



UNIVERSITY OF  
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# Enhancing IFP students' engagement through pronunciation peer practice

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# Overview

- Background
- Research questions
- Research design
- Results pilot study
- Implications



# Pronunciation in EAP

- Knowledge of phonological features of English (Reed and Michaud, 2011):
  - heightens non-native speaker intelligibility
  - enhances confidence when speaking
  - improves listening skills



# Pronunciation practice

- In EAP, often little targeted pronunciation instruction and practice (Baker & Burri, 2016)
  - Time constraints /full curriculum
  - Speaking usually geared towards fluency



# Learning how to learn: Enhancing engagement

IFP might be last English course

- Should promote autonomy, self assessment & study competence
- Ss need to learn how to continue acquiring the language and content of their disciplines independently (Alexander et al, 2008: 211-213)



# A collaborative approach

- Vygotsky (1978): learning in an L2 context should be collaborative and interactive.
- Lave & Wenger (1991): communities of learning.
  - Learners can scaffold each other/practise together.
  - Teacher acts as facilitator



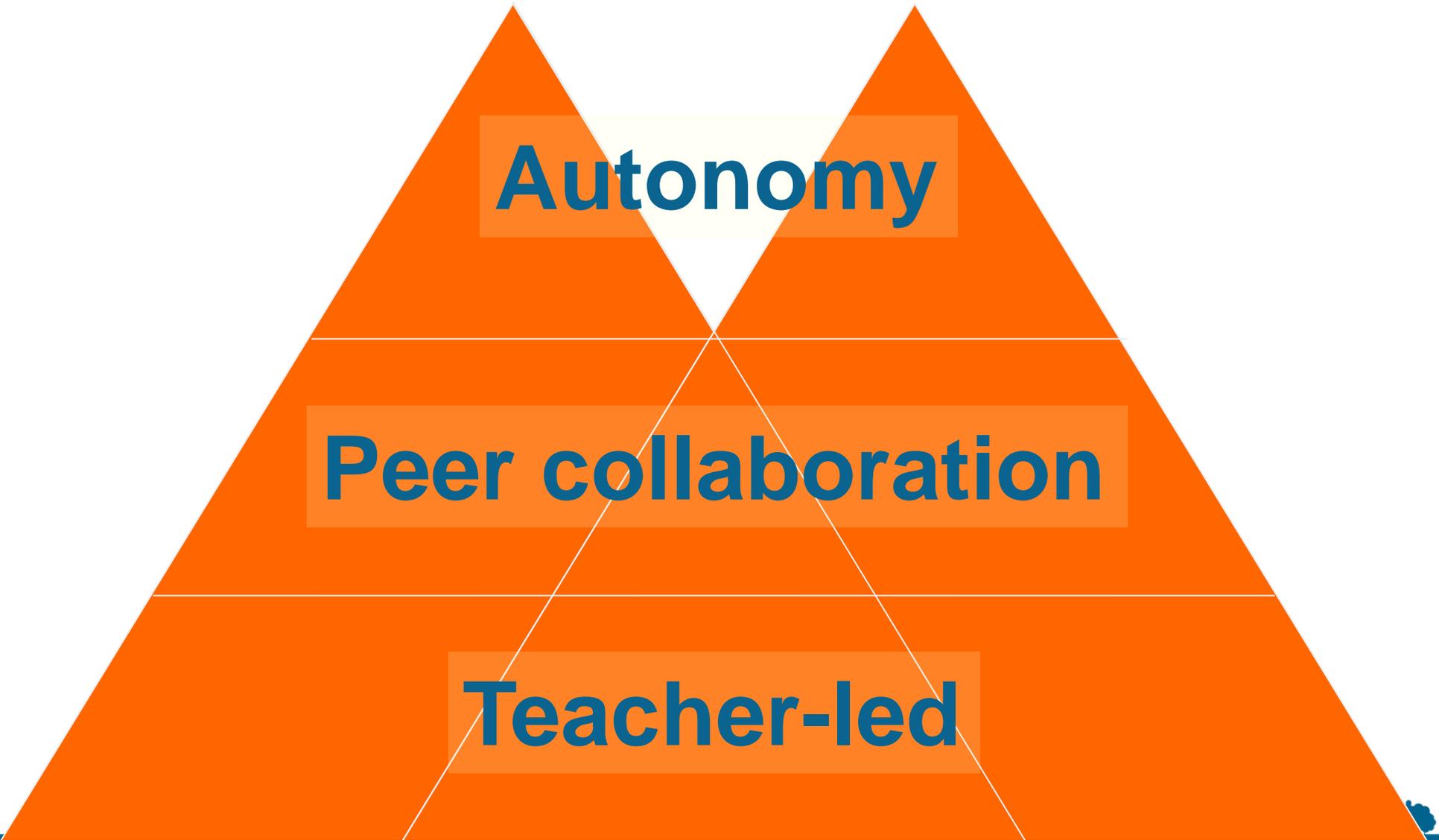
# Facilitating peer practice

- Set a meaningful task (motivating students; integrating pronunciation).

