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**NOVEL APPROACHES FOR TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS IN EFL/ESL CLASSROOMS:
A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

The twenty-first century has brought tremendous changes in communication and it has paved path for the people of the whole world to communicate easily with others. Since there is a need for a common language to communicate with others all around the globe, English, being an international language, serves the purpose. It is a known fact that English is a language that is used in almost all the fields. Even though there are four language skills, speaking is given more importance because the success of human beings depends mostly on the performance of their oral communication skills. Therefore, English as a foreign language or English as a second language (EFL/ESL) learners should know more about the importance of oral communication skills or speaking skills and try to learn these skills in order to communicate well in English for various purposes. In the process of preparing the learners proficient in speaking English, the EFL/ESL teachers have to say good bye to the traditional methods of teaching speaking skills and think innovatively to replace these methods with the latest ones in their English classrooms. In this regard, the teachers of English have to adopt different strategies and techniques of teaching speaking skills and select suitable and interesting material for the learners so that they will take part actively in these activities and practice these skills not only in the classrooms but also outside the classrooms. Hence, the teachers should try to develop the speaking skills of the learners by involving them in certain activities that create more fun and enjoyment in the EFL/ESL classrooms. As a result, the learners show more interest towards the activities as they do them in a gamified environment and improve their speaking skills in a learner-friendly atmosphere.

This paper focuses mainly on the novel approaches for teaching speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms. First of all, this paper discusses the importance of English in the modern world and it also discusses the importance of language skills elaborately. This paper also presents the purpose of teaching speaking skills systematically. Moreover, this paper also brings out the activities that are involved before practicing speaking skills. Furthermore, this paper also emphasizes on the techniques of involving the ELLsmore on speaking skills. This paper highlights mainly on the novel approaches for teaching speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms comprehensively. Finally, this paper suggests some useful tips not only for the

teachers of English but also for the English language learners to improve their teaching and learning speaking skills effectively in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Key words: activities; EFL/ESL classrooms; oral communication; speaking skills; techniques.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of English in the modern world

In the globalized modern world, communication plays a major role to connect people all over the globe. In order to communicate well with people who live in different parts of the world, there should be a common language that is understood by all. At this juncture, English serves the purpose to communicate well with everyone as it is spoken by a majority of people in the world. Moreover, it is the only language spoken in all the states, regions, countries and continents. Furthermore, it is the native language of some countries and it is also an official language of many countries. Most of the scientific research is also

done in English and almost all the research publications are in English. It is also the language used in the fields of business, trade and commerce, software, computer, travel and tourism, education, engineering and technology, medicine and so on. It also serves as lingua franca. Also, most of the books related to higher education are published in English. Learning English is also more useful for the learners to continue their further studies in foreign countries. As English is the primary language used for the internet purposes, most people try to use it. Therefore, there is a need to learn English in order to achieve the desired results in all fields. After knowing the importance of English, people all around the globe try to learn it for various purposes.

The English Language Skills

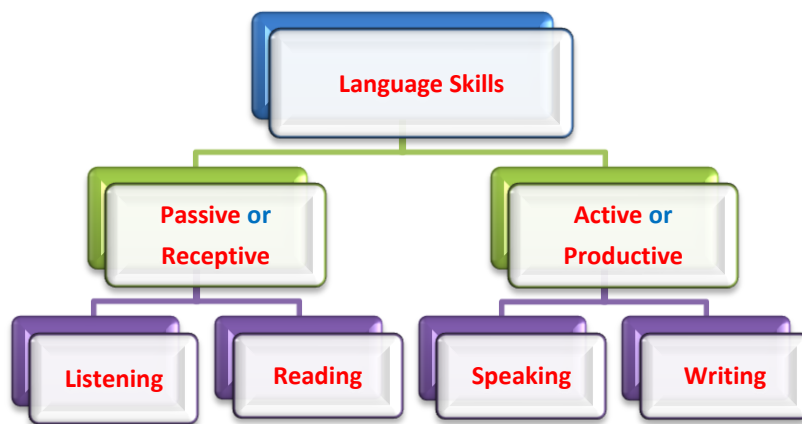


Figure: The English Language Skills

In the process of learning a language, the learners should learn the basic skills of the language. In learning English also, there are certain skills that a learner need to learn. These skills are so important in learning English and the learners should acquire all these skills and they should not neglect any of them. In English language, there are four basic skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four skills are further divided into two categories, viz. receptive or passive skills and productive or active skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills as learners just either listen or read

