

Research Article

DEVELOPING WRITING LESSONS BASED ON GENRE-BASED APPROACH TO IMPROVE INSTRUCTION WRITING PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This research is an endeavor to investigate the writing development in the genre of instruction through the application of genre-based approach. The participants were 20 university students from non-English major at a private university in Bangkok. A naturalistic participant observation was applied to collect the qualitative data, which are the participants' written outputs from the writing tasks. The findings revealed that the participants tended to improve writing ability for the creation of the contextual information to encounter the communicative purpose based on the instruction genre as expected. In detail, they acquired the capability in applying the appropriate text organization and relevant language features into their writing effectively.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Genre-Based Approach, Materials Development, Professional Development and Writing Practices

Introduction

It cannot be denied that writing pedagogy in Thai-English classroom, not only a high school but also the university, has still been conducted in Grammar Translation Method, as a traditional method. Principally, learners are emphasized on producing isolated sentences with accuracy from the sets of grammatical structures and vocabulary provided in disconnected lessons without clear communicative purposes (Kongpetch, 2006). In these learning lessons, writing practices are repetitively proceeded through the limited choices of drills, featuring reorganized sentence, reordering words, sentence completion, and error identification, in which the learners only recall the accumulated linguistic knowledge while the learners' interests and their backgrounds are not highly involved.

From the pedagogical viewpoint, it can be assumed that one of the major causes generating the learners' deficient proficiency and writing failures on this specific task tends to be from the traditional pedagogic approach that they have been learning for a long time. Technically, its sets of learning lessons and practices have barely facilitated such the appropriate and adequate explanation and guidance. Due to this specific pedagogical limitation, the learners subsequently lacks of capability to construct the text or contextual information with appropriate organization and language features to encounter the specific communicative purpose (Dueraman, 2015) and (Rodsawang, 2017), which in this particular case is the instruction or process genre. Principally, it is the genre constituting a communicative purpose to convey the step-by-step operative information.

According to this problematic English pedagogic situation, it can principally be identified that offering a set of lessons facilitating activities or tasks and opportunities to the learners in Thai-English classrooms to develop writing proficiency from the practices of writing text or contextual information to encounter a specific purpose, from the genre-based approach, is worth implementing. As identified in the objective of the genre-based approach, learners are supported to learn how to construct meaningful contextual information through writing in a systematic way with critical thinking, consciousness and comprehension, from an explicit systemic pedagogy (Hyland 2004). In pedagogical process, frameworks are provided to the learners in order to assist in producing meaningful communication regarding the social situation and purposes at the same time (Cheng, 2008). In other words, for the purposeful and meaningful communication, the learners are supposed to regard three key elements, including audience, purpose, and organization as the essential criteria (Chen & Su, 2012). To write an appropriate content, the learners should recognize the specific organization, involving: 1) particular communicative functions in order (interpersonal metafunction) and information arrangement in detail (textual metafunction), and 2) language features (ideational metafunction) systemically and functionally appropriate and vital to apply in communication based on each specific genre (Paltridge, 2001; Foley, 2011; Ling, 2001). Referring to Derewianka (1990), in case of the instruction or process genre, the communicative purpose, organization (interpersonal metafunction and textual metafunction) and key language features (ideational metafunction) can be identified, as follows:

Instruction Genre (Derewianka, 1990; Foley, 2011)

- a) Purpose – Explain how to do something, or how something works step by step
- b) Organization – In achieving the communicative purpose:

b1) Interpersonal Meta-function – The information is presented through the orderly stages under the following communicative functions:

- Goal (Introduction) – Introducing a particular aim or mission
- Materials (Optional) – Presenting detail of what needs to be used
- Steps/Method (Body) – Presenting the detail of the information as the process of production or operation

b2) Textual Meta-function – The detail of the information in the body as the process of production or operation is presented based on “a sequence of actions”

c) Key Language Features (Ideational Meta-function)

- Step indicators (first, second, next, then, lastly, finally and so on)
- Command clauses and present-tense clause (Subject + Verb 1)

Based on this conceptual principle as presented in Figure 1, English lessons under genre are normally situational and content-based targeting on social issues (Thu, 2009). Owing to Vygotsky’s ideas of “cycle supports or scaffolds”, pedagogy is implemented through the processes of modeling, analysis, joint performance and independent construction (Johns, 2011). For classroom teaching, the English lessons under the genre approach can be separated into two parts (Derewianka & Jones, 2016). The first part is to supply essential input knowledge of the learning genre featuring a communicative purpose, a framework for organization, and the use of relevant language features. The second part is to provide an opportunity for the learners to practice producing and communicating contextual information from the assigned writing topic of the learning genre. As recommended by Berendt (2010), the learners are ideally supposed to use their target language to perform their assigned communicative tasks functionally and interactively.

