

**A Web-based Program for Developing EFL
Listening Skills of English-Major Students of the
Faculty of Education**

Prepared By

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Abstract

The aim of the current study was to develop third year English major students the listening language skills in English as a foreign language. The treatment tool is a web based learning program. The participants of the current study included a group of third year English major students in Ismailia (N=30). The design of the study starts with a pilot test to assess the need of this group of learners to develop their listening language skills. A pre/post-test for the experimental group is administered then the satisfaction questionnaire. The results of the study revealed that the developed web based learning program had a significantly positive effect on developing the listening skills in English as a foreign language for English major students. The study offers a number of findings concerning the need for more efforts to help improve EFL learners' listening Skills and sub-skills as a significant component of such learners' overall mastery of EFL.

Keywords: Listening skills, web based learning

1.1 Introduction:

Learning English should not be restricted to the learning in the classrooms. With the various technologies that we have, teachers, in particular, have to be selective and productive to ensure that their teaching is useful, varied and interesting. This can be done by promoting web-based learning.

1.2 Web 2.0

Some key concepts that have to be introduced in this section web 2.0, and the former version web 1.0. Web 2.0 a concept that refers both to a large and shifting set of technological tools and to an approach to the socially and technologically integrated use of technology. Some researchers use the term "social computing" (Redecker, 2009) or simply the phrase "digital age," (Greenhow, et al., 2009). Some major authors in the field talk about new media practices (Ito, et al., 2008) but they are all talking about tools, ranging from blogs, Facebook, and media-sharing sites to platforms such as virtual worlds or virtual learning environments, and even Web-based applications, for example, Voice

Thread or Google Earth. Briefly, Web 2.0 is an online computing platform. This term, which is now a popular buzzword, was coined by Tim O'Reilly at the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 technology conference in 2004. The idea of Web 2.0 has completely changed our thinking about Internet usage and teaching modalities supported by the Internet.

1.2.1 Web 2.0 tools:

The following table presents the web 2.0 tools currently in use.

Table 1: Web 2.0 Tools Currently in Use

AJAX :Asynchronous JavaScript And XML— web development techniques used for creating inter-active or “rich” Internet applications rather than static Web pages; this technology allows dragging elements across the page
Atom a syndication format, or publishing protocol for Web feeds; like RSS (see below) but in a newer format
Blog short for ‘weblog’—a web site that enables anyone who accesses it to add commentary, graphics, or other content via simple self-publishing tools
HTML Hypertext Markup Language – the standard page description language for the creation of Web pages; a “tagging” language that formats the page and tells where images, sound, and other elements should be inserted
Mash up a web application that combines data from more than one source into a single integrated tool e.g., Google Maps
Podcast a digital audio file distributed via the Web for playback on portable media players, smart phones, and PCs
RSS Rich Site Summary or Really Simple Syndication – a family of Web feed protocols (formats) that automatically deliver selected content to the user’s Desktop
Social Media the use of electronic and Internet tools to share information/experiences, allow group interaction and collaboration— examples include MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, Flickr (personal); LinkedIn (professional); Second Life (virtual world)

Tags short for metatag—a non-hierarchical, user-generated keyword assigned to a piece of information allowing it to be found more easily by a search engine

Wiki a dynamic Web document designed to enable anyone who accesses it to contribute to and *modify or edit* the content; which distinguishes it from a blog and makes it an excellent tool for group projects

XMLeXtensible Markup Language—a mark-up language specification that is stricter than HTML which allows users to define their own elements; preserves the formatting and structure of a digital document regardless of what application is used to read it

(Kuchinskas, 2007; Stair & Reynolds, 2010; Web 2.0 Reference Center, 2009)

The researcher used some tools including podcast, wiki, youtubes, Gmail, RSS, and social media in the web based learning she designed.