the language and they need not to produce it on their own. Whereas, speaking and writing are the skills that the learners need to produce sentences on their own. So, speaking and writing are called productive or active skills where the learners produce sentences in English on their own. Speaking in a foreign or second language is the most demanding of the four language skills in English. According to Harmer (2000: 16), "While listening and reading involve the ability to correctly receive messages and are therefore referred to as receptive skills, speaking and writing, on the other hand,

involve language production and are referred to as productive skills". Most of the EFL/ESL learners feel comfortable while learning listening or reading skills, but the situation is quite opposite when they have to learn speaking and writing skills. When the learners have to produce sentences on their own, they should be thorough in all aspects of the English language such as phonological, morphological, semantic and syntactic features. Since speaking and writing are quite difficult to acquire, the EFL/ESL learners have to go on practising them until they learn these skills thoroughly or perfectly. Therefore, the responsibility is on the shoulders of the English teachers to prepare the learners to have more practice on productive skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

The Purpose of Teaching Speaking Skills

Speaking is considered an important skill in order to express the speaker's intentions and effective oral communication results in getting success in various fields. Therefore, the learners have to get mastery over speaking skills. According to Cora and Knight (2000), "Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching which involves producing, receiving and processing information". Furthermore, Cheng (2007: 99) states, "Effective communication takes more than the ability to talk. It likewise includes the use of one's mental capacities in the choice of words and the ability to make other person understand what one is saying and vice versa". Also, Brown and Yuke (1983) assert, "Speaking is the skill that the students will be judged upon most in real life situations". Therefore, the teachers of English should adopt novel approaches and techniques to teach speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms in order to prepare the learners proficient in speaking English.

Since speaking skills are the most important skills for the learners to communicate effectively with the others in accomplishing their works or jobs, the English teachers have to concentrate more on these skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms. Acquiring speaking skills is more essential in the present competitive job market and global business scenario. In the present job market, most of the recruitment agencies or boards ask the job seekers to show the talents of

their oral communication skills as the companies want to get constant progress in order to compete with other companies. Moreover, there is a cut-throat competition in the global business world and each company strives to exhibit the importance of their products. In this regard, the employees of the companies need to acquire speaking skills as they play a vital role in promoting their businesses. Hence, various purposes of teaching speaking skills in the English classrooms have been comprehensively discussed below.

- To prepare the ELLs to communicate well with the teachers and peers in the classrooms.
- To give opportunity for the ELLs to participate in speaking activities in pairs or groups.
- To help the ELLs give oral presentations for various purposes.
- To engage the ELLs actively in group discussions.
- To encourage the ELLs to take part in speaking activities that take place in the English classrooms.
- To prepare the ELLs to communicate well with people all around the globe.
- To build self-confidence and self-esteem among the ELLs.
- To prepare the ELLs to pursue their higher education in foreign countries.
- To make the ELLs to give proper response to the queries and questions asked by different people.
- To train the ELLs to perform well in the debating competitions held for various purposes.
- To prepare the ELLs in giving good oral presentations to their colleagues or other international company representatives.
- To make the ELLs to stand on their own throughout their lives.
- To prepare the ELLs to become good orators when they get opportunities to give a talk.
- To train the ELLs properly how to participate well during their interviews.
- To prepare the ELLs in getting better opportunities in their future job attempts.
- To make the ELLs to become good promoters of their businesses at the international level once they settle down in their jobs.

Since there are several advantages of teaching speaking skills in the English classrooms, the teachers are advised to teach these skills with thorough preparation by adopting the material suitable for the level of the learners, selecting the topics that are more interesting for the learners and applying different strategies to make it a successful and fruitful teaching-learning environment.

