%	3.1%	60.0%	18.7%
Yukagir	20.0%	50.0%	13.3%	16.6%	66.6%	33.3%
Ukrainian	23.3%	12.5%	33.3%	46.8%	43.3%	40.6%
Belarusian	43.3%	28.1%	23.3%	40.6%	33.3%	31.2%
American	0	6.7%	66.6%	50.0%	33.3%	43.3%
German	0	0	36.6%	68.7%	63.3%	31.2%
Buryat	36.6%	43.7%	20.0%	21.8%	43.3%	34.4%
Tajik	3.3%	6.2%	43.3%	65.6%	53.3%	28.1%
Kazakh	23.3%	46.9%	26.6%	15.6%	50.0%	37.5%
Armenian	16.6%	3.1%	36.6%	65.6%	46.6%	31.2%
Tatar	33.3%	15.6%	23.3%	59.3%	43.3%	25.0%
Dolgan	6.6%	46.9%	30.0%	21.8%	63.3%	31.2%
Chukchi	23.3%	43.7%	30.0%	12.5%	46.6%	43.7%
Uzbek	3.3%	6.2%	50.0%	71.8%	46.6%	21.8%
Georgian	6.6%	6.2%	40.0%	71.8%	53.3%	21.8%
Koryak	13.3%	15.6%	33.3%	31.2%	53.3%	53.1%
Chinese	10.0%	12.5%	30.0%	40.6%	60.0%	46.8%
Korean	6.6%	12.5%	30.0%	43.7%	63.3%	43.7%

French	3.3%	0	30.0%	53.1%	66.6%	46.8%
English	16.6%	9.3%	30.0%	53.1%	53.3%	37.5%
Eskimo	0	15.6%	16.6%	31.2%	83.3%	53.1%
Spanish	6.6%	0	46.6%	56.2%	46.6%	43.7%
Turk	0	28.1%	43.3%	37.5%	56.6%	34.3%
Italian	16.6%	0	30.0%	59.3%	53.3%	40.6%
Japanese	3.3%	15.6%	30.0%	50, 0 %	66.6%	34.3%
Kyrgyz	6.6%	28.1%	16.6%	50, 0 %	76.6%	21.8%
Mongol	13.3%	53.1%	26.6%	15.6%	60.0%	31.2%

Relative/close/stranger

The characteristics of “relative” and “close” are often defined as synonyms, and “stranger” acts as their antonym. But in autostereotypes and heterostereotypes, the differences between the markers “relative” and “close” are especially obvious. “Relative” is perceived almost as “related”, “of blood”. And “close” is rather perceived as “near”, “proximate”, “not far”. This was proved by our experiment, since the majority in both groups attributed each other to “one’s own”, but not always named “relative”. Most often, the respondents attributed the representatives of their own ethnic groups to “relative”.

The **Russians** most often attributed the *Sakha* (40%), *Belarusians* (26,6%), *Yukagirs and Ukrainians* (16,6%) to “relative”. The *Sakha* determined the *Russians* (50%), *Evenks* (25%), *Evens* (18,7%), *Buryats, Dolgans* (15,6% ) as “relative”.

The **Russians** identified the *Sakha* (50%), *Evenks, Evens* (36,6%), *Buryats* (33,3%), *Chukchi, Mongols* (30%), *Belarusians* (26,6%) as “close”. The **Sakha** identified the *Evens* (65,6%), *Evenks* (62,5%), *Mongols* (53,1%), *Russians, Yukagirs, Buryats* (43,7%) as “close”.

Most often, the **Russians** named the *French* (93%), *Americans, Uzbeks, Georgians, Koreans, Turks* (90%), *Germans* (86.6%) “strangers”. The **Sakha** identified the *Italians, Spanish* (100%), *Tajiks, Armenians* (96,8%), *French* (93,7%), *Germans, Georgians* (90,6%) as “strangers”.

**Table 2**

Scaling object	Native		Close		Stranger	
	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha
Russian	83.3%	<b>50.0%</b>	16.6%	43.7%	0	6.2%
Sakha	<b>40.0%</b>	100%	50.0%	0	10.0%	0
Evenk	6.6%	25.0%	36.6%	62.5%	56.6%	12.5%
Even	0	18.7%	36.6%	65.6%	63.3%	15.7%
Yukagir	16.6%	6.2%	10.0%	43.7%	73.3%	50, 0 %
Ukrainian	16.6%	3.1%	20.0%	15.6%	63.3%	81.2%
Belarusian	26.6%	3.1%	26.6%	12.5%	46.6%	84.3%
American	0	0	10.0%	20.0%	90.0%	80.0%
German	0	0	13.3%	9.3%	86.6%	90.6%