1.3 Listening skills:

Listening is defined as the process of identifying and understanding the speech of the speakers. It involves understanding the speaker's accent or pronunciation, speaker's grammar and vocabulary, and comprehension of meaning (Saricoban, 1999). The listener should be capable of doing these four things at the same time. Therefore listening is very important in the process of second language education.

Listening is considered as a principal language skill. Through listening, people can acquire a large portion of their education, their information, their ideas, and their understanding of the world. As an input skill, listening plays a vital role in student's language development (Saricoban, 1999).

Some listening instruction-related research (Brown, 2007; Cross, 2009; Vandergrift, 2003, 2004) suggests that listening can be better taught through the use of a balanced approach to listening instruction. According to Vandergrift (2004), the balanced approach to listening instruction has to include both top-down and bottom-up processing to exploit students' past knowledge of social contexts and grammar. It

was suggested also that by using previously acquired knowledge, learners will better understand both the context and linguistic content that are present in everyday conversations (Greenleaf, 2011). In order to enhance this approach, specific listening strategies should be used to make audible language even more comprehensible (Oxford, 2001; Vandergrift, 2004). These strategies are defined as cognitive, metacognitive, and socioaffective in nature (Greenleaf, 2011).

With the advent of multimedia computing and the Internet, the role of computers in language instruction has now become a key factor in how foreign languages are taught in higher educational institutions around the world. EFL instructors are able to implement in their curricula websites like YouTube that offer “an infinite array of 50 possibilities to enhance the efficacy of listening instruction” (Greenleaf, 2011, p. 2). According to Jones (2008), when various audiovisual materials are used and the listening strategies are applied in practice, “aural comprehension within a multimedia environment” may improve.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are the four necessary skills of a foreign language (Grittner, 1969; Wilkins, 1974; Paulston, 1976; Carrell, Devine and Eskey, 1990; Şire, 1999; Sariçoban, 1999). Carrell et al. gave considerable credit to listening over reading and speaking over writing. All over these abilities, listening is the most necessary part of communicating in any language (Grittner, 1969). Macy & Feyten (2002) explain the importance of listening ability by stressing that listening ability is very essential in language learning. Moreover, listening ability is the most used language skill among speaking, reading and writing.

1.3.1 Listening Process:

The nature of the listening process can be clearly illustrated from the perspective of native language research; it is a process of filtering raw speech into short-term memory. The filtered information then is organized according to their respective fields to produce coherent understanding of the whole subject, and this outcome is only what is stored in long-term memory thus, listening is an activity to create meaning of speech rather than speech its original form (Richard,

1983:219-240). This is in agreement with Stevick (1984:281-283) who stated that listening is a process of generating images that might include sensory, emotional, temporal and verbal that come together in memory. According to Byrnes (1984:317-329) listening plays an important role in building a student's understanding which is then crucial for the development of other language skills. Students develop these skills in a cyclic form rather than linear. They need to refer to precedent information. This new information received by the students is then organized to produce better understanding (Lund, 1990:105-115, and Richard, 1983:219-240). Hadley (1993:127-151) on the other hand, illustrates listening as a problem solving activity where initially the student will form a hypothesis about what they hear later several inferences are formulated to build the intended meaning of the speech. After having processed all the ambiguities and uncertainties, students will finally retain the exact required meaning of that speech. However, Nanda (1989) identified four steps in the listening process:

- 1) Hearing
- 2) Understanding
- 3) Evaluating
- 4) Responding

From the first step to the fourth, the process involves successively the more hearing of sounds represented by words and sentences at the sensory level, perceptive recognition of meaning framed by the physical and emotional context, sizing up the totality of the communication either for acceptance or rejection and finally making a response consistent with one's nature and the demands of the situation.