Activities involved before practising Speaking Skills

Speaking plays a key role in not only motivating the listeners but also fulfilling their tasks successfully. With the art of good speaking skills, speakers can achieve great success in their respective fields. The first and foremost thing involved in speaking is to think positive. When the ELLs think positive about the given task, it indicates that they have achieved half of their success in it. Moreover, the best speakers should have the aptitude to absorb the ability and analyze the given information quickly and accurately and access the information very fast so that they can make the right decisions and then communicate the same to the others. So, there are some important points involved in habituating good speaking skills and we shall discuss the techniques of involving the ELLs more on speaking skills.

Techniques of involving the ELLs more on Speaking Skills

Since speaking skills need more time and practice to acquire, the teachers of English should teach speaking skills to the ELLs in a systematic way. Furthermore, the learners should also pay more attention towards their teachers in order to grasp a variety of sentence structures and some new vocabulary that are needed for this purpose. In this regard, the EFL/ESL teachers have to adopt various techniques of teaching speaking skills such as to prepare their learners as active listeners, teaching various strategies of organizing their ideas and also teach them the techniques of preparing the ELLs to inculcate good speaking skills among them.



Figure: Techniques of involving the ELLs more on Speaking Skills

Active Listener: The main ingredient that makes the ELLs to think on the spot and give a positive and intelligent response is to be active learners. Hence, the teachers should prepare the ELLs to listen carefully to the topic and involve them completely in this process in order to grasp the complete words, logic, tone and emotion that involve behind the speakers' speech.

Organization of ideas: The EFL/ESL teachers should inculcate fast and critical thinking skills among the ELLs. As most of the ELLs have these skills, the teachers should teach them how to organize their ideas systematically to prepare for a good speech. In this regard, the teachers should teach their ELLs the techniques of adopting some models or frame works to structure new information into something coherent that the ELLs can respond with. Moreover, the teachers should also train their ELLs in breaking down the ideas or issues according to the timeline such as past, present and future.

Preparation of Speech: The teachers should teach the ELLs in organizing their thoughts and ideas systematically and quickly. Moreover, the teachers should also help the learners in this regard and also demonstrate with more examples as long as the learners grasp these techniques. Therefore, the EFL/ESL teachers should teach the basic structure involved in speaking skills or speech such as opening, body and conclusion. As preparation of speech is more important in speaking situations such a stable topics during meetings or for some other purposes when the speakers are called upon to "say some words", the ELLs are supposed to prepare their speech in a well-organized manner. Since thinking before speaking adds more value to the ELLs' ideas, thoughts and feelings, they are taught how to think effectively before

demonstrating their speaking skills. With their effective and impressive speaking skills, there is no doubt that the ELLs can touch and win the hearts of the listeners. As speaking skills are more important for the ELLs to establish themselves well in oral communication, it is time to discuss the novel approaches of teaching speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms.

Novel Approaches for teaching Speaking Skills in EFL/ESL Classrooms

The EFL/ESL learners have to acquire the needed vocabulary as well as grammatical structures to communicate the English language effectively and successfully. Therefore, the teachers should introduce speaking skills to the learners by adopting the latest techniques and approaches that create

more interest among the learners. In this regard, the teachers should select appropriate materials that involve the learners more in speaking activities. Thus, the teachers think of alternative methods of teaching speaking skills which encourage the learners to participate in the activities actively in pairs or groups. So, the EFL/ESL learners share their thoughts and ideas with their peers and develop their knowledge and self-confidence that play a vital role in developing the learners' speaking skills. In this connection, the responsibility is on the shoulders of the English teachers to mould the learners to acquire necessary skills to improve their oral communication immensely by applying several novel techniques and approaches of teaching speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms.