Turuk (2008): collaborative learning most effective in pairs of mixed ability or different L1.



# Scaffolding each other



**Autonomy**

**Peer collaboration**

**Teacher-led**

# **Pilot study:**

## **Central research questions**

### **1. Is peer practice useful?**

Better results than practising alone?

### **2. How do students perceive peer practice?**

Engaging? Motivating?



# Research design

(based on Pattanpichet, 2011)

- **Pre-test**  
Recording of 50 target words
- **Input session on Word Stress Patterns**  
Teacher led + materials/exercises
- **Task**  
Ss practised alone (**'singles'**) or with a peer (**'pairs'**) using materials provided
- **Post-test**  
Recording of 50 new target words



**Part A.** Start the recording and read out the words and sentences on the two pages below).

|                      |
|----------------------|
| <i>record (noun)</i> |
| <i>strategic</i>     |
| <i>spontaneous</i>   |
| <i>expansion</i>     |
| <i>experience</i>    |

|                     |
|---------------------|
| <i>potential</i>    |
| <i>supervision</i>  |
| <i>neutralise</i>   |
| <i>bureaucratic</i> |
| <i>incredible</i>   |

|                       |
|-----------------------|
| <i>perfect (verb)</i> |
| <i>efficiency</i>     |
| <i>economist</i>      |
| <i>conditional</i>    |
| <i>criminalise</i>    |

**Part B** Read out the sentences below.

*Some students at the Academy have unconditional offers.*

*He was fully proficient and had great ability.*

*The economic results will be detrimental.*

*Photography is a dynamic field.*

*We need to strive after flexibility and full collaboration.*



- Often, however, the suffix influences the stress of a word. Fortunately, such stress shifts are fairly predictable. This can help you to pronounce academic words correctly.

Example: *demonstrate* > *demonstration* (making a noun from a verb; the stress shifts).

a. Look at these words. Underline the bit that has the strongest stress.

presentations

collaboration

negotiation

recommendation

decision

expansion

supervision

technician

politician

optional

provisional

unconditional

Where does the stress come in words ending in -ion(al) and -ian?

Can you think of any similar words?

Rule: .....

Other examples: .....

h. Go through these word families. Where does the stress go? Underline the syllable that gets the most stress.

equal

equality

equalise

equalisation

final

finality

finalise

finalisation

neutral

neutrality

neutralise

neutralisation

# Response & attrition

- 46 voluntary participants: 25 'singles'; 21 'pairs'
- Overall IELTS level 5.0-6.0
- 96% Chinese speakers
  
- 4 'singles' did not complete the tasks
- 3 'pairs' had invalid tests (2 missing test sections; 1 student was seen to use a dictionary)
  
- **21 'singles'; 18 'pairs'**



# Results

| <b>Average Score (out of 50 items)</b> | <b>Singles (N = 21)</b> | <b>Pairs (N=18)</b> |
|--|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Pre-Test                               | 36                      | 36                  |
| Post-Test                              |                         |                     |



# Results

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|--|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Pre-Test                               | 36                      | 36                  |
| Post-Test                              | 35                      | 33                  |



# Reasons for lack of progress

- Practice time: not enough recycling / no consolidation?
- Other underlying problems:
  - Interference other pronunciation features
  - Word substitution
  - Lack of reading skills / lexical knowledge
- No mixed-ability pairs



# Survey

- **How do students perceive peer practice?**  
Engaging? Motivating?

Brown (2008): academic benefits, social benefits, generic skills, negative aspects.



# Survey: design

- Google forms: ‘singles’ and ‘pairs’
  - Some questions were the same
  - Some parallel questions
  - Pairs – some extra questions (experience)