1.3.2 Listening Skills:

Table 3: A list of listening skills

Direct meaning comprehension

- Listen for gist
- Listening for main idea(s) or important information; and distinguishing that from supporting detail, or examples
- Listening for specifics, including recall of important details

- Determining a speakers' attitude or intention towards a listener or a topic

Inferred meaning comprehension

- Making inferences and deductions
- Relating utterances to their social and situational context
- Recognizing the communicative function of utterances
- Deducing meaning of unfamiliar lexical items from context

Contributory meaning comprehension

- Understanding phonological features
- Understanding grammatical notions such as comparison, cause, result, degree, etc.
- Understanding discourse markers
- Understanding the main syntactic structure of clauses or idea units
- Understanding cohesion, especially reference
- Understanding lexical cohesion, especially lexical set membership and collocations
- Understanding lexis

Listening and taking notes

- Ability to extract salient points to summarize the text
- Ability to select relevant key points

(Weir, 1993, cited from Buck, 2001, pp. 54-55)

As shown in table (3), Weir (1993) divided the listening process into four main sections, and each with further detailed description: direct meaning, inferred meaning comprehension, contributory meaning comprehension, and listening and taking notes. The list is not only a description of the listening process, but also a comprehensive checklist of operations for listening tests.

According to James (1982) there are six components of listening comprehension which are:

- 1-The sonic realization or actual physical hearing of language.
- 2-The segmental/supra segmental form (phoneme distinction).
- 3-The musical pitch and rhythm.
- 4-Lexical phrasing.
- 5-The purpose of the message intended by the speaker.

6-The actualization of the message in the listener.

Listening skills have been classified in different ways by different researchers. One of them is Harvey (1984:31-41) who stated that listening skills include; perceiving blur of sound, perceiving sound contrasts and perceiving contrasts in language units. Other skills including predication, listening for specific information, and listening for gist are presented by

Sheerin (1987:127-131) and Hanafy (2005). The Effectiveness of Using a Multimedia Software in Developing Some Listening. One of the principal skills which listeners must develop if they are to participate successfully in conversation is the ability to identify the topic of conversation, so they can make a relevant response (Anderson & Lynch, 1988, 40). According to Nanda (1989:138-149) there are four essential skills involved in listening; these are:

- 1- Perception of sounds.
- 2- Accuracy of sequencing.
- 3- Gaining of meaning and;
- 4- Utilizing the meaning.

Statement of the problem

The problem of the current study steams from the fact that 3rd year, Ismailia Faculty of Education students have difficulty in understanding a listening text.

That is why, the current study attempts to help such prospective teachers listening skills through a web based learning program.

1.4 Aim of the study

The current study attempts to design a web based program and measuring its effect on developing English major students listening language skills and satisfaction of it.

1.5 Questions of the study:

The study tried to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the listening language skills required for English major students of Education?
- 2- To what extent do they master listening skills?

3-What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening skill of English major students of Education?

What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for gist skill of English major students of Education?

- a) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for summarizing skill of English major students of Education?**
- b) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for details skill of English major students of Education?**
- c) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for note taking skill of English major students of Education?**
- d) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for inference skill of English major students of Education?**
- e) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for specific details skill of English major students of Education?**
- f) **What is the effect of a web- based program on developing listening for choosing title skill of English major students of Education?**

1.6 Hypotheses

1. **“There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the overall sub-listening skills test”.**
2. **“There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for gist test”.**
3. **“There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for summarize test”.**
4. **“There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for note taking test”.**

5. “There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for inference test”.
6. “There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for choosing subtitle test”.
7. “There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the listening skills for specific details test”.

1.7 Participants

Participants were one intact group (30) of English major students at the faculty of Education in Ismailia. They all came from a homogeneous community, both socially and economically. Their ages ranged between twenty to twenty one years old. The access to computer and Internet was easy as the majority of the participants had their own personal computers or notebooks.

1.8 The research Design

This research used the one group pre-post test quasi –experimental design, where one intact group was randomly selected to be the experimental group.