Figure: Novel Approaches for Teaching Speaking Skills

Initial Stage Activities: While teaching speaking skills at the initial stages, the EFL/ESL teachers should concentrate mainly on two components, viz. vocabulary and grammatical structures. In the beginning, the teachers should introduce new vocabulary of English using several techniques such as images, flashcards, pictures, realia, videos, mimic, blackboard drawings, gestures, facial expressions, acting out, puppets and so on to involve the learners more on learning the new vocabulary taught in the EFL/ESL classrooms. In some situations, the teachers

can even use miming technique while teaching new vocabulary at the initial stages. Here, the teachers can introduce the vocabulary items such as 'throw' and 'a ball' by miming 'throwing a ball' and simultaneously showing the picture of 'throwing a ball' so that the learners grasp the vocabulary items of 'throw' and 'a ball' very quickly. In this way, the teachers can also ask the learners to give the opposite of 'throw' so that they will learn the antonyms and speak some more sentences with those antonyms. Moreover, the teachers can also

improve the learners' speaking skills by introducing various grammatical structures such as converting affirmatives into negatives; negatives into affirmatives; then affirmatives and negatives into questions and so on. This kind of activities create interest among the learners and they participate actively and improve their speaking skills. While implementing these activities in the English classrooms, the teachers should motivate the learners to produce maximum number of sentences and devise to give more opportunities for the learners to speak without any hesitation or fear in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Using Pictures in the classroom: "A picture is worth a thousand words" is an English language idiom. It is understood from the idiom that even a complex idea is conveyed through a single picture and the picture itself conveys the message effectively than the description of it. But, the teachers can use the same picture to make the ELLs to express their thoughts and ideas about it. Then the students express their own opinions about the picture and it develops speaking skills as well as critical thinking of the learners. Moreover, the usage of pictures in the EFL/ESL classroom is an added advantage for the learners to produce sentences in English in a systematic way. In this way, the teachers should make use of the pictures in order to develop their ELLs' speaking skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Games: In order to improve the speaking skills of the ELLs, the English teachers have to think of various techniques to implement in their English classrooms. One among them is 'guessing games'. While implementing such activities, the teachers have to hold something in their wrists where the learners cannot see it. Then the teachers have to ask the ELLs to guess the name of the object. Then they go on saying something like, "Is it a?" which encourages the learners in producing some good English sentences in the classroom. It also helps them learn new grammatical structure as well as pronunciation. Later on, the teachers can ask the learners to guess the place that they had visited last week and also ask them to say something related to it. Moreover, the teachers can also ask the learners to give a small talk on topics such as "My family", "My best Friend". "My favourite Book/Movie/Sports

star/Game", "My Best Teacher", and so on. Later on, the teachers can introduce some more topics such as "How did they spend their time yesterday?/last week?/ last Sunday?", etc. in order to improve their speaking skills in the English classrooms. When the teachers introduce a variety of activities in the form of games in their classrooms, the ELLs will actively participate in those activities and as a result, develop their speaking skills immensely.

Brainstorming Sessions: In promoting speaking skills, brainstorming sessions are one of the best teaching techniques for the teachers to enhance the ELLs' oral communication skills enormously. Since the ELLs are free to express their ideas about the given topic, they think independently and try to produce as many points as possible. At this juncture, the teachers should also concentrate on the below average learners and encourage them to participate in the discussions. Also, it is quite natural that the advanced learners participate very actively in these sessions and produce more and more ideas to build more strength to the topic. As this is the right opportunity for the below average learners to add some points during these brainstorming sessions, the role of teachers becomes very crucial to involve them dynamically in these sessions. Therefore, the teachers should not neglect the learners who wish to keep quite themselves in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers have to go around the classroom and concentrate on each and every learner, especially, those who are not active participants. As there is no hard and fast rule for the learners to supply some points related to the topic, teachers should motivate and encourage the learners just to produce relevant points even if they are very short like one or two words. Hence, the teachers have to act as facilitators and inspire the learners to participate in the brainstorm sessions as they enjoy the entire sessions by adding some more points to the given topic.

Pair or Group Activities: In some situations, the teachers can also introduce pair work or group work or team work that makes the learners to share their ideas in a learner-friendly environment. Therefore, the teachers have to divide the class into pairs or groups and give them some topics to prepare and deliver speeches for one or two minutes on those

topics. In this connection, the teachers have to adopt collaborative or cooperative learning approaches in their teaching so that the learners share their ideas and opinions with the others. As Brown says, "Group work teaches learners to respect other learners and improve their English language skills". While working with their peers in an independent learning environment, the ELLs are free to share their ideas with their co-participants and enhance their knowledge enormously. They also improve their speaking skills by participating in discussions and arguments that happen within the groups. Then they collaborate in preparing their points in a proper sequence and finally the representative of each group presents the speech to the whole class. As soon as all the presentations are over, there will be an open discussion where all the ELLs can have their opinions on the speech. Since this is the best method to involve all the ELLs to participate in the group activities, the EFL/ESL teachers should encourage such activities in their regular classrooms to improve the speaking skills of their ELLs.