# Parallel questions

## Singles

Practising with a partner  
**would be** more  
fun/enjoyable

## Pairs

Practising with a partner  
**was** fun/enjoyable

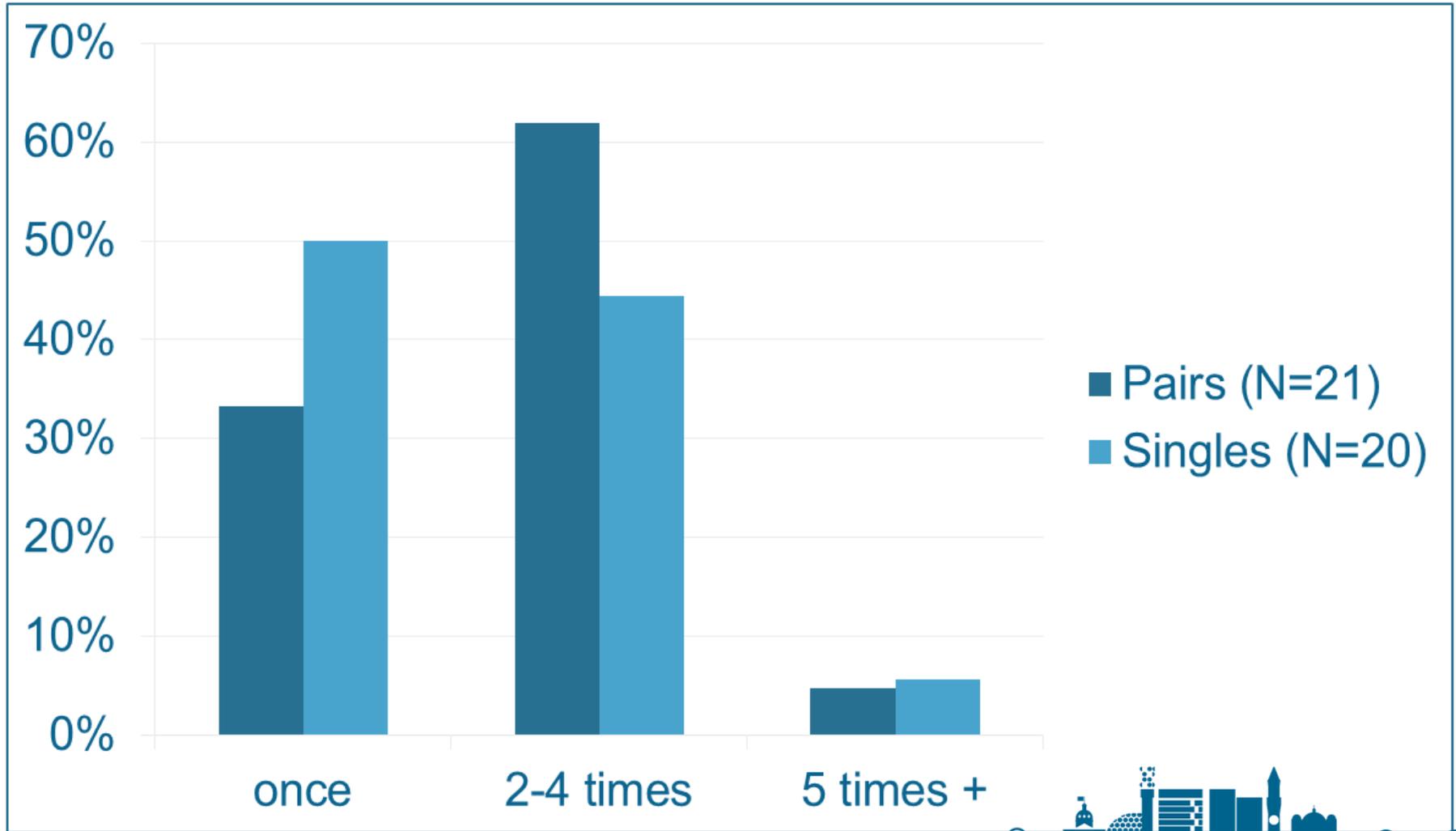