1.9 Significance of the study

This study may be useful for the following categories:

- 1- Students: by improving listening language skills among students of Education through the suggested program.
- 2- Teachers: by designing a program for English language teachers that may help them to teach skills of English-language.
- 3- Curriculum developers: by drawing the attention of curriculum designers and developers to the importance of including listening skills in the textbooks for students.

1.10 Variables

The variables in this study were: the independent variable is the Web based program and the dependent variable which is students' listening skills.

1.11 Instruments and materials of the study:

1.11.1 Listening skills checklist

Aim of the checklist:

The aim of this checklist was to identify EFL listening skills suitable for third year English major students at Ismailia Faculty of Education

Description of the checklist:

It contained seven main levels of listening sub skills suitable for third year English major students at Ismailia Faculty of Education include Listen for details, Listen for specific details ,Gist, Summarize, Inference, Choose suitable title and Note taking

1.11.2 Designing the web based program (TEACH ME ONLINE.NET)

Aim and objectives of the program

The aim of this program was to develop 3rd year Ismailia faculty of Education students' listening skills.

Learning objectives:

By the end of this website, learners will be able to:

- Listen for details
- Listen for specific details
- Gist: for main idea(s) or important information
- Listen to summarize the text.
- Inference: to guess about the text and about the writer's idea
- Listen to find a suitable title for the text.

1.11.3 Designing the Receptive Skills pre-post test

Aim of the test

The aim of this test was to measure English major student listening language skills of EFL after administering the proposed program in an attempt to measure the effect of the proposed program on developing

these skills. Also it was used as a pretest the entry level of the participants.

Description of the test

The test consists of 40 items that measured the main listening language skills identified as suitable for English major students at the faculty of education.

1.12 Procedures of the study:

Reviewing literature previous studies related to the study variables.

Preparing the instruments and materials of the study.

Selecting the participants of the study.

Designing the web based learning program taking into consideration the various dimension of program design.

Designing a test for listening language skills.

Pre-test of the group.

Designing an initial checklist of listening language skills appropriate for English majors at the faculty of Education.

Teaching the proposed program to the group.

Post- test of the group.

Administering the satisfaction questionnaire.

Analyzing statistical data to show the effectiveness of web based Learning, discussing and explaining the results.

Writing recommendations and suggestions for future research.

1.13 Experimental procedures:

Every student should do an account on the website TEACH ME ONLINE to register his/her name and email to contact with the researcher. Before and after studying the website, the student should answer the listening skills test.

Listening tasks were selected by the researcher to suit the English major students, as they have little exposure to authentic language. These tasks gave them the chance to develop their listening skills. The tasks were in authentic language for: focusing on communication rather than manipulative practice. They also focused on language spoken in real situations by native speakers, requiring the learners not to focus on

every word or every detail but rather to listen selectively for key information, idea extraction, predication, and guessing.

The website consists of many sessions and every session aims at developing receptive skills. Students listen to five listening texts in each session, each session follows three stages:

(1)Pre-Listening Stage:

In this stage, they are given a definition of the skill they are going to have training on.

(2)During Listening Stage:

a- They listen to two examples to guide them about the specified listening skill. The listening examples have their answers explained. The answer explains why a certain choice is correct and why a statement is considered true or false.

b- Then they begin listening to the podcast for example and their listening tasks about the specified skill are in the form of Multiple Choice Questions, and they should click on the correct choice. The listening tasks could be part of talks or conversations.

c- Then they begin listening to the second type listening (YouTube) and their listening tasks of the specified skill are in the form of True/False Statements. They should click (T) if it's correct, and (F) if it's wrong.

d-They can listen to the listening texts more than one time, just click on the icon (Listen).

e- After they click on (Next) and (Confirm Answer) the next screen will be presented.

(3)Post-Listening Stage:

a- They are provided with a key answer in order to check their comprehension.

b- They are engaged in free discussion with the researcher to explain the answers.

Finally, the researcher checked her email to print the scores of the students.