The Picture-strip Story-telling Activity: In order to improve speaking skills of the learners, picture-strip story telling activity is one of the most useful techniques for the teachers to adopt in their regular English classrooms. Through this technique, the English teachers ask one of the ELLs to hold the given picture-strip and show the first picture to the class and the rest of the ELLs have to guess how the second picture appears. Then the second picture is shown to the ELLs and the ELLs compare the second picture with their own guesses. Later on, the ELLs go on developing their story further. After that, the ELLs are asked to predict how the third picture looks like and this activity goes on in the same way until the last picture is shown to the ELLs. Through this activity, the learners develop their speaking skills as well as critical and logical thinking skills. In this game-based activity, the ELLs have a wider choice of vocabulary and great choice of ideas that they make prediction using their own intelligence. Furthermore, the ELLs get a continuous feedback. The ELLs proceed towards the end of the story as the strip discloses. It is sure that the ELLs develop their

speaking skills massively with this picture-strip story-telling activity.

Roleplays: The English language learners can develop their speaking skills tremendously through role plays. Role plays pay to be aware of the EFL/ESL teachers where they want their learners to go and they are the most essential tools to have in the teaching box. Role plays are one of the staples of teaching EFL/ESL learners and they are very useful in developing the learners' speaking skills. Furthermore, role plays allow the learners to practise speaking skills in a dialogue form or in a conversational situation. They are more useful for the learners to build their confidence and fluency of the English language, access constant progress and put learning into action. In most cases, role plays are generally set to target some specific grammatical items like tenses and also to test the skills of social interaction such as asking for help, interrupting, negotiating, making small talk, and so on. The teachers can design role plays from simple to complex levels. Since the design of the role plays depend on the desire of the EFL/ESL teachers whether they are so simple or more complicated for the learners to acquire speaking skills, the teachers should select items for this purpose with utmost care. In setting scenes for role plays, the teachers have to introduce several ways such as gestures, cue cards, secret messages, verbal instructions, and so on. Hence, the teachers should try to adopt as simple scenes as possible at the initial stages and further continue these activities with more difficult ones so that the learners can have enough practice in producing grammatical sentences that are more relevant to the situation.

Group Discussions: Through group discussions, the EFL/ESL teachers can train the learners' language skills, especially, their oral communication or speaking skills in English language learning. Group discussions are also helpful in building confidence among the learners. At the same time, they also encourage the learners to build a sense of participation in the EFL/ESL classrooms. It is very useful to develop group discussion skills for daily-life situations as the learners frequently find themselves having more discussions amongst their peers, family members, colleagues and even teachers. Group

discussions may vary from the most informal chats that are related to routine things to the most serious topics. Moreover, group discussions are widely used in the present job market during the interviews and selection procedure time. Even these group discussions take various formats, the basic skills remain the same. Since group discussions provide the learners an opportunity for extended speaking practice, the teachers have to introduce more activities in the EFL/ESL classrooms and encourage the ELLs to participate in such activities that enhance their speaking skills. In this context, the teachers of English should either give a chance to select the topics on their own interests or provide them a list of topics that are accepted by a majority of the learners. And, the teachers have to make the classrooms like the outside world and inspire the learners to use the language spontaneously and communicatively that is more suitable to the context. According to Badache (2011), "Group work is an instruction method where learners of different levels form small groups and work together towards a specific objective". As communication system generally happens and is facilitated through group discussions, the teachers should act merely as facilitators in order to help the learners meet their goals.

