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Examining "We" and Modality as Ideological Practice in Opening Speeches of Asian-African Conference: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

This article examined the practice of solidarity's ideology as reflected through the pronoun "we" and its collocated modal expressions in the opening speeches of the 1955 Asian-African Conference. Adopting a descriptive-qualitative approach, the study was grounded in Fairclough's model of Critical Discourse Analysis with particular emphasis on the textual dimension: word meaning, coherence and cohesion, modality, and deixis. AntConc software was employed to construct a specialized corpus and to generate word lists, node words, collocations, and concordances. These approaches facilitated the investigation into how the pronoun "we" represented a unified collective identity of Asian and African nations, and how modality contributed to articulating ideological commitments. The research corpus consisted of 27 digitized texts of the opening speeches sourced from the official Verbatim Reports of the Asian-African Conference Plenary Sessions published by the Conference Secretariat in 1955. The findings demonstrated that the collocation of "we" with modal verbs (must, can, should, shall, and will) illustrates how language was strategically employed, not merely to convey propositions but also to enact ideological positions, mobilize regional solidarity, and articulate a transnational commitment to decolonization and global peace.

Keywords: We, Modality, Ideology of Solidarity, Asian-African Conference, Critical Discourse Analysis

1. Introduction

The Asian-African Conference marks its 70th anniversary in 2025. Commemorative activities were commenced a year in advance to honor the occasion. One of them was a discussion titled Road to the Platinum Jubilee of the Asian-African Conference. In that discussion, the former Indonesian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Retno Marsudi, stated that the 70th anniversary must serve as a moment to strengthen both domestic and international public awareness of the significance of the Conference (Anugranov, 2024). This importance is also closely linked to the conservation and preservation efforts of the Asian-African Conference Archives, which have been recognized as a Memory of the World International Register since October 2015. Article 13 of the Convention for the

Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage mandates the public must be encouraged to undertake scientific studies to protect, develop, and promote such heritage (UNESCO, 2003).

The 1955 Asian-African Conference took place on April 18-24 in Bandung, Indonesia. On its first two days, plenary sessions featured opening remarks from the heads of invited delegations. These speeches merit critical examination as they constitute significant sources of historical insight and political discourse. Abdulgani (1981) said, "reading and listening to those speeches was very important, because we could catch from those speeches the spirit and stand of the respective delegations about the various world problems."

The majority of speeches delivered by the heads of delegations underscored the importance of maintaining an independent stance and unaligned with the political interests of superpowers, particularly the principal adversaries of the Cold War. The head delegates articulated ideas and perspectives of considerable significance, emphasizing the pursuit of solidarity among Asian and African nations (Abdulgani, 1981). However, a more in-depth linguistic analysis is necessary to explore how the concept of solidarity's ideology is presented within these discourses, potentially through the use of pronouns and modality. Furthermore, understanding context of the speeches is essential as a discourse is neither produced nor fully comprehensible without considering its surrounding circumstances (Cenderamata & Darmayanti, 2019).

This study applied an interdisciplinary approach combining Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Corpus Linguistics (CL) to investigate how the solidarity's ideology between Asia and Africa is constructed in opening speeches of the Conference. Specifically, it examined the pronoun "we" as a node word and analyzed its modal collocates to uncover patterns of collective identity and ideological positioning. The theoretical framework was grounded in text dimension of Fairclough (1992) while corpus principles of Sinclair (1991) as the methodology. A combined approach of CDA and CL yields more robust results. These two approaches complement each other as a result of that allowing claims arising from one mode of analysis to be tested using the tools of the other (Waskita, 2018). According to Salama (2011), integrating CL into CDA offers several advantages: (a) enabling a more objective and systematic analysis, (b) reducing researcher bias as well as enhancing the validity of findings, and (c) providing deeper insights into how language constructs ideology.

A review of scholarly publications in reputable national and international journals reveals growing interest in language as a site of ideological practice, especially within linguistic research employing CDA and CL. One such study was *"Ideology and Power in Presidential Speech"* demonstrating how ideology could be encoded and conveyed through specific lexical choices (Susilowati & Ulkhasanah, 2021). The study highlighted a strategy of language usage to construct positive self-representation and legitimize political actions. Another relevant study by Citraresmana (2019) investigated the conceptual meanings of *Kita* and *Kami* in the Indonesian presidential debate held in January 2019. Utilizing AntConc software within a corpus-based framework, the study analyzed how these first-person plural pronouns function in political discourse. The findings offered insights into collocation and concordance, particularly in relation to identifying keywords in Context and how pronoun choices reflected inclusive or exclusive group positioning.

The subsequent study, "A Corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of the Discursive Representation of Immigration in the EU Referendum Debate" demonstrated a heuristic methodological approach that integrates CDA with corpus-assisted statistical tools (Aluthman, 2018). The study provided a systematic framework for investigating how language constructs ideological meaning through node-word identification, collocation patterns, and concordance analysis. This integrated method allowed for both quantitative pattern recognition and qualitative discourse interpretation. While this study provided methodological insight, the present research distinguished itself by conducting a more comprehensive discourse analysis of the textual dimension; word meaning, cohesion and coherence, modality, and deixis as central features in construction of the solidarity's ideology.

1.1. Solidarity

Solidarity emerges when individuals collectively experience and emotionally respond to a shared issue. In Indonesian cultural expression, this is reflected in the proverb "*Senasib Sepenanggungan*" which conveys the idea

of enduring the same fate and burden together. Such shared experiences foster a sense of unity in both sentiment and action. From a discourse perspective, solidarity functions to bind individuals into a cohesive group identity and often linguistically marked by the pronoun "we" which simultaneously delineates in-group affiliation and contrasts with "they" as the out-group (Van Dijk et al., 2013). This dynamic plays a critical role in constructing ideological boundaries and collective agency within political discourse.

The idea of solidarity is consistently associated with the notion of fraternity. This concept reflects the belief that all human beings as creations of God, are bound by mutual affection and should be treated equally with every action driven by a strong commitment to the collective good (Stjernø, 2005). Emile Durkheim, the father of modern sociology, further elaborates that solidarity is a fundamental phenomenon sustaining social cohesion (Trifunovic, 2013). He identifies two distinct forms of solidarity: mechanical solidarity which arises from shared beliefs and sentiments among members of a homogenous group, and organic solidarity which emerges in more complex societies that diverse roles and functions are interlinked through structured relationships (Durkheim, 2013).