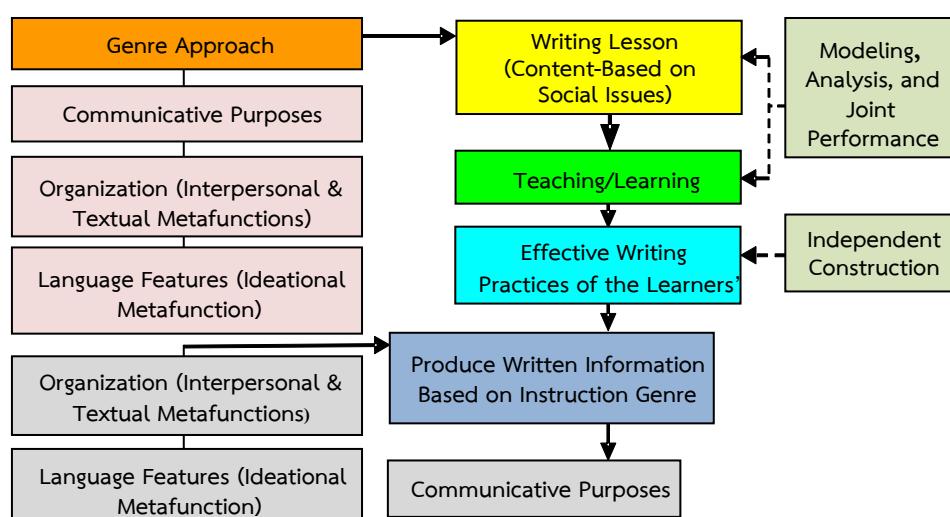


Figure 1 Conceptual Principle of Genre-Based Approach for Writing Pedagogy

Research Objective

To investigate the learners’ writing development in the instruction genre in terms of the organization (interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function) and the use of language features (ideational meta-function) in relation to the communicative purpose

Research Methodology

Research Design

Field research with an aim to explore and/or measure the causality of the designed experiment on the target participants and its subsequence (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2002) was utilized to implement this specific study. The learners' written outputs from the writing tasks were the qualitative data to be collected to explore the effects of the pedagogy developed from the genre-based approach on the learners' writing.

Population and Participants

The target participants for the data collection were 20 third-year students from a private university in Bangkok studying in Academic Writing course in the academic year 2/2020. Regarding the English-education background, the participants had studied English for Communication 1-3 as the fundamental courses. In the process of the participant selection, the participants were required to earn TOEIC score approximately 500-700 marks to be qualified to participate in the study. According to the university's policy, a TOEIC score of 600 is identified as the graduation requirement.

Research Instruments

Six Genre-Based Lessons with Writing Tasks

To acquire the data, which were the participants' written outputs in this case, six three-hour classes of lessons comprising writing tasks or activities, as illustrated in Table 1, were developed based on genre-based approach (Derewianka, 1990) for the participants to practice writing based on the instruction genre over the semester. In each writing task, the learners were required to apply the organization (Ideational Meta-Function and Textual Meta-Function) and the language features (Ideational Meta-Function) in connection to the communicative purpose of the instruction genre to create an approximately 200-word essay.