1.14 Findings:

1-Hypothesis one stated “There is a statistically significant difference at (0.00) level between the mean scores of the pre-post administration in favor of the mean post-test scores of the experimental group in the sub-listening skills test”.

In this respect, the researcher estimated the mean scores of the pre and post-measurements of the sub-listening skills test, and then T-Test Paired was used to estimate the statistical significant difference between both mean scores of the pre and post measurements for each listening sub-skill.

The following tables show the related findings for each sub-listening skills:

Table (2)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of listening for specific information

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	**** T-Value
Pre	25	2.96	.61	7.85
Post		4.40	.65	

Table 2 above indicates that the T-Value for the sub-skill of *specific information* is significant at (0.00) level. Accordingly, the findings suggest that the developed website had a high and positive effect on this listening skill for English major students

* Significant at (0.00)

Table (3)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of listening for gist

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	2.60	.816	9.53
Post		4.24	.925	

Table 3 above demonstrates that the T-Value is significant at (0.01) level. Accordingly, the findings indicated that the developed program has a high and positive effect on the listening skill of gist in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

* Significant at (0.00)

Table (4)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of listening in detail

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	2.04	1.13	9.43
Post		4.32	.748	

Table 4 above demonstrates that the T-Value for the sub-skill of in detail is significant at (0.00) level. Accordingly, the findings indicate that the developed website has a high and positive effect on that listening sub-skill in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

* Significant at (0.00)

Table (5)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of listening for summarize.

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	2.88	.881	8.88
Post		4.56	.869	

Table 5 above demonstrates that the T-Value is significant at (0.01) level. Accordingly, the findings indicate that the developed website has a high and positive effect on the listening skill of summarize acquisition in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

Table (6)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of listening for note taking.

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	3.40	.707	8.27
Post		4.84	.746	

Table 6 above demonstrates that the T-Value is significant at (0.00) level. Accordingly, the findings indicate that the developed website has a high and positive effect on the listening skill of *note taking* acquisition in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

Table (7)

T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of suitable title.

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	2.56	.821	12.0
Post		4.96	.789	

Table 7 above demonstrates that the T-Value is significant at (0.00) level. Accordingly, the findings indicate that the developed website has a high and positive effect on the listening skill of *suitable title* acquisition in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

Table (8)

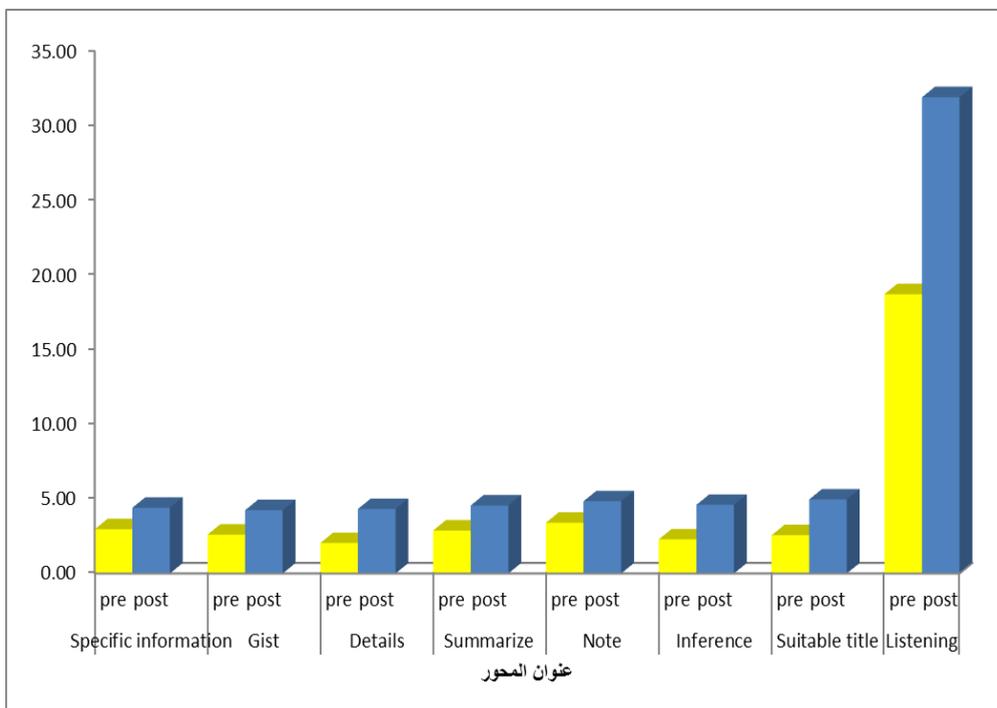
T test Value for the difference between the mean scores of the pre and post measurements of inference