1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis of Fairclough's Model

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) analyses social interaction with a focus on its linguistic elements and aims to reveal determinants that are often hidden within systems of social relations, as well as the concealed effects that may arise from those systems (Fairclough, 1989). In CDA, discourse analysis is not merely seen as a study of language but also as an effort to identify the underlying intentions of an actor who gives a statement. According to Meyer in (Wodak & Weiss, 2003), CDA is inherently interdisciplinary as it integrates insights from various disciplines particularly Sociology and Linguistics. Its theoretical framework is regarded as eclectic that reflects the incorporation of multiple theories that contribute to its development and application.

Fairclough proposes that discourse analysis can be conducted at the textual dimension also known as the microstructural level or discourse as text. At this level, analysis focuses on the formal properties of language that construct meaning within a text. These include lexical choices or word meaning, coherence and cohesion, modality, and deixis (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). Each element contributes to how meanings are shaped, ideologies are encoded, and relationships between discourse participants are structured. By examining these linguistic features, a researcher can investigate the subtle ways in which ideological positions are embedded within the text.

1.2.1.   Word Meaning

One of the initial steps in discourse analysis is the examination of diction which involves interpreting word meaning at both lexical and grammatical levels, and through denotative as well as connotative dimensions (Fairclough, 1992). This is crucial as every word can carry multiple meanings shaped by particular assumptions and contextual frameworks (Stubbs, 2001). These meanings are not fixed; they emerge and evolve through discourse and are often influenced by the words they frequently co-occur with, a phenomenon known as collocation.

Fairclough (1992) explains dictionaries, while often seen as neutral references, provide a useful foundation for lexical analysis by organizing word entries hierarchically, from stable, universal meanings to more discrete, exclusive, and complementary ones. These entries reflect how language users interpret and assign meaning within normative orientations derived from actual texts. In this way, dictionaries serve not only as repositories of lexical information but also as a guide that reflects prevailing patterns of usage and help speakers navigate which meanings are conventional, appropriate, or ideologically charged in a given context.

1.2.2.   Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence refers to the logical and conceptual relationships among elements within a discourse that collectively form a comprehensible meaning for the reader or listener (Brown & Yule, 1983). Unlike cohesion, which focuses on surface-level linguistic features, coherence is grounded in the audience's ability to interpret how ideas are

connected by drawing upon context, prior knowledge, experience, and common-sense. They emphasize that coherence is inherently mental and conceptual implying that the comprehension of discourse is shaped, not only by textual structure but also by the interpretive framework of the reader or listener.

Thus, a text may exhibit cohesive devices yet still lack coherence if its meaning fails to align with the audience's context or expectations. The process of interpreting intended meaning involves three interrelated aspects: understanding the communicative function of the discourse (how the message is conveyed), activating general socio-cultural knowledge (fact about the world), and determining the necessary inferences that need to be made. Cohesion is a semantic connection within a text that contribute to the unity of discourse (Fairclough, 1992). It arises when an interpretation of one linguistic element depends on another, forming presuppositional ties. For instance, in the sentences *"Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish,"* The pronoun "them" that refers back to "six cooking apples," forms an anaphoric link and binds the two sentences into a cohesive discourse unit.

Cohesion reflects how meaning is organized in discourse through specific linguistic features rather than through structural units beyond the sentence (Brown & Yule, 1983). It can be categorized into grammatical cohesion (reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction) and lexical cohesion (repetition, synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, collocation, and equivalence). These cohesive devices function as textual indicators that guide the reader in interpreting meaning across sentences (Halliday & Hasan, 1976).

1.2.3. Modality

Modality is essential in leadership discourse as it serves to express and reinforce ideology through its directive and pervasive nature. According to Fairclough (1992), modality refers to the grammatical aspect of a clause that reflects the interpersonal function of language. It is commonly realized through modals such as *must, can, may,* and *should*. Hodge and Kress note that modality is used to reveal patterns of social relationships and power within a text (Fairclough, 1992). Palmer (1990) categorizes it into three types: epistemic modality, deontic modality, and dynamic modality.

Epistemic modality refers to a speaker's level of certainty or belief regarding a proposition that is expressed through modal verbs such as "may", "must", and "will". The modal "may" indicates possibility and is commonly used to refer to present or future conditions, as in: "You may not like the idea of it, but let me explain" or "I may go up at the end of August." In contrast, "must" conveys a higher degree of certainty or necessity based on inference or deduction. For example, "She is a bridesmaid and she must be all excitement at the moment" reflects a present inference, while "All the X-rays showed absolutely negative. There was nothing wrong, so it must just be tension, I suppose" refers to a conclusion drawn about a past event. The modal "will" also functions within epistemic modality expressing strong assumptions or predictions, as seen in "John will be in his office" which implies an expectation based on prior knowledge. These examples illustrate how epistemic modality enables speakers to position themselves in relation to the truth value of their statements.

Deontic modality refers to the performative use of modal expressions to grant permission, impose obligations, or make promises. It is typically marked by modals such as "may", "can", "must", and "shall". These modals are discourse-oriented and generally appear in present-tense forms due to their performative function. "May" and "can" are used to express permission, with "may" conveying a higher level of formality (e.g., you may stay here as long as you wish, of course) than "can" (e.g., can I pinch a ciggie? - course you can). Both modals may function as commands but "can" is often perceived as more direct or even sarcastic (e.g., oh, you can leave me out, thank you very much).

"Must" is typically employed to express obligation or necessity and implies a certain degree of authority on the part of the speaker (e.g., you must get into permanent jobs). It can also be used as an invitation when the speaker seeks to influence action in a polite manner (e.g., well, you must say what you want for a present). "Shall" is used to express future commitments or guarantees emphasizing the speaker's authority or intent (e.g., The 1947 act shall have effect as if this section were included in Part III thereof.). Through these modal expressions, deontic

modality plays a crucial role in shaping interpersonal relationships and expressing power dynamics in discourse.