Table 1 Overall Lesson Plan for Writing Practices Based on Instruction Genre

Class	Lesson	Stage
1	Lesson 1 - Super Dose for Olympic Athlete Activity: Create the step how to produce Super Dose, the special drug for Olympic athlete. Explain each step in details.	Initial Evaluation
2	Lesson 2 - Super Black Card Activity: Explain how to apply the Super Black Card, which has both very special offers and priority. Explain each step in details.	Teaching Instruction Genre and Individual Writing Practice 1
3	Lesson 3 - The Next Level of Jumanji Activity: Create the new level of Jumanji for your best friends to play. Explain each step in details	Individual Writing Practice 2
4	Lesson 4 - Master Chef Activity: Explain how to train (name of friend) to become the most famous Master Chef and explain in step-by-step	Individual Writing Practice 3

Class	Lesson	Stage
5	Lesson 5 - Starbuck Product Activity: Create one new product for Starbuck's coffee and explain the steps how to produce that product	Individual Writing Practice 4
6	Lesson 6 - Graduation Party Activity: Create unforgettable graduation party for your faculty and explain in step-by-step with logical support	Post Evaluation

Data Collection

A naturalistic participant observation was the selected method to collect the data. The data collection was operated in ENL 420-Academic Writing, which was three-hour weekly class over 12 weeks. The participants' individual written outputs from the six lessons designed based on the genre-based approach were the data to be collected. In total, 120 essays were collected from the target participants for the data analysis. In each written output, the participants needed to write approximately 200 words and submitted at the end of the class as an in-class activity.

To acquire the expected data, as illustrated in Table 1, the data collection was distinguished into four stages, which are: 1) initial evaluation, 2) teaching instruction-genre writing through scaffolding processes (modeling, analysis, joint performance and independent construction), 3) individual writing practices, and 4) post evaluation.

In brief details, on the first stage, the participants were obliged to write the first individual writing from Activity 1 in Lesson 1 for the initial writing evaluation. On the second stage, the participants required studying the text model by reading a reading passage provided in Lesson 2, written based on the instruction genre to explore the text organization (Ideational Meta-Function and Textual Meta-Function) and the use of language features (Ideational Meta-Function). At this pedagogic point, the framework of instruction genre, including the purpose, text organization and language features were also explicitly analyzed and explained by the researcher as the teacher before the participants participated in the joint-construction process. Then, they had to create the second individual writing from Activity 2 in Lesson 2, as their first independent construction. On the third stage, the participants continued the independent-construction process by working on the individual writings from Activity 3 in Lesson 3, Activity 4 in Lesson 4, and Activity 5 in Lesson 5. On the final stage, they had to create the last individual writing from Activity 6 in Lesson 6 for the post writing evaluation.

Data Analysis

To explore the learners' writing development in the instruction genre as specified in the research objective, the collected data, which were the participants' writing outputs, were first recorded on the observational checklists. In details, the checklist comprises two main parts, as illustrated in Table 2 and Table 3: Part 1) the use of the organization (interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function) and Part 2) the use of the language features in depth (ideational meta-function). Second, the participants' writing

outputs were analyzed by highlighting the words, chunks, phrases or clauses, and utilizing the solid arrows and dash arrows to explore their writing performance in details on each meta-function regarding the instruction genre. For the language features (ideational meta-function), four main elements, requiring the participants to produce, were explored, which were idea indicators, and relevant clause forms.

To demonstrate the participants' writing performances in Part 1, the total number of participants, 1) applying the goal and the step in the organization (interpersonal meta-function), and 2) properly arranging the detail information based on a sequence of actions (textual meta-function), were counted and calculated to be the percentage number. From the calculation, the findings were revealed in a form of graphs. To demonstrate the participants' writing performances in Part 2, the total number on the use of key language features (ideational meta-function), 1) the idea indicators, and 2) the relevant clause forms, by the participants, was counted and calculated to be the percentage number. From the calculation, the findings were revealed in a form of graph or table as appropriate.