# Same questions Pairs/Singles

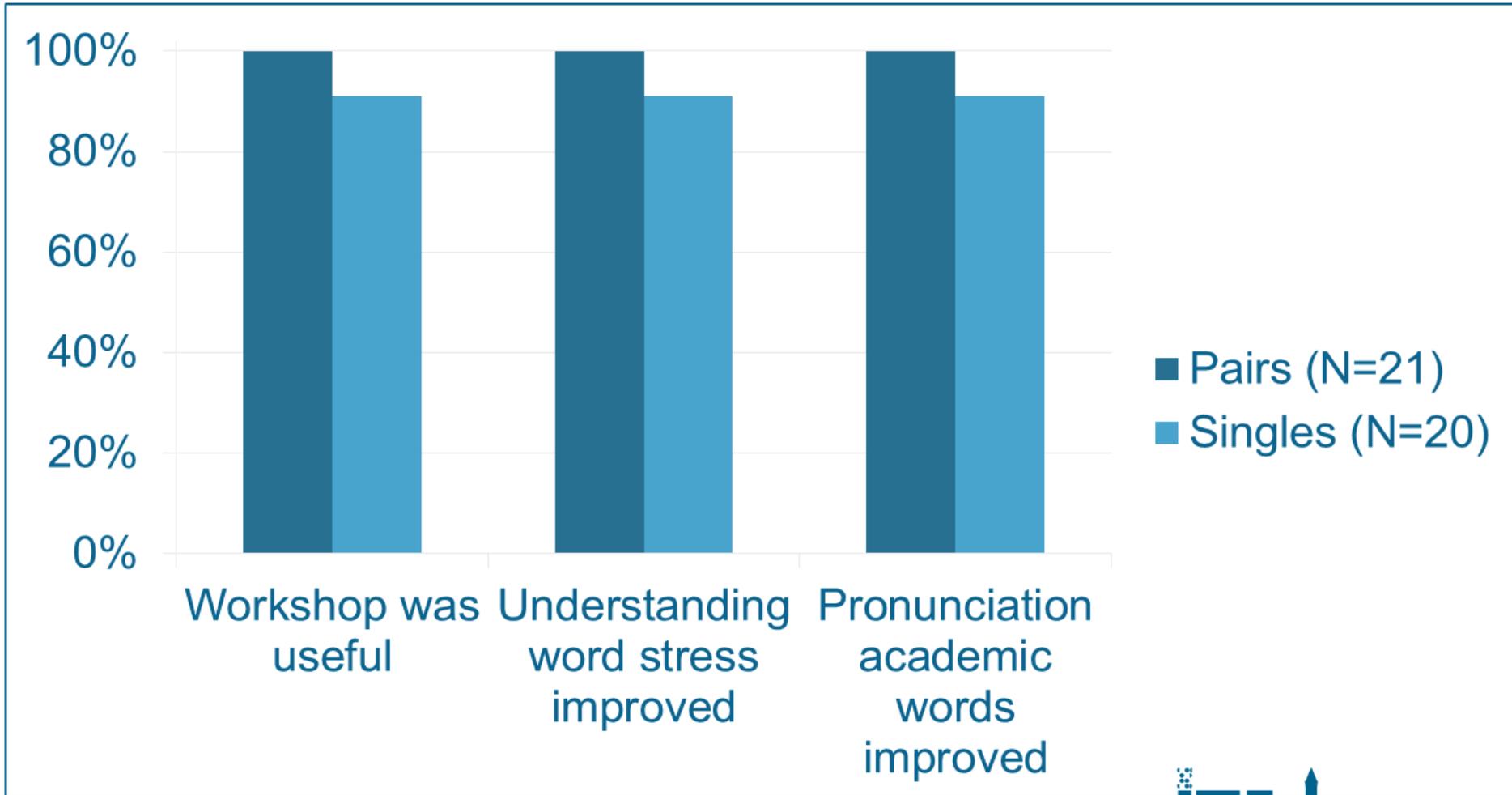
- Frequency of practice
- Academic benefits:
  - Useful workshop?
  - Improved understanding of word stress?
  - Improved pronunciation of academic words?