Dynamic modality is primarily subject-oriented reflecting internal capacities, volition, or habitual behaviours rather than external obligation or epistemic evaluation. This type of modality is typically realized through the modals "can" and "will", and occasionally "should" when they are used in contexts that imply internal capability or inclination. The modal "can" is frequently employed to indicate situational or circumstantial possibility (e.g., signs are the only things you can observe) and the subject's inherent ability (e.g., I can make or break my life and myself; religion can summate, epitomize, relate, and conserve all highest ideals and values). Additionally, "can" is commonly associated with private or cognitive verbs such as "see" and "understand" (e.g., I can see the moon), further reinforcing its dynamic function. It also serves a pragmatic role in expressing indirect suggestions, often distinguished by pronoun use: first-person singular and plural for offers (e.g., I can tell you the reference, if that's any help, of the letter; we can send you a map, if you wish), second person for directives (e.g., can you pass the salt, please?), and inclusive "we" to suggest cooperative action (e.g., do come early and we can have a drink).

Similarly, the modal "will" functions dynamically when expressing volition (e.g., hang on a minute and I will try and find it), object capability (e.g., you know that certain drugs will improve the condition), or habitual behaviour becoming characteristics (e.g., These are visual things. You don't need words to convey them and countries as far apart as China and Wales will use the dragon to convey basically the same concepts without any words). According to Jespersen in (Palmer, 1990), the dynamic uses of "will" can be classified into volition, capacity, and habit semantically linked to the subject's agency. Lastly, the modal "should" exhibits multifunctionality and can be dynamic when it is used to express non-compulsory suggestions that relate to actions with future or potential realization (e.g., You should read, my dear, more. You don't read enough, my darling). While morphologically a past form of "shall", "should" in this sense signals advisability rather than necessity.

1.2.4. Deixis

Deixis derived from the Greek term meaning "pointing" or "indicating", refers to linguistic expressions whose interpretation is anchored in the context of the utterance. These expressions known as indexical, require contextual information for accurate reference (Senft, 2014; Yule, 1996). Levinson defines deixis as the linguistic encoding of features related to the speech situation including participant role, spatial location, and temporal reference (Senft, 2014). One of its types, person deixis distinguishes between the speaker (first person: I and We), the addressee (second person: You), and others (third person: He, She, and They). According to (Yule, 1996), a notable issue arises in the interpretation of the first-person plural pronoun "we" which can be either exclusive (excluding the addressee) or inclusive (including the addressee) depending on context. For instance, "we expect to cut waiting lists by the end of the year" exemplifies exclusive use, whereas "shall we go out for some lunch?" demonstrates an inclusive use (Cummings, 2005).

2. Method

This study adopts a descriptive-qualitative approach to investigate the ideological concept of solidarity in the opening speeches delivered by heads of delegations at the 1955 Asian-African Conference. The primary focus lies on the use of pronoun "we" and its collocating modal expressions. The analysis draws on Fairclough's CDA model particularly within the textual dimension which emphasizes the integration of linguistic features with contextual and experiential dimensions (Fairclough, 1989, 1992). This methodology aligns with Corpus Linguistics which prioritize qualitative insights into language usage patterns and frequency. As McEnery and Wilson suggest, the field often emphasizes methodological rigor over in-depth interpretation of linguistic content (Puteri et al., 2024). The research employs corpus principles by utilizing AntConc software to build a specialized corpus and to generate word lists, keywords, collocations, and concordances based on a framework of Sinclair (1991) and Baker (2010).

The data consists of 27 digitized texts of opening speeches sourced from the official Verbatim Reports of the Asian-African Conference Plenary Sessions published by the Conference Secretariat in 1955 (Ministry of Foreign

Affairs Republic of Indonesia, 1955). The digital corpus was developed by converting the printed speeches into editable text through optical character recognition (OCR) and manual retyping to ensure fidelity (Sinclair, 1991). All speech texts were stored in .doc (MS Word) format and processed through AntConc to extract linguistic patterns. A qualitative winnowing technique was used to filter and classify relevant data focusing only on instances related to the research aims (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). To facilitate traceability and consistency in data presentation, each sentence was assigned a unique three-digit code (Nur, 2019). The first digit denotes the speaker. The second indicates the paragraph number. The third represents the sentence number. For example, "Recognise that we are gathered here today as a result of sacrifices. (1.3.1)" The following is the code assigned to each head of delegation who delivered an opening speech at the 1955 Asian-African Conference.

Table 1: Heads of Delegations Delivering Opening Speeches at the Plenary Sessions of the Conference

Code	Head of Delegation	Country	Code	Head of Delegation	Country
1	Sukarno (Keynote)	Indonesia	15	Sami Bek Solh	Lebanon
2	Ali Sastroamidjojo	Indonesia	16	Momolu Dukuly	Liberia
3	Sardar Mohammad Naim	Afghanistan	17	Mahmoud B. Muntasser	Libya
4	Norodom Sihanouk	Cambodia	18	Sovag Jung Tapa	Nepal
5	John Kotelawala	Ceylon	19	Mohammad Ali	Pakistan
6	Chou En Lai	China	20	Carlos P. Romulo	Philippines
7	Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	21	Sayed Ismail El Azhari	Sudan
8	Yilma Deressa	Ethiopia	22	Khaled El Azm	Syria
9	Kojo Botsio	Gold Coast	23	Wan Waithayakon	Thailand
10	Ali Amini	Iran	24	Fatin Rustu Zorlu	Turkey
11	M. Fadhel Jamali	Iraq	25	Pham Van Dong	Democratic Vietnam
12	Tatsunosuke Takasaki	Japan	26	Nguyen Van Thoai	State of Vietnam
13	Sayyed Wahid Salah	Jordan	27	Emir Sheikh El Islam Al Hasan	Yemen
14	Katay Don Sasorith	Laos			

3. Results and Discussion

There are 27 speech texts delivered during the opening session of the 1955 Asian-African Conference. The total number of words across these speeches amounts to 54.033 tokens and 5.270 word types. The pronoun "we" ranks among the most frequently used words placing ninth with a frequency of occurrence at 666 times (F = 666). The following table presents the frequency of "we" usage distributed across each speech.