Overall Text Organization (Interpersonal M.F.)	Student 4	Language Features (Ideational M.F.)
	Information	
Phenomenon (Goal)	Many graduated people want to join the graduation party before working in their real life. And there are the steps to organize the party.	Main Language Features
Explanation (Steps)	<p>Step 1 Hiring staff The organizer must hire 2nd-4th year Business Administrator student at least 100 people from TNI university. Staff has to post on social media including facebook and line. All the staff will be separated into 3 groups involving registration, take photo group and coordinator. For registration, the staffs are required to take care and contact all the participants by calling and sending emails. For taking photo group, they must have cameras and edit the video presentation. In case of coordinator, they have to contact other people including hotel manager and artist manager. The staff must attend the meeting one a week from September to October to update the work.</p> <p>Step 2 Finding location After hiring staff, the organizer has to find the 5 Stars Hotels coping with Centara Grand, Siam Hotel which has to locate near BTS, has large conference room and personal car park. The organizer is required reserve the largest meeting room within 2 weeks by contacting hotel manager with international food buffet including Japanese, Thai and so on. Moreover, all the staffs must come to meeting room in order to decorate the party and check the overall details.</p> <p>Step 3 - Contacting Artists The organizer is required to contact the famous artists packed with the three man down, Bodyslam and DJsala to perform the mini concert 1 hour per group within 3 weeks. All the artists have to sign the contract, practice at TNI hall twice a month and attend the activities involving music chair with the participants. In addition, the organizer has to provide the private rooms for these artist in the party day.</p>	Main step
Information Arrangement in details (Textual M.F.)		Sub-Step
Step-By-Step		In Detail Language Features
		Step Indicators
		Command Clauses

*** Interpersonal M.F. = Interpersonal Meta-Function Ideational M.F. = Ideational Meta-Function

Textual M.F. = Textual Meta-Function

Figure 2 Example of Participant's Writing Output Analysis in Part 1 - Presentation of Organization and Overall Use of Language Features

Language Features			
Item	Relevant Language Features	Words/Chunks/Clauses	No.
1	Step Indicators	Step 1 Hiring staff, Step 2 Finding location, Step 3 - Contacting Artists	3
2	Subj.+ V.1	X	0
3	Verb 1 +	attend the activities...	1
4	Subject + Modal Verbs to Display Command +	The organizer must hire 2nd-4th year Business Administrator student..., TNI university which has to post..., they must have camera..., they have to contact other people..., The staff must attend the meeting..., the organizer has to find the 5 Stars Hotel..., Siam Hotel which has to locate..., all the Staff must come to meeting room..., All the artists have to sign the contract, practice..., the organizer has to provide the private rooms...	10
5	Subject + is/are required to/obliged +Infinitive	the staff are required to take care and contact..., The organizer is required to contact...	2
6	Subject + need + Infinitive	X	0

Figure 3 Example of Participant's Writing Output Analysis in Part 2 -Use of Relevant Language Features in Depth

Results

To report the findings, there were two parts including, 1) the report of learners' writing performance from the six writing lessons based on the instruction genre.

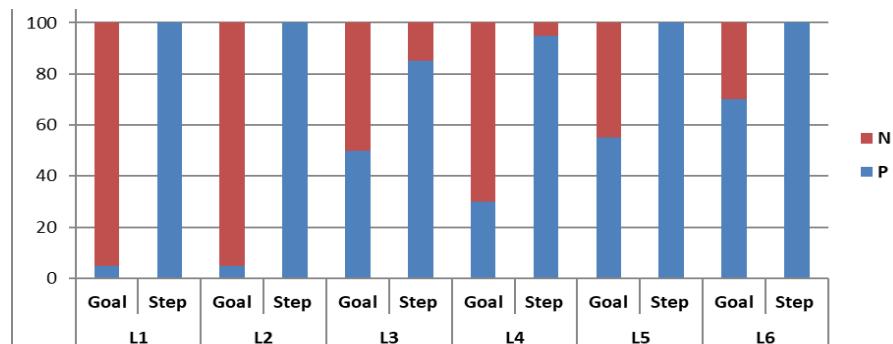
Report of Learners' Writing Performance from Instruction-Genre Lessons

Research question: What are the effects of genre-based approach on learners' writing development in the genre of instruction in terms of the organization and language features?

From the data analysis, as illustrated in Figure 1, the findings from the learners' writing performance from the six writing lessons based on the instruction genre were presented in two main issues regarding the communicative purpose of the instruction genre, including: 1) organization (text organization in this case) or interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function, and 2) language features or ideational meta-function, consisting of step indicators, and clause forming.