Buryat	10.0%	15.6%	33.3%	43.7%	56.6%	40.6%
Tajik	0	0	16.6%	3.1%	83.3%	96.8%
Kazakh	6.6%	9.3%	20.0%	34.3%	73.3%	56.2%
Armenian	6.6%	0	16.6%	3.1%	76.6%	96.8%
Tatar	10.0%	3.1%	20.0%	18.7%	70.0%	78.1%
Dolgan	3.3%	15.6%	20.0%	40.6%	76.6%	43.7%
Chukchi	6.6%	9.3%	30.0%	40.6%	63.3%	50, 0 %
Uzbek	3.3%	0	6.6%	12.5%	90.0%	87.5%
Georgian	3.3%	0	6.6%	9.3%	90.0%	90.6%
Koryak	0	3.1%	20.0%	21.8%	80.0%	75.0%
Chinese	0	0	23.3%	21.8%	76.6%	78.1%
Korean	0	3.1%	10.0%	21.8%	90.0%	75.0%
French	0	0	6.6%	6.2%	93.3%	93.7%
English	0	6.2%	20.0%	15.6%	80.0%	78.1%
Eskimo	3.3%	6.2%	16.6%	15.6%	80.0%	78.1%
Spanish	3.3%	0	23.3%	0	73.3%	100%
Turk	3.3%	9.3%	6.6%	28.1%	90.0%	62.5%
Italian	3.3%	0	16.6%	0	80.0%	100%
Japanese	3.3%	0	20.0%	18.7%	76.6%	81.2%
Kyrgyz	10.0%	0	16.6%	31.2%	73.3%	68.7%
Mongol	3.3%	9.3%	30.0%	53.1%	66.6%	37.5%

Friendly/neutral/threatening

Table 3 shows the percentage of the tested subjects identifying each of the presented ethnic groups as “friendly”, “neutral” or “threatening”.

In the opinion of all **Russian** respondents, the following are not threatening: the *Russians, Evens, Evenks, Belarusians, Spanish*; the following do not threaten the **Sakha**: *Sakha, Evens, Evenks, Belarusians, Buryats, Eskimos and Mongols*.

The respondents from both groups identified the *Americans, Tajiks, Armenians, Turks, Ukrainians, Germans* as the most threatening.

The **Russians** considered *themselves, the Sakha, Belarusians, Buryats and Chinese* the friendliest.

The **Sakha** graded the highest the friendliness of the *Russians, Sakha, Evenks, Evens, Belarusians, Buryats, Dolgans, Koreans, Mongols*. Unlike the Russians, they considered friendly the *Americans (Sakha – 31,2%, Russians – 6,6%)* and the *Turks (Sakha - 21.8%, Russians - 3.3%)*. The *Mongols* were also rated high (**Sakha – 50,0 %**, **Russians – 23,3%**).

The scale “neutral” turned out to be the most common. More often the respondents defined “different” ethnic groups as “neutral” or “friendly”. Out of all answers provided, “threatening” was the rarest.

**Table 3**

Scaling object	Friendly		Neutral		Threatening	
	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha	Russian	Sakha

Russian	86.6%	<b>90.6%</b>	13.3%	6.2%	0	3.1%
Sakha	<b>63.3%</b>	93.7%	30.1%	6.2%	6.6%	0
Evenk	26.6%	75.0%	73.3%	25.0%	0	0
Even	20.0%	65.6%	80.0%	34.3%	0	0
Yukagir	23.3%	34.3%	73.3%	62.5%	3.3%	3.1%
Ukrainian	23.3%	25.0%	50.0%	43.7%	26.6%	31.2%
Belarusian	46.6%	46.9%	53.3%	53.1%	0	0
American	6.6%	31.2%	40, 0 %	28.1%	53.3%	40.6%
German	23.3%	12.5%	56.6%	50.0%	20.0%	37.5%
Buryat	36.6%	37.5%	60.0%	62.5%	3.3%	0
Tajik	10.0%	6.2%	50.0%	43.7%	40.0%	50.0%
Kazakh	16.6%	37.5%	60.0%	50.0%	23.3%	12.5%
Armenian	13.3%	9.3%	60.0%	53.1%	26.6%	37.5%
Tatar	16.6%	12.5%	66.6%	75.0%	16.6%	12.5%
Dolgan	10.0%	43.7%	73.3%	53.1%	16.6%	3.1%
Chukchi	26.6%	37.5%	70.0%	56.2%	3.3%	6.2%
Uzbek	16.6%	3.1%	70.0%	62.5%	13.3%	34.3%
Georgian	16.6%	9.3%	56.6%	56.2%	26.6%	34.3%
Koryak	26.6%	18.7%	66.6%	78.1%	6.6%	3.1%
Chinese	33.3%	25.0%	53.3%	56.2%	13.3%	18.7%
Korean	30.0%	40.6%	53.3%	50.0%	16.6%	9.3%
French	26.6%	28.1%	70.0%	68.7%	3.3%	3.1%
Englis	30.0%	34.3%	60.0%	56.2%	10.0%	9.3%
Eskimo	23.3%	18.7%	70.0%	81.2%	6.6%	0
Spanish	30.0%	18.7%	70.0%	78.1%	0	3.1%
Turk	3.3%	21.8%	60.0%	62.5%	36.6%	15.6%
Italian	23.3%	25.0%	73.3%	71.8%	3.3%	3.1%
Japanese	26.6%	34.3%	66.6%	56.2%	6.6%	9.3%
Kyrgyz	16.6%	25.0%	73.3%	59.3%	10.0%	15.6%
Mongol	23.3%	50.0%	66.6%	50.0%	10.0%	0