Table 2: AntConc-Generated Frequency List of the Pronoun "We"

No	Head of Delegation	Country	Frequency
1.	Sukarno (Keynote)	Indonesia	78
2.	Ali Sastroamidjojo	Indonesia	74
3.	Sardar Mohammad Naim	Afghanistan	38
4.	Norodom Sihanouk	Cambodia	4
5.	John Kotelawala	Ceylon	29
6.	Chou En Lai	China	62
7.	Gamal Abdel Nasser	Egypt	11
8.	Yilma Deressa	Ethiopia	23
9.	Kojo Botsio	Gold Coast	10
10.	Ali Amini	Iran	12

11.	M. Fadhel Jamali	Iraq	17
12.	Tatsunosuke Takasaki	Japan	6
13.	Sayyed Wahid Salah	Jordan	13
14.	Katay Don Sasorith	Laos	8
15.	Sami Bek Solh	Lebanon	13
16.	Momolu Dukuly	Liberia	13
17.	Mahmoud B. Muntasser	Libya	2
18.	Sovag Jung Tapa	Nepal	19
19.	Mohammad Ali	Pakistan	18
20.	Carlos P. Romulo	Philippines	66
21.	Sayed Ismail El Azhari	Sudan	39
22.	Khaled El Azm	Syria	43
23.	Wan Waithayakon	Thailand	3
24.	Fatin Rustu Zorlu	Turkey	25
25.	Pham Van Dong	Democratic Vietnam	8
26.	Nguyen Van Thoai	State of Vietnam	18
27.	Emir Sheikh El Islam Al Hasan	Yemen	14

The pronoun "we" in these speeches serves as both a marker of person deixis and an indexical expression whose reference is bound to the discursive context. Its interpretation depends on the immediate linguistic and situational surroundings. Consider the following excerpts from speeches delivered by head of delegation:

(1) **We**, the peoples of Asia and Africa, 1,400,000,000 strong, far more than half the human population of the world, **we** can mobilise what I have called the Moral Violence of Nations in favour of peace. (1.46.6)

(2) In this Conference, **we** are meeting as representatives of the Asiatic and African countries. There is a striking similarity between the conditions prevailing in our countries; a similarity that operates as a unifying force; **we** have emerged from a long period of foreign influence, political as well as economic. (7.1.1&2)

In both Sukarno's (1.46.6) and Nasser's (7.1.1&2) speeches, the referent of "we" is explicitly contextualized as the collective identity of Asian and African nations (*the peoples of Asia and Africa* and *the Asiatic and African countries*). To uncover how such usage reflects an ideological stance of solidarity, it is essential to analyze the pronoun's collocational behavior and concordance lines using corpus linguistic tools. By treating "we" as a node word, one can identify discursive patterns that reveal the underlying ideology encoded in these opening addresses.

3.1. Analysis of Pronoun "We" as the Node Word

As a personal pronoun, "we" typically occupies the subject position within a clause or sentence. According to *Collins Dictionary*, it denotes the first-person plural form referring either to a specific group including the speaker or more generally to people as a collective. In formal discourse such as speeches, the pronoun "we" may serve an inclusive or exclusive role. Inclusivity implies the speaker includes the audience in the statement, and exclusivity indicates their exclusion. In addition to its deictic role, "we" frequently operates as an endophoric or exophoric reference in discourse as demonstrated in the following excerpts.

Table 3: Instances of Opening-Speech Excerpts from Sukarno and Khaled El Azm

Reference	Excerpts of the Opening Speeches
Endophoric	On behalf of the **people and Government of Indonesia** - your hosts - I beg your understanding and forebearance if some circumstances in our country do not meet your expectation. **We** have, I

	assure you, done our best to make your stay amongst us memorable for both our guests and your hosts. **We** hope that the warmth of our welcome will compensate for whatever material shortcomings there may be. (1.1.2-4)
Exophoric	In the battle for peace, first and foremost, **we** must have faith in our capacity and our potentiality. **We** are not negligible. It is true **we** are under-developed in the military and economic fields. It is equally true that **we** do not possess nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. But still our contribution can be great and decisive. (22.4.1-5)

In Sukarno's speech, the pronoun "we" identified as data 1.1.2-4, functions anaphorically with its antecedent explicitly stated as "the people and government of Indonesia" within the speech. This use of "we" is exclusive that signifies a distinction between the speaker and his national constituency on one hand and the audience on the other. The phrase "on behalf of the people and government of Indonesia" lexically reinforces this exclusivity.

This exclusive usage of "we" reflects an ideological positioning of solidarity as a unified collective entity encompassing Sukarno, the Indonesian government, and its people. For instance, in the clause "we have, I assure you, done our best to make your stay amongst us memorable…", the pronoun conveys a shared commitment by the government and the citizenry to provide a hospitable and memorable experience. Similarly, the expression "we hope that the warmth of our welcome will compensate for whatever material shortcomings there may be" constructs a narrative of collective effort and mutual responsibility.

In contrast, Khaled El Azm's use of "we" indicated by data 22.4.1-5, is contextually inclusive encompassing both the speaker and the broader assembly of delegates present at the 1955 Asian-African Conference. This inclusive "we" aims to foster collective identity and solidarity among the diverse nations represented.

Within El Azm's discourse, "we" underscores shared challenges and aspirations particularly in military and economic domains, while highlighting the capacity of Asian and African peoples to contribute meaningfully toward peace. The pronoun serves as a unifying rhetorical device aligning speaker and audience as part of a resilient collective. Through this inclusive usage, El Azm strategically constructs a sense of moral authority and communal responsibility encouraging collective engagement in the pursuit of peace and solidarity.

3.2. Analysis of Modality Collocated with the Node Word "We"

In corpus analysis, collocates are words that frequently appear in proximity to a keyword, either to its left or right. Using the cluster/N-gram feature in AntConc, this study identifies modal collocates of node word "we" by setting a cluster size of two words to the right, with a minimum frequency and range of one. The analysis focuses specifically on right-side collocates as "we" typically functions as a subject in a clause, and its meaning is clarified by the verbs or modal expressions that follow it.

The range in this context refers to the number of different speech texts in which each collocate appears. Among the most frequent modal collocates of "we" are "must", "can", "should", "shall", and "will". Specifically, "we must" appears 28 times (F=28) across 13 speeches, "we can" 26 times (F=26) in 10 speeches, "we should" 18 times (F=18) in 13 speeches, "we shall" 13 times (F=13) in 10 speeches, and "we will" 12 times (F=12) in 10 speeches.