# How often did you practise?



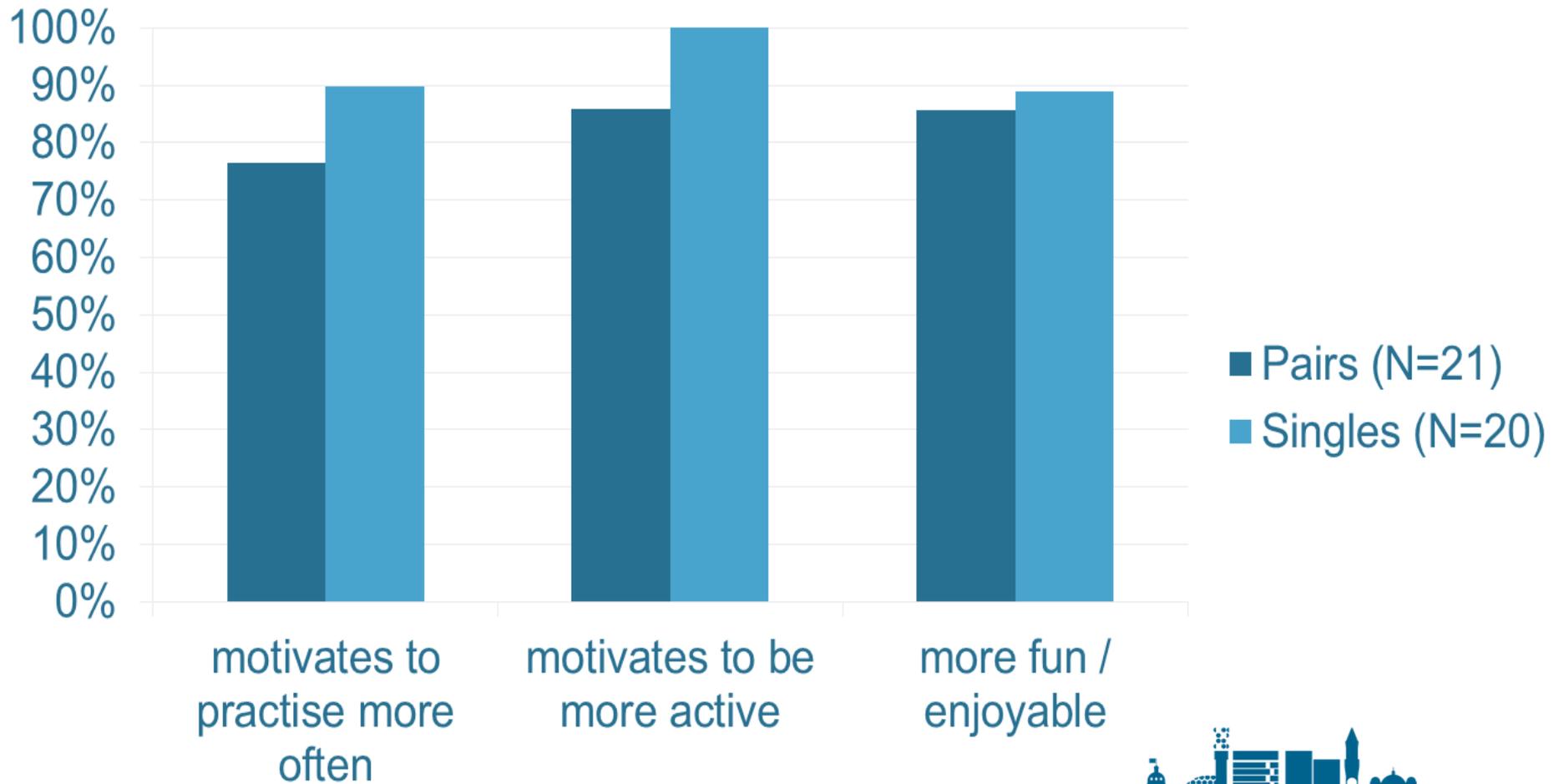
# Perceived academic benefits



| <b>Singles</b>  | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|
| I was able to make enough improvement on my own.      | 66.7%        | 33.3%           |
| Practising with a partner would help me improve more. | 94.4%        | 5.6%            |