## 5. Conclusions

So, the autostereotypes of most tested subjects (**Sakha and Russian**) were positive. It can be said that ethnocentrism of both groups of the tested subjects is obvious. The respondents most often marked “their nationalities” on the scales “*one’s own*”, “*relative*”, “*friendly*”.

Heterostereotypes also had positive characteristics with respect to some ethnic groups, ethnonyms were defined as “one’s own”, “relative” and “friendly”.

Although the elements of the oppositions “alien” and “different” are the defining markers of heterostereotypes, they have unequal connotative meaning. “Different” is characterized as a neutral or positive image of the object under consideration. In our experiment, it most often correlated with the categories “close” and “friendly”. “Alien” is more often charged negatively and was used to assess the ethnonym along with the definitions of “stranger” and “threatening”.



The opinion about “strangers” is more strict, schematized and often based on the existing stereotypes.

“Different” is an alternative to “one’s own”, but does not fully correspond to the “norm”, frameworcking only “one’s own”. “One’s own” is always positive, “relative” or “close”, “friendly”, etc., “different” can be almost like “one’s”, but with certain reservations, features that will indicate variations from the norm. “Different” can be “close”, “friendly” or “neutral”. Regarding “different”, the characteristics are not that strict, they can be said to be “vary”. The status of “different”, under certain conditions, can be a transition from the “alien” to “one’s own” or vice versa.

The experiment demonstrated that the representatives of certain nationalities, assigned to “one’s own”, were not always characterized as “relative” and were determined as “close”, tending to “friendly” or “neutral”.

Unlike the Sakha, the Russians preferred the evaluation of “different”, they less often attributed the objects of study to “one’s own”, but they also more rarely defined the offered ethnonyms as “stranger”.

The tested subjects most often defined the Americans and the labor migrants as alien, strange and threatening.

In general, in the linguistic consciousness of ethnically **Russian** tested subjects, the highest number of negative evaluations is given to *the Americans*, most respondents in this group considered them - *alien* (66,6%), *stranger* (90%), *threatening* (53,3%).

The **Russians** have positive heterostereotypes and give the highest number of positive evaluations to the **Sakha** (“one’s own” 66,6%, “relative” 40%, “friendly” 63,3%); *Belarusians* (“one’s own” 43,3%, “relative” 26,6%, “friendly” 46,6%) (see Tables 1,2,3).

In the linguistic consciousness of the ethnically **Sakha** tested subjects, the most negative stereotypes belong to the *Uzbeks* (“alien”-71,8%, “stranger” – 87,5%, “threatening” - 34.3%), *Tajiks* (“alien” – 65,6%, “stranger” – 96,8%, “threatening” - 50%), *Germans* (“alien” – 68,7%, “stranger” – 96,8%, “threatening” – 37,5%), *Americans* (“alien” - 50%, “stranger” - 80%, “threatening” – 40,6%).

As seen from the results of the study, the **Russians** living in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) have deeply integrated into the Sakha culture, that is why, out of all nations, they most often defined the Sakha as “one’s own”. The same can be said of the **Sakha**; 96,8 % of them marked the Russians as “one’s own”.

It is interesting, that the **Sakha** more often defined the *Russians* as “one’s own”, not *Evens* and *Evenks*, who also are the indigenous peoples of Yakutia and have for the most part adopted Sakha language and have similar traditions and beliefs.

Despite considerable stability, ethnic stereotypes are still subject to changing. The media, socio-cultural and political changes in the society have a significant impact on their formation.

O.V. Balyasnikova writes: “There is a possibility of the objects’ moving from one status to another. Despite the boundary between “one’s own” and “alien” is most often maintained by the first ones, it can become penetrable under certain conditions” [1]. The transition from the status of “stranger” to the status of “different” (or even “one’s own”) is possible only under favorable long-term inter-ethnic relations.

Thus, the problems of ethnic stereotypes, conflictogenic areas are one of the key ones in a civilized multinational world, because they allow to study and prevent misunderstanding in the situations of cross-language, cross-cultural communication. They require further interdisciplinary study.

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