The use of modality by heads of delegations serves not only to convey degrees of necessity, possibility, or obligation but also to establish authority and social alignment. Such modal constructions are often employed persuasively to foster a sense of collective commitment and ideological solidarity with the audience. To determine the precise function of each modal expression, whether epistemic (related to knowledge or belief), deontic (expressing duty or obligation), or dynamic (indicating ability or volition), a concordance analysis was conducted. This involved expanding the textual window to 10 tokens on either side of the node word "we" to observe the broader linguistic context. The following section outlines the distribution and interpretive patterns of these modal collocates as they appear in the opening speeches at the 1955 Asian-African Conference.

3.2.1. Modal Collocate of "Must"

The following image is a screenshot taken from the AntConc displaying a variety of clauses or sentences in the left and right contexts surrounding the node word "we" that collocates with the modal "must". Analyzing the context is essential for understanding how the heads of delegations employed the modality to express solidarity's ideology as a strategic effort toward achieving global peace.
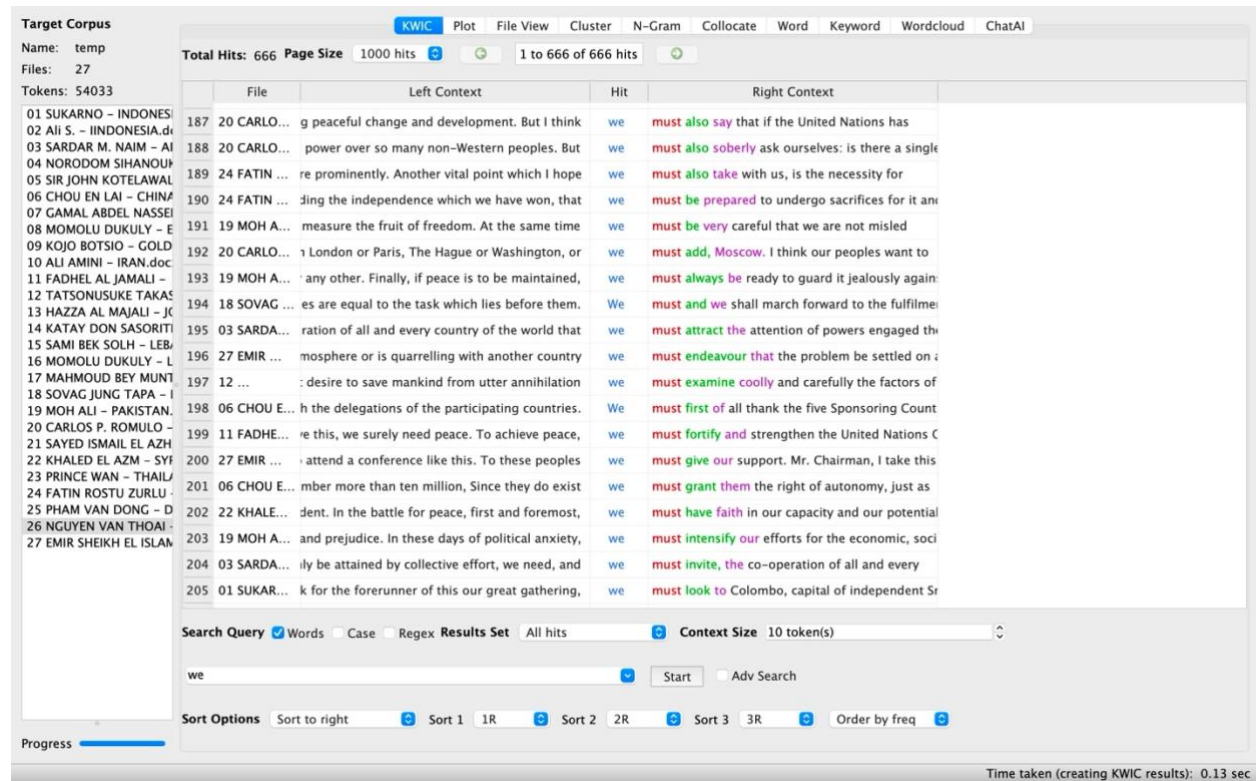

Figure 1: Concordance Lines of "We must"

The modal "must" which frequently collocates with the keyword *we*, appears with notable frequency in the opening speeches. It is employed primarily as a form of deontic modality conveying meanings of obligation, command, exhortation, encouragement, or demand. As such, "must" often implies the speaker's authority, making their positionality identifiable, particularly when it is used to assert norms or regulations.

Drawing on the following excerpted contexts, "must" serves as a performative expression implicitly signalling the speaker's authority as a head of state capable of issuing imperatives. Simultaneously, the use of "must" in these contexts denotes obligation to act, as demonstrated in the following analysis:

(3) Finally, if peace is to be maintained, **we must** always be ready to guard it jealously against any threat, no matter in what form or from what quarter it should arise. (19.5.8)

The use of "must" in this sentence conveys a demand that the preservation of peace must be accompanied by preparedness in the face of threats from any source. This statement does not emerge from a logical conclusion or epistemic reasoning based on observable facts; rather, it expresses a collective responsibility that must be undertaken.

(4) In these days of political anxiety, **we must** intensify our efforts for the economic, social and intellectual improvement of our peoples. (19.15.7)

(5) **We must** promote international understanding by means of such things as discussions between thinkers and philosophers, translations of classical and contemporary literature, free interchange of teachers and students. (19.15.8)

The data of 19.15.8 are thematically linked to the earlier excerpt as in 19.5.7 underscoring the idea that political unrest may pose a threat to peace. The modality "must" is used here to advocate for intensified efforts in economic, social, and intellectual development, framed as imperative actions that Asian and African nations are collectively obliged to pursue to preserve peace. Furthermore, fostering international understanding through intercultural dialogues, literary exchange, and academic collaboration is similarly positioned as a shared responsibility.

(6)   Since collective peace can only be attained by collective effort, we need, and **we must** invite, the co-operation of all and every country of the world; that we must attract the attention of powers engaged in the atomic race; that in terms of human welfare they better concentrate on the development of nuclear forces for peaceful and constructive purposes only. (3.30.1)

In this statement, the node word "we" appears twice with the modal "must", alongside the expression "we need", forming a pattern of lexical cohesion intended to reinforce a particular message. The use of "must" conveys a normative obligation grounded in moral and social expectations that the nuclear arms race should be redirected toward peaceful purposes for the benefit of humanity. The head of Afghanistan Delegation, Sardar M. Naim, uses "must" to emphasize that collective peace can only be achieved through collective effort. Thus, Asian and African nations must cooperate with the global community and draw the attention of superpowers to the need for the peaceful development of nuclear energy. Here, the necessity conveyed by "must" functions, not merely as an invitation but as a moral imperative to secure peace and human welfare.