1. Text Organization (Interpersonal Meta-function and Textual Meta-function)

1.1 Interpersonal Meta-function



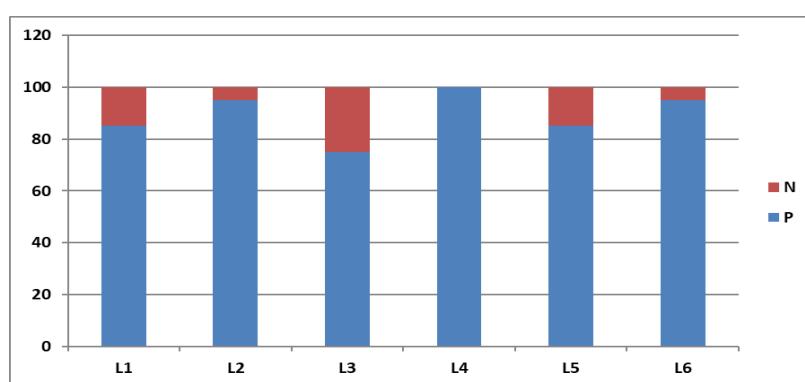
N = Not produced P = Produced

L1 = Lesson 1 L2 = Lesson 2 L3 = Lesson 3 L4 = Lesson 4 L5 = Lesson 5 L6 = Lesson 6

Figure 4 Participant's Overall Text Organization

As presented on Figure 2, on the point of goal, from the initial evaluation in the first lesson, out of 20 participants, only one participant (five percent) enabled to produce the goal (introduction), while all the participants showed no problem in producing the step (body). After studying the text model, up to 6-11 participants (30-55 percent) were capable of producing the goal in Lesson 3-5. Progressively, from the post evaluation in Lesson 6, 14 participants (70 percent) were able to produce the goal while all of them maintained the same level of ability in writing the step.

1.2 Textual Meta-function



N = Not Produced P = Produced

L1 = Lesson 1 L2 = Lesson 2 L3 = Lesson 3 L4 = Lesson 4 L5 = Lesson 5 L6 = Lesson 6

Figure 5 Participants' Writing on Textual Meta-function

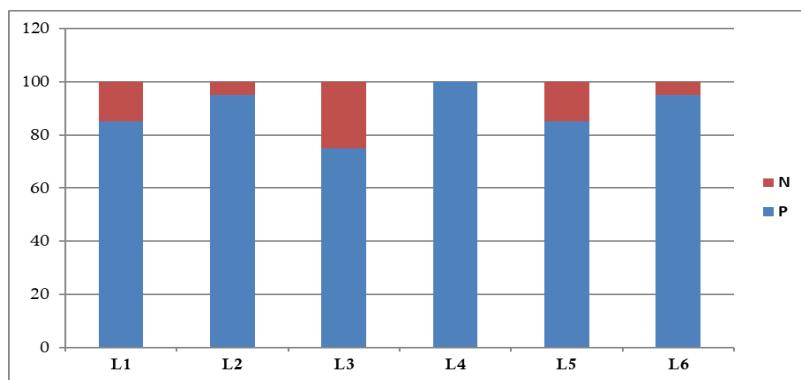
As presented on Figure 3, from the initial evaluation in Lesson 1, out of 20 participants, 17 out of 20 participants (85 percent) were capable of arranging the detail information based on a sequence of actions. After studying the text model in Lesson 4, it was determined that all the participants (100 percent) had no

difficulties in arranging the detail information based on a sequence of actions. Similarly, from the post evaluation in lesson 6, up to 19 participants (95 percent) were able to do so.

2. Language Features (Ideational Meta-function)

In terms of applying appropriate language features, two main parts are discussed: 1) Step indicators, and 2) clause forms related communicative purposes.

2.1 Step Indicators



N = Not Produced P = Produced

L1 = Lesson 1 L2 = Lesson 2 L3 = Lesson 3 L4 = Lesson 4 L5 = Lesson 5 L6 = Lesson 6

Figure 6 Participants' Writing in Applying Idea Indicators

As presented on Figure 6, the majority of the participants were likely to be able to apply the step indicators in the instruction writing. From the initial evaluation in Lesson 1, out of 20 participants, 17 participants (85 percent) produced the step indicators in their writing. After studying the text model, 15-20 participants (75-100 percent) utilized the step indicators in Lesson 3-5. In a similar result, from the post evaluation in lesson 6, up to 19 students (95 percent) utilized the step indicators.