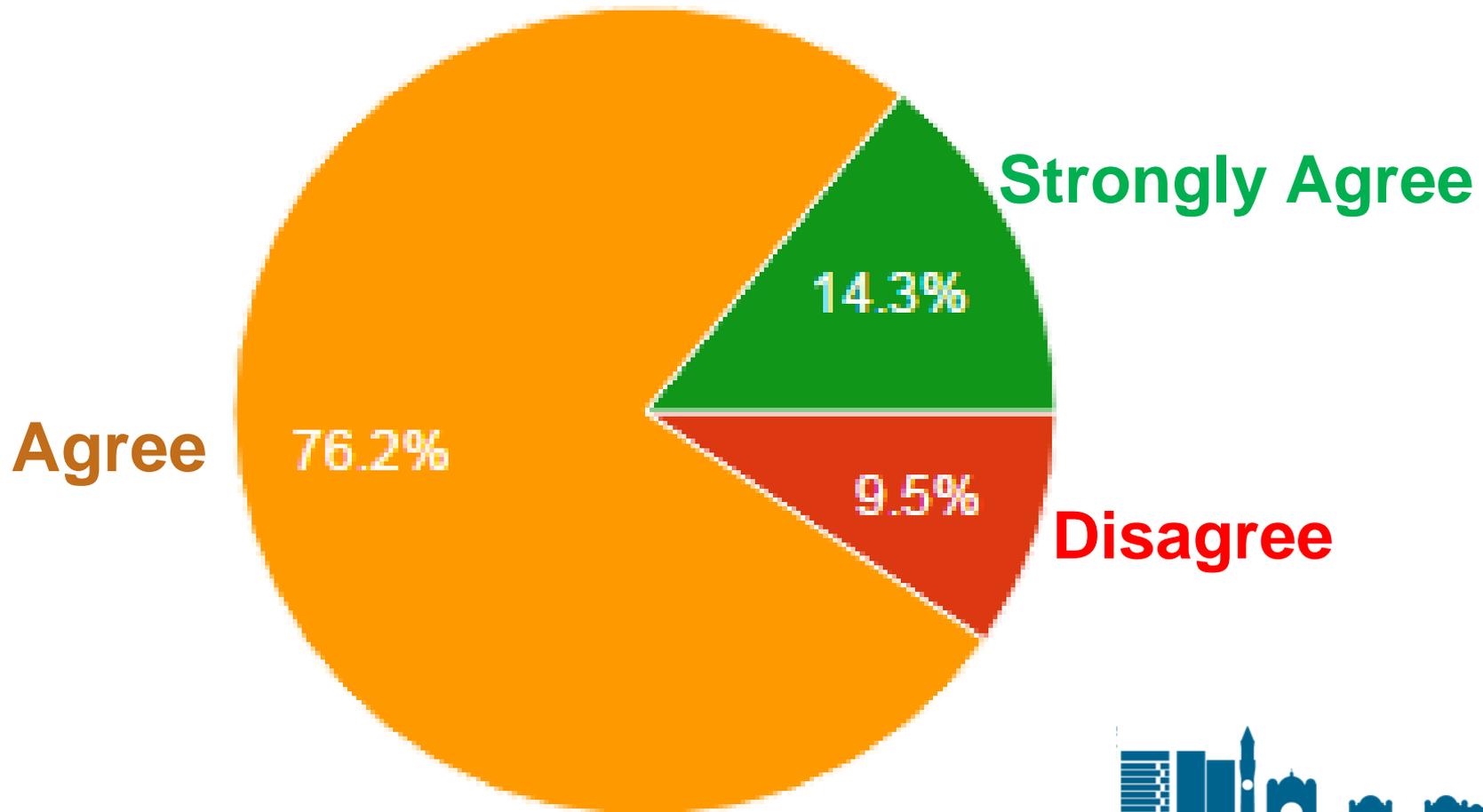
| <b>Pairs</b>   | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> |
|--|--------------|-----------------|
| Working with a partner was not really necessary for me to improve. | 42.9%        | 57.1%           |
| Working with a partner improved my pronunciation.                  | 90.5%        | 9.5%            |