(7)   Prompted, therefore, by an earnest desire to save mankind from utter annihilation, **we must** examine coolly and carefully the factors of international tension that may lead to war, and cooperate most sincerely for the eradication of those factors. (12.5.4)

In this excerpt, "must" is employed to express advice or exhortation, specifically the need to "examine coolly and carefully the factors of international tensions". Although these factors are not explicitly identified in the text, they can be inferred from the broader historical context such as colonialism, nuclear arms proliferation, racial discrimination, and the Cold War. These tensions were widely recognized among Asian and African nations as sources of potential conflict. Therefore, this exhortation calls for action based on ethical reasoning and shared responsibility in order to avert human catastrophe.

(8)   Achieving that **we must** work on the basis of moral rearmament and physical disarmament whereby men of all races and nations with a clean heart, with no rancor or hatred, approach each other with humility and admit our own mistakes and work for mutual harmony and peace. (11.6.19)

In this final example, "must" is used to advise on necessary actions for achieving peace. It conveys a normative obligation that Asian and African nations must operate based on moral principles rather than military might. The speaker emphasizes that this obligation is not rooted in epistemic necessity but in moral and social norms concerning how peace ought to be achieved.

3.2.2. Modal Collocate of "Can"

The following is a screenshot generated from the AntConc displaying various clauses or sentences occurring to the left and right of the node word "we" in collocation with the modal "can". Examining both the left and right contexts is essential for understanding how the heads of delegations articulated capacity or potential as a rhetorical means to advance the solidarity's ideology in pursuit of global peace.
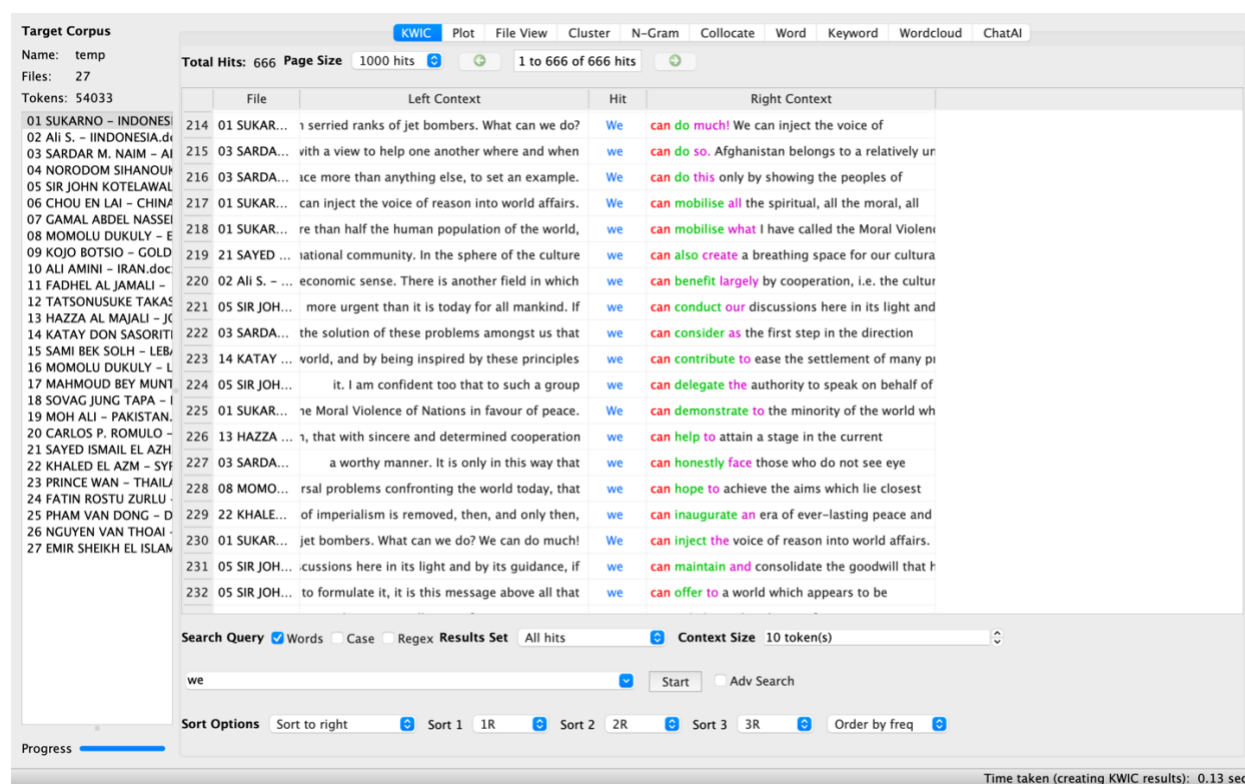
Figure 2: Concordance Lines of "We can"

The modal "can" frequently collocating with the pronoun "we" occurs 26 times across the opening speeches. This usage predominantly reflects dynamic modality emphasizing the subject's inherent capacity or potential to act. The following analysis explores how "can" is employed to articulate the capability of Asian and African nations as envisioned by their leaders to promote the ideology of solidarity in pursuit of global peace.

(9) What can we do? **We can** do much! **We can** inject the voice of reason into world affairs. **We can** mobilise all the spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace. Yes, we! We, the peoples of Asia and Africa, 1,400,000,000 strong, far more than half the human population of the world, **we can** mobilise what I have called the Moral Violence of Nations in favour of peace. **We can** demonstrate to the minority of the world which lives on the other continents that we, the majority, are for peace, not for war, and that whatever strength we have will always be thrown on to the side of peace. (1.46.1-7)

In this excerpt, the repeated use of the clause "we can" alongside the verb "mobilise" and the noun "peace", reflects a form of lexical cohesion. That emphasizes the idea of Asian and African nations possessing the collective capacity to promote peace. The use of "can" denotes circumstantial possibility suggesting that under specific conditions, peace is achievable through the potential and demographic strength of these regions. The inclusive pronoun "we" paired with "can", conveys a suggestion or proposal aiming to engage all participants of the 1955 Asian-African Conference. This usage affirms their ability to act and encourages a collective sense of responsibility and empowerment.