2.2 Clause Forms

Table 2 Participants' Performance in Applying Relevant Clause Forms

Lessons	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6
Language Features						
'Subject + Verb 1 +'	33%	35%	43%	32%	28%	30%
'Verb 1 + ...'	28%	4%	5%	6%	16%	10%
'Subject + Must/Have to + ...'	15%	20%	20%	31%	24%	30%
'Subject + is/are+ required to +...'	0%	7%	0%	4%	5%	4%
'Subject + Need to +	6%	6%	2%	6%	5%	3%

*** L1 = Lesson 1 L2 = Lesson 2 L3 = Lesson 3 L4 = Lesson 4 L5 = Lesson 5 L6 = Lesson 6

As presented on Table 4, from the initial evaluation in Lesson 1, among all the relevant clause forms, the participants mainly used 'Subject + Verb 1 +' and 'Verb 1 +' which were determined to be used up to 60 percent. After studying the text model, the participants applied more varieties of the relevant clauses. As can be perceived, the participants applied 'Subject + Verb 1 +' 32 percent, 'Subject + Must/Have to + ...' 31 percent, 'Verb 1 +' six percent, 'Subject + Need to +' six percent, and 'Subject + is/are+ required to +...' four percent. Furthermore, the similar results were also generated from the post evaluation in lesson 6. On this certain language feature, it seemed to imply that the more the participants practiced on their writing, the higher capability in producing a variety of the relevant clauses the participants tended to upgrade.

Discussion

From the findings, it can overall be reflected that the genre-based approach was likely to develop the participants' ability to write the contextual information to encounter the communicative purpose of the instruction genre, which is to explain how to do something, or how something works or happens step by step, as anticipated. The participants seemed to improve the ability in producing the instruction writing after having chances to learn and practice writing in a systematic way. This can be explained by the conceptual framework of learning cycle, i.e., modeling, analysis, joint construction, and independent construction being really useful and necessary for participants in learning writing (Hyland, 2007). The genre- based approach also emphasizes the explicit teaching of text organization and linguistics features of a particular text type (Chen & Su, 2012; Derewianka, 2020; Hammond & Derewianka, 2001). Moreover, the exploration phase was very useful in providing participants with suitable tools to write the essay in terms of social purposes, suitable language features, and schemata structure of instruction genre as evidenced by several studies (Cheng, 2008; Hyland, 2007; Hyon, 2018).

In details, it can be indicated that, for the text organization (interpersonal meta-function and textual meta-function), on the point of producing the interpersonal meta-function, the participants were likely to have no difficulty in producing the steps (body), whereas only some participants seemed to be able to create the goal (introduction) at the beginning. However, after studying the text model, the majority of the participants seemed to acquire the way to generate the goal (introduction) more effectively. On the points of producing the textual meta-function (the information arrangement in details), many participants seemed to have no difficulty in organizing the step-by-step information at the beginning. After studying the text model, almost all the participants tended to acquire an awareness in producing this specific point effectively as evidenced by previous studies (Kongpet, 2006)

For the language features (ideational meta-function), on the point of the idea indicators, most participants had no difficulties in creating the step indicators at the beginning. After studying the text model, the progress improved to the point that all the participants acquired the effective way use the step indicators as expected. For the clause forms, it could be interpreted that the participants seemed to have ability in

producing the relevant clauses to construct the contextual information based on the instruction genre. With the variety of clauses that the participants use, it could be concluded that they were able to acquire the 'know' how to use suitable language features and develop their writing performances (Myskow & Gordon, 2010; Hyland, 2003).

Pedagogical Implications from the Study

From the particular study, it can be affirmed that the teacher may apply the genre-based approach when they are planning to develop the learners' instruction or process writing ability. From the pedagogical perspective, teachers may offer the creative writing activities in relation to the real-world situations from the social theme or business theme requiring the learners to present the specified operating schedule, such as, event organization, or business-plan development (Johns, 2011). The writing topics assigning the learners to create the information to present the sequential methods of producing the items; for instances, consuming products, the machine operations in the factories, can also be very interesting choices for the learners to practice (Ling, 2001). With a proper guide on Vygotsky's scaffolding ideas, the learners will definitely have opportunities to learn how to apply the appropriate language features to construct text in appropriate organization for explaining how to do something step by step, or how something is done sequentially, from these particular writing topics (Hyland, 2007).

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