Debates: Activities that take place in the EFL/ESL classrooms in the form of debates will be more challenging and fun way to motivate the learners to encourage their classroom interaction, review vocabulary and develop their fluency of speaking. The teachers have to prepare a solid lesson plan and adopt good moderating skills in order to make the debate more successful and the learners also participate actively in the debates that take place in the EFL/ESL classrooms. While choosing the topics for debates, first of all, the teachers should select the topics that the learners are more interested in such as family, friends, work, school, language learning, mobile phones, technology and so on. Moreover, there should be a little controversy in the topics and the learners should generate more ideas so that they go on speaking more points on the topics supplied by the teachers. Then the teachers have to divide their classes according to their real preferences. Furthermore, it is also important for

the teachers to structure their debates into different stages depending on the availability of time for the task. Therefore, the teachers have to plan the duration of the debate in advance so that the learners can perform well in the debate and meet the expectations of their teachers. In this context, the teachers should divide the classrooms into groups and encourage all the learners of the groups to participate in the debate. Also, the teachers moderate the debate that goes on in the classrooms.

The role of the teachers is limited to act as facilitators or guides or helpers by feeding the learners who are struggling in formulating their opinions with key words or eliciting their intended meaning. It is better that the teachers should stand behind the listening team so that they can focus the speaking team on their audience. At the same time, the teachers should offer some key phrases to help the learners argue for or against the ideas discussed during the debate. As debates sometimes take place with heated arguments, the teachers should always try to neutralize them in speaking. During the debate sessions, the teachers should use the timer and it should be visible to the whole class. Once the debate is over, the teachers have to review the main points and major speaking difficulties at the end of the debate. As all the learners take part in the debate, they improve their speaking skills immensely. Hence, the teachers should introduce some interesting and thought-provoking activities so that the learners develop not only their speaking skills but also their critical thinking and reasoning skills in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Teaching speaking skills is quite a difficult task for the EFL/ESL teachers as it involves various other components that the learners have to acquire. Thus, the teachers have to implement innovative and a variety of speaking activities in the EFL/ESL classrooms and select the materials according to the needs and interests of the learners. Moreover, the teachers of English have to provide congenial atmosphere in the EFL/ESL classrooms in order to involve the learners more on speaking activities. With constant practice on speaking activities, there is no doubt that the learners will massively develop their speaking skills in English.

Conclusion

In this paper, the main focus has been laid on the novel approaches for teaching speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms. For this purpose, first of all, the importance of English in the modern world has been briefly given. Then the importance of language skills has been discussed elaborately and the purpose of teaching skills has been presented systematically. After that, the activities that are involved before practising speaking skills have been brought out. Moreover, the techniques of involving the ELLs more on speaking skills have been emphasized. Furthermore, this paper has comprehensively elaborated the novel approaches for teaching speaking skills in EFL/ESL classrooms. Finally, the teachers as well as the learners have been given some useful tips to improve their teaching and learning speaking skills effectively in the EFL/ESL classrooms.

Since most of the teachers have been still following the traditional methods in their EFL/ESL classrooms, a majority of the learners do not show more interest on learning speaking skills. Due to the awareness among the present generation of EFL/ESL learners, they prefer the latest methods to the oldest and out-dated methods. Therefore, there is a need for the teachers to understand the needs and requirements of the learners and try to adopt entirely different techniques and approaches of teaching speaking skills. Moreover, the materials used for this purpose must fulfill the desires and needs of the learners and involve them more on learning speaking skills by participating in several innovative tasks given by the teachers. In order to involve the learners more in the activities that take place in the classrooms, the teachers of English have to adopt various techniques of teaching speaking skills such as group and pair activities, discussions, debates, role plays and so on. At the initial stages, the teachers should introduce some simple and easy activities and then they have to extend them by incorporating more difficult ones in a systematic order. Moreover, the teachers should give instructions in detail to the learners on how to complete the given task. Furthermore, the teachers of English should adopt novel techniques and approaches of promoting the learners' speaking

skills in English. Then there is a possibility for the learners to concentrate more on the given activities and do a lot of practice to improve their speaking skills. So, the learners have to follow the instructions of the teachers carefully and utilize their valuable classroom time on practising speaking skills. Thus, the teachers of English should focus more on innovative methods and techniques of teaching speaking skills and create friendly and pleasant atmosphere among the learners in order to improve their learners' speaking skills enormously in the modern ESL/EFL classrooms.

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