# Other potential benefits: Working with a partner....



# Pairs: Collaboration

Working with a partner encouraged me to cooperate.



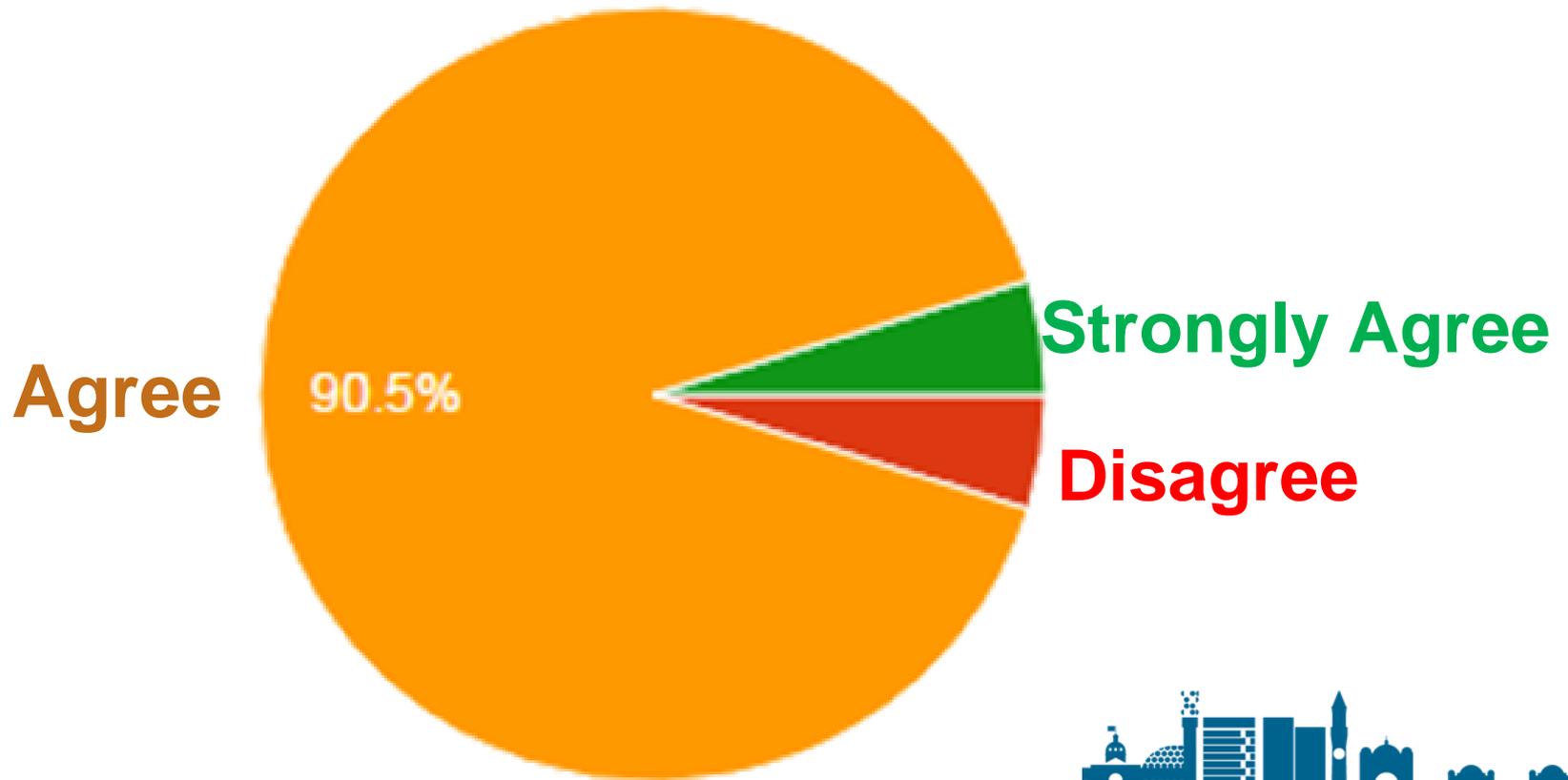
# Pairs: Peer assessment

|   | Agree | Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|
| I was able to give my partner useful feedback.  | 90.5% | 9.5%     |
| My partner was able to give me useful feedback. | 95.2% | 4.8%     |



# Pairs: Moving towards autonomy

Working with a partner made me feel more responsible – for myself and my partner.



# Pairs: Practical issues

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| It was difficult to make my partner participate in the task | 33.3% |
| Working with a partner took too much time                   | 57.1% |
| It was difficult to organise meetings with my partner       | 57.1% |