	Number of Subjects	Mean Scores	Standard Deviation	* T-Value
Pre	25	2.28	.737	12.88
Post		4.60	.866	

Table 8 above demonstrates that the T-Value is significant at (0.00) level. Accordingly, the findings indicate that the developed website has a high and positive effect on the reading skill of *inference* acquisition in the English as a foreign language for English major students.

Applying the paired t-test also shows that all mean values are statistically significant at 0.00. This clearly shows that the effectiveness of the proposed program employed in the present study has been confirmed according to the statistical analysis shown in tables 2-8 and table 9 and the figure below. This applies to both the results obtained for the individual sub-skills and the total scores for the different sub-skills of listening skills. This is clear from comparing the pre- and post-test results in favor of the post test scores for the sub-skills included in the study.

*



Significant at (0.00)

Fig. 1 Values of correct responses (out of 5) achieved by the learners in the individual listening sub-skills and the total score (out of 30)

$2=t2/t2+df$

Table (9)

Mean values achieved by the learners for the pre- and the post- tests for the listening sub-skills

Test parts	Pre		Post		Df	T value	η
	Mean	St.dev	Mean	St.dev			Effect size
Specific information	2.96	.611	4.40	.645	24	7.856	.72
Gist	2.60	.81	4.24	.925		9.53	.78
In detail	2.04	1.13	4.32	.748		9.43	.78
Summarize	2.88	.88	4.56	.869		8.88	.76
Suitable title	2.56	.82	4.96	.789		12.00	.85
Inference	2.28	.73	4.60	.866		12.88	.87
Note taking	3.40	.70	4.84	.746		8.27	.73
Total	18.72	1.486	31.92	2.34		25.24	.96

4. 4 Discussion of the results:

The web based learning program proved to be effective in developing students' listening skills.

Difference between the listening skills varied from a pre test mean value (out of 5) of 2.96 to 4.40 for the skill of listening for specific information and from 2.40 to 3.40 for scanning acquisition and from 3.40 to 4.84 for not taking to 2.28 to 4.60 for inference. This means that largest improvement following the application of the web based learning program was in the area of note taking and choosing suitable title. The lowest improvement came in the skills of listening for details and gist skill respectively.

In the light of referenced table of Effect Size, table 12 above indicates the high Effect Size of the website “teach me online” on developing the listening skills in English as a foreign language for English major students. Thus, the hypothesis is approved. This result, corresponding to many other findings (e.g., Rowsell & Libben, 1994; Hayati, 2005; Pala, 2005; Wong, 2006), shows that students when using computer technology become motivated and interested in improving their listening comprehension.

Recommendations

In the light of the results of the current study, the following recommendations can be made:

- Universities should adopt modern technology, such as computers in teaching languages.
- Multimedia technology would facilitate the effective development of listening skills more than the conventional devices.
- Time devoted to computer courses for EFL university students should be increased.
- Listening skill courses should include textual schemata, verbal stress and the manner in which the input is organized to influence how the listening material is interpreted.
- Multimedia should be used in organizing listening material; multimedia would help students learn at their own pace and they provide sufficient visual cues and immediate feedback for the learners.

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