(10) Let us face squarely up to the fact that within the nation **we can** regain our self-respect and grapple with our local problems but that for the primary goals of economic transformation and well-being and peace, the nation no longer suffices. (20.12.3)

In this passage, "can" marks the internal ability of the nations to restore dignity and address domestic issues. The inclusive use of "we" implies that the statement functions as a suggestion affirming the capability of Asian and African countries to initiate change at the national level as a foundation for broader transformation, prosperity, and peace.

(11) I am sure, gentlemen, that with sincere and determined cooperation **we can** help to attain a stage in the current history of the world where the legitimate right of every nation, small or great alike, will be recognized and respected by all concerned in the world. (13.15.1)

In this statement, "can" reflects the ability of the collective subject, Asian and African nations, to achieve international recognition and respect for sovereign rights. The preceding clause, "I am sure, gentlemen, that with sincere and determined cooperation", shows circumstantial possibility suggesting that genuine cooperation is a precondition for global legal recognition and peace.

(12) To achieve peace all pockets of imperialism should be washed away, all evils of discrimination should be swept away. When all the debris of imperialism is removed, then, and only then, we can inaugurate an era of ever-lasting peace and prosperity. (22.13.3&4)

In this excerpt, "can" is used to describe the collective ability of Asian and African nations to establish a lasting era of peace and prosperity. This capacity is presented as conditional upon the elimination of imperialism and discrimination. The cause-effect structure of the statement reinforces the use of "can" as an expression of capability contingent on fulfilling certain moral and political prerequisites.

3.2.3. Modal Collocate of "Should"

The screenshot below obtained via the AntConc software shows various clauses or sentences that appear in the immediate left and right context of the keyword "we" in collocation with the modal "should". Analyzing these contextual patterns is crucial for uncovering how the heads of delegations constructed propositional logic to advance the ideology of solidarity as a means to foster global peace.

Figure 3: Concordance Lines of "We should"

The modal "should" which frequently collocates with the keyword "we", appears 18 times in the opening speeches. It serves as a marker of either epistemic or deontic modality, depending on whether it conveys a logical inference or a recommendation. The following data analysis explores how the clause of "we should" is employed

to reinforce propositional claims of solidarity's ideology based on the delegates' epistemic reasoning and their recommendations for advancing global peace.

(13) At present we are faced with such problems as economic development, social and political reconstruction. It is not surprising therefore that **we should** feel close together; a fact that finds its expression in our concepts of world peace and international justice. (7.1.3&4)

In this excerpt 7.1.3&4, the use of "should" reflects a logical deduction derived from shared experiences. The clause "It is not surprising therefore that we should feel close together" indicates that the sense of unity among Asian and African nations is a rational consequence of the economic, social, and political challenges they collectively face. Hence, the modal "should" in this context represents epistemic modality expressing the speaker's logical assumption rather than a directive for action.

(14) All our ideologies and religions urge us, in the name of social justice and human compassion, to rid our countries of this evil of poverty; the times demand of us that **we should** do it, also in the name of peace.(5.17.3)
(15)
In statement 5.17.3, "should" operates as deontic modality delivering a recommendation or obligation to act. The clause *"the times demand of us that we should do it"* implies a strong call to eliminate poverty in the name of justice and peace, thus portraying an ethical and humanitarian imperative.

(16) **We should** not permit religious or racial fanaticism to weaken the force or the prestige of the counsels or the contributions which we give in the interest of peace and collaboration among peoples. (8.8.4)

In the data 8.8.4, the use of "should" likewise signals deontic modality suggesting a moral obligation. The clause "we should not permit religious or racial fanaticism…" is a normative appeal urging Asian and African nations to reject extremism in order to uphold peace and foster cooperation. Thus, the modal "should" functions to delineate what ought or ought not to be done within a framework of social and ethical norms.

3.2.4. Modal Collocates of "Shall" and "Will"

The following screenshot is taken from the AntConc software and displays various clauses or sentences from the left and right contexts of the keyword "we" that collocates with the modals, "shall" and "will". These contextual surroundings are essential to understanding how the heads of delegations asserted their determination to realize the ideology of solidarity in pursuit of global peace.
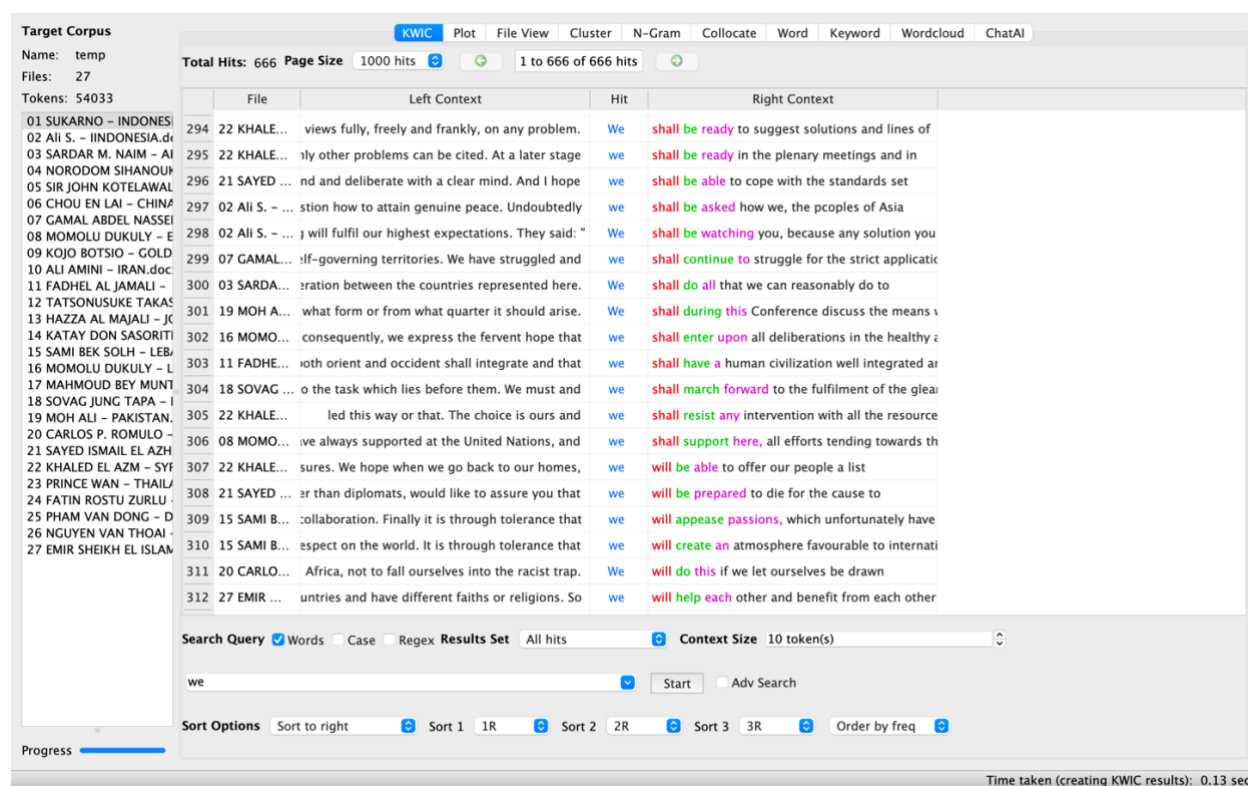
Figure 4: Concordance Lines of "We shall" and "We will"