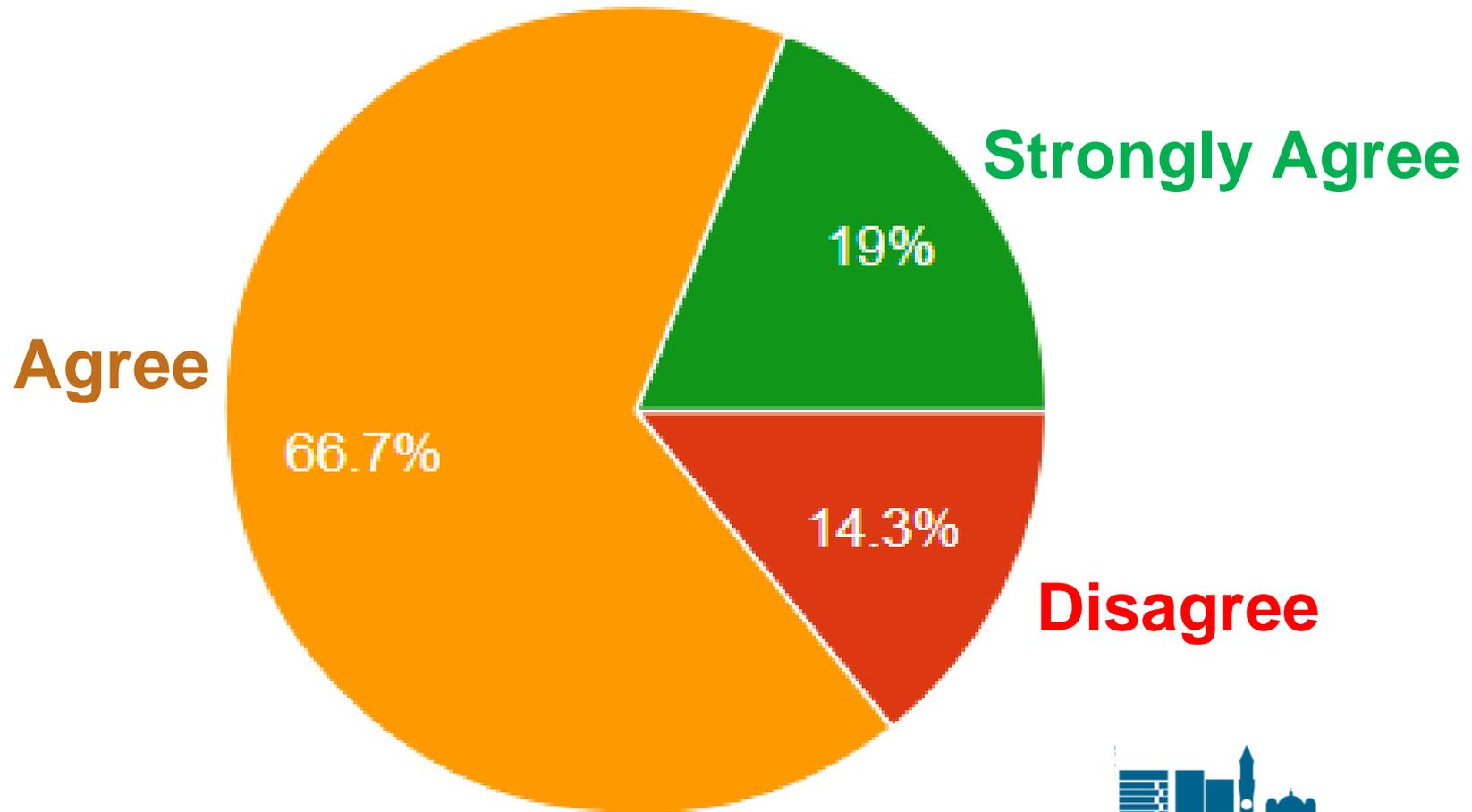


# Conclusions

- Pronunciation input and practice builds confidence and raises awareness.
- Peer practice...
  - motivates and engages.
  - promotes autonomy and study competence.
  - encourages cooperation and responsibility.
  - stimulates criticality (self/peer assessment).



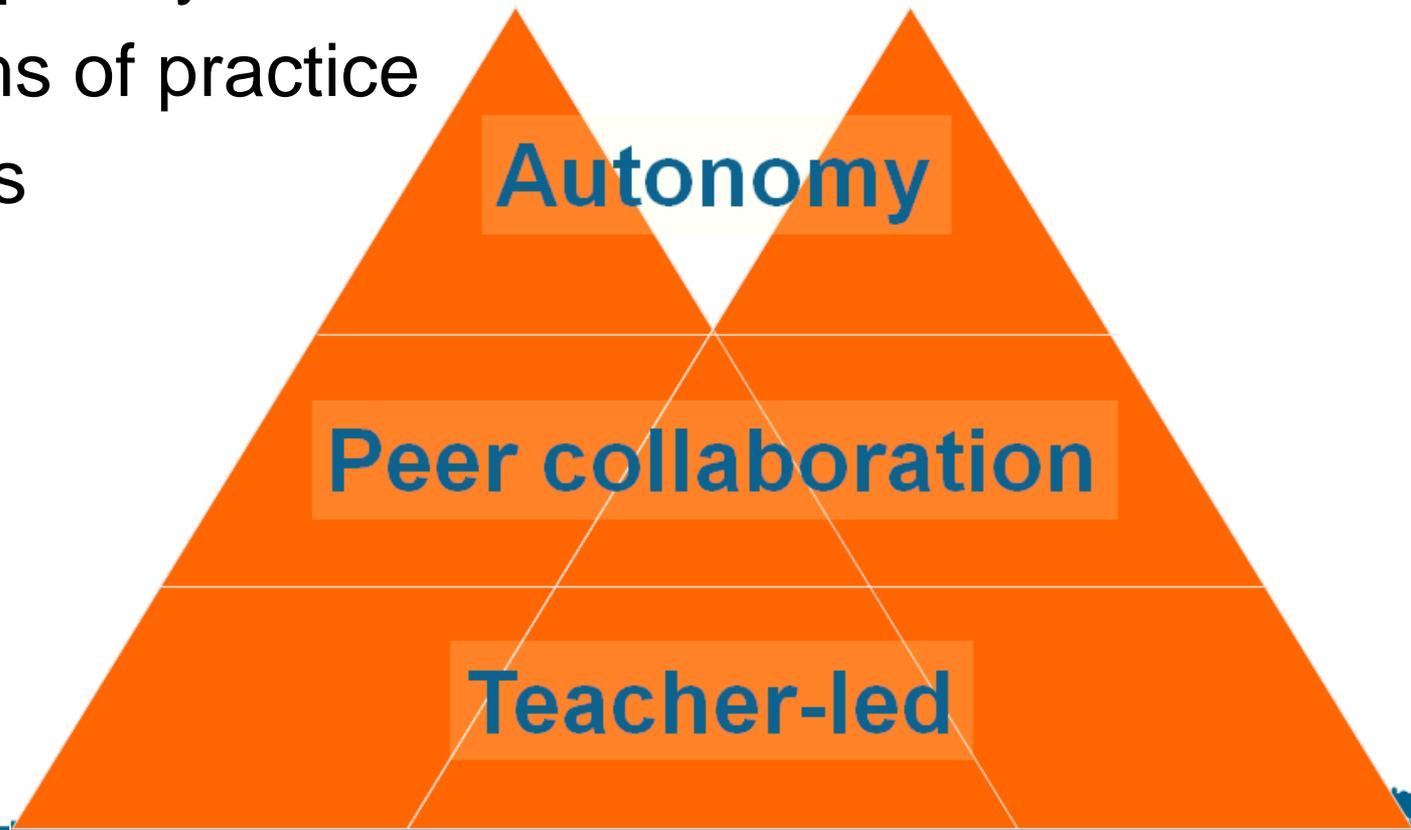
# Teachers should ask us more often to work with a partner (Pairs).



# Suggestion:

## Buddy system for peer practice

- Long term
- Lower frequency
- Other forms of practice
- Other skills



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