The modal "should" which frequently collocates with the keyword "we", appears 18 times in the opening speeches. It serves as a marker of either epistemic or deontic modality, depending on whether it conveys a logical inference or a recommendation. The following data analysis explores how the clause of "we should" is employed to reinforce propositional claims of solidarity's ideology based on the delegates' epistemic reasoning and their recommendations for advancing global peace.

The modals "shall" and "will" are often used to refer to future actions or in traditional English grammar to indicate the future tense, however the key distinction lies in their modal function: "shall" tends to be used as a form of deontic modality, while "will" represents dynamic modality. The following is an analysis of the use of these collocates.

(17) … **we shall** have a human civilization well integrated and harmonious in its composing elements. Integration and harmony between matter and spirit, between science, art and religion, between individuals and groups within each nation, and between the nations of the world, should be our guiding principles. To achieve this, we surely need peace. (11.1.18–20)

(18) The choice is ours and **we shall** resist any intervention with all the resources at our command. This is how we understand co-existence. With this in mind we need not belong to blocs, alliances and the like. We become members of an international family tied with the bonds of the co-existence based on sovereignty and equality. (22.7.7–10)

The use of "shall" in both of the above statements falls under deontic modality. Statement 11.1.18–20 expresses a guaranteed future action, making it a binding commitment. It emphasizes that peace is a prerequisite condition for the realization of an integrated and harmonious civilization for Asian and African nations. Similarly, statement 22.7.7–10 views peaceful co-existence as a moral obligation for Asian and African nations, asserting their commitment to resist all forms of intervention.

(19) Each of us has experienced the same experience and suffered the same sufferings, so that we are now facing the same problems, though we are coming from different countries and have different faiths or religions. So

we will help each other and benefit from each other by the exchange of views about more than one problem. (27.2.1&2)

(20) After all it is through tolerance that **we will** settle permanently our difficulties and that **we will** impose our respect on the world. It is through tolerance that **we will** create an atmosphere favourable to international collaboration. Finally, it is through tolerance that **we will** appease passions, which unfortunately have been for so long nourished, and which if unchained, would lead us to disaster. (15.13.1–3)

The modal "will" in the two statements above falls into the category of dynamic modality. Its use expresses volition implying the speaker's willingness or intention to act. In excerpt 27.2.1–2, the solidarity among Asian and African nations is based on shared experiences and sufferings. The clause "we will help each other and benefit from each other" reflects the collective will of these nations to engage in mutual cooperation. In excerpt 15.13.1–3, tolerance is framed as an ideological foundation of solidarity. The repeated clause "we will" indicates a collective intention to act with tolerance, aiming to resolve conflict, promote mutual respect, and ultimately foster internationalism values.

4. Conclusion

The use of pronoun "we" in the opening speeches of the 1955 Asian-African Conference demonstrates a form of collective representation of the Asian and African nations as a single ideological unity. This pronoun is inclusive encompassing all conference participants and even the broader Asian-African community that have aim to strengthen a solid and united shared identity. The collocation of "we" with various modal forms (must, can, should, shall, and will) serves as a discourse strategy reflecting the practice of solidarity's ideology and collective aspiration.

The modality "must" indicates an absolute necessity that cannot be negotiated and often referring to moral or political obligations. The use of "must" strengthens the ideological claim that Asian-African nations are obliged to act together for peace and sovereignty. In this context, "must" serves as a deontic modality.

The modality "can" indicates the collective capacity of the Asian-African nations to realize peace through mobilizing moral, spiritual, and political strength. This reflects dynamic modality and circumstantial possibility. The modality "should" contains normative demands or logical inferences. It is derived from shared experiences, functioning as epistemic and deontic modality to encourage ethical action in eliminating injustice and poverty.

The modality "shall" conveys normative commitment to the future, as a form of deontic modality showing collective determination to realize a more just and harmonious world order. while the modality "will" marks shared intention and willingness as a dynamic modality portraying the active desire of Asian-African nations to unite and act in facing global issues through cooperation and tolerance.

Collocational use of the modals with the pronoun "we" reflects Fairclough's view that both elements function as strategic linguistic tools for articulating and disseminating ideology within political discourse. In the opening speeches of the 1955 Asian-African Conference, the pronoun "we" is employed to construct a narrative of solidarity, both mechanical and organic, signifying that the unity among Asian and African nations is rooted, not only in shared visions and aspirations but also in their interdependence. Modal expressions further reinforce this ideological framing by serving as persuasive and directive devices that underscore collective obligation, intention, and capacity, thereby enabling the heads of delegations to assert ideological commitments with greater discursive authority.

The combination of the pronoun "we" and these modal forms is not merely a linguistic structure but part of a discursive ideological practice. The head delegates of the Conference use language to articulate transnational solidarity, strengthen collective identity, and voice the struggle against colonialism and global injustice. Through this discourse, they do not only convey a vision but also construct a shared obligation to create world peace and cooperation.

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