

IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN NARRATIVE TEXT BY USING SEMANTIC MAPPING

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Abstract: This research was conducted in order to investigate whether semantic mapping was able to improve students' writing skill of the eleventh grade students of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu or not. The researcher conducted Classroom Action Research. The research focused in improving writing of narrative text. In this research the data were in the kinds of quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were taken by using test, while the qualitative data were taken by using questionnaire, observation, and interview. The result shows that semantic mapping is able to improve students writing competence. From the pre-test, it was shown that the highest score was 6.50, the lowest score was 3.00, and the average score was 4.70. In the end of cycle 1, the researcher conducted post-test, and the result were as follows: the highest score was 7.00, the lowest score was 5.00, and the average score was 6.20. At the second post-test which was held after cycle 2, the highest score was 8.00, the lowest score was 6.00. and the average was 7.00. Based on the qualitative data analysing, teaching learning process was held effectively. The class atmosphere was alive, the students were motivated, excited and active in joining the class, the effective communication was occurred, and the classroom assesment and reflection ran well.

Key words: semantic mapping, writing skills, classroom action research.

Writing is one of the four skills beside Listening, Speaking and Reading which is very important to be mastered by students. The Indonesia Department of Education stated that English is one of the subject tested in National Final Examination for High School. Listening and Reading comprehension are examined through National Final Examination while Speaking and Writing skill are tested trough practical examination. It is said in *Permendiknas* No 22, 2006 that the national educational purpose for Senior High School is focused on increasing students competency in reading and writing. It is because the Senior High School students are hoped to get literal informational degree in order to prepare them to continue their study to the university.

Based on *Standar Kompetensi Lulusan*, (Permendiknas No.23 tahun 2006), students should master the competency of listening, speaking, reading, and writing based on the three basic groups of genre-based text, namely: Narrative, Descriptive, and Argumentative. Beside that there are review texts, procedure texts and short functional texts such as posters, banners, pamphlets, invitations, announcements, advertisements, memos, and messages. Students of the first semester of eleventh grade should master report, narrative, and analytical exposition texts and short functional texts of banner, poster, and phamplet.

School Based Curriculum (*KTSP*) gives a chance to the teacher to develop syllabus based on their own students

and school characteristics but there is a standard of writing skills that should be achieved. *Badan Standar Nasional Pendidikan (BSNP)* delivers *Buku Panduan Penyusunan Kurikulum* as standart for the teachers.

Based on *Standar Isi* and *Standar Kompetensi Lulusan*, the curriculum development team of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu develop its curriculum and syllabus. In the syllabus it is mentioned that the instructional objectives of the development of writing skills based on *KTSP* of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu are ideas and content, grammar, vocabulary, writing convention, and organization. Those instructional objectives mentioned above adapted from Peha theory and suited with the students' need and environment. Moreover, it is based on the national educational objectives. Peha (2010) pointed out that a good writing should have ideas that are interesting and important, organization that is logical and effective, voice that is individual and appropriate, word choice that is specific and effective, sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive, and conventions that are correct and communicative.

In fact, in my school, there is a gap between the standard and the reality. Writing becomes problem for most students's of SMA 2 Cepu, especially at the eleventh grade where the researcher teaches. The main problem facing by the students is the ability to organize information systematically. Although their essays are long but they are difficult to understand. There is no main idea in their paragraphs. They also have problems in choice of word or vocabulary. It is known from their result

of writing assignment and writing test. The scoring rate of most students are 55. It is 15 point below the *Kriteria Kompetensi Minimal (KKM)*. The first semester *KKM* for writing skill of eleventh grade of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu is 65. It is estimated that the problem can be caused by the method of teaching writing which is used by the teacher, the lack of vocabularies of the students, the problem in organizing information, and the student's low mastering sentence pattern. To know the real cause of the problem, the researcher conducted a primarily study which was held on 16 June 2011. The study was held in XI IPS1 of SMA 2 Cepu which involves of 34 students in a class, consist of 14 male students and 20 female students. The research was done by using pre test related to their competency on writing, a questionnaire, and an interview. The preliminary study started by doing the pre-test and answering the questionnaire. It took 90 minutes. Then it was continued by having the interview.

From the preliminary study, it was found that most students have problems in generating ideas or content, organizing ideas or information into appropriate generic structure of text, selecting vocabulary, using english writing convention, and using appropriate grammar. The scoring rate for each problem was described as follows: (1) The scoring rate for ideas and content is 45, (2) the scoring rate for organization is 47, (3) the scoring rate for vocabulary is 50, (4) the scoring rate of writing convention is 55, and (5) the scoring rate for grammar is 38. The final result for writing skill is 47.

To solve those kinds of problems, the researcher try to find a solution by using semantic mapping. The definition said that semantic mapping is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Semantic map is used to generate, visualize, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems, making decisions, and writing. The elements of a given mind map are arranged intuitively according to the importance of the concepts, and are classified into groupings, branches, or areas, with the goal of representing semantic or other connections between portions of information (Buzan, 2010).

Meanwhile, Masters, Mori, & Mori (1993) said that mapping technique used to motivate and involve students in the thinking, reading, and writing aspects.

A mind map is often created around a single word or text, placed in the center, to which associated ideas, words and concepts are added. The words in the middle is the topic which is then supported by the words below it as the main idea. Each idea then supported by some words below it. The combination of main idea and supported idea can be elaborated to construct sentences, paragraphs, or even texts. Mapping help students to classify ideas, and then organizing them. The lines help them to the understanding of the relationships among the connected objects.

Based on the statements above, the researcher assumed that semantic mapping is suitable method to solve the problem in her class, as Farrand et al. said that map-

ping provide an effective study technique when applied in written material.

Based on the background of study mentioned above, the problem statements can be formulated as follow: (1) Is and to what extend semantic mapping able to improve students' competence of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu on writing narrative text?, (2) How effective is the teaching learning process when semantic mapping applied in teaching writing for students of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu?

The general objectives of the research is to improve the students writing skill of the eleventh grade of SMA 2 Cepu in the Academic year of 2011/2012 while the specific objectives of the study are: (1) To find out whether semantic mapping is able to improve students writing skills of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu, (2) To find out the effectiveness of semantic mapping to teach writing in SMA Negeri 2 Cepu.

(Bashyal, 2009: 14) said that writing is a productive skill that has it own features. However, it involves better organisation of meaning and also more accuracy of form than speaking. It means that writing is about expressing ideas using its features appropriately that focuses more on organisation of meaning and accuracy of form than speaking.

Hedge mentions features such as: a high degree of accuracy, complex grammar devices, careful choice of vocabulary and sentence structures in order to create style, tone and information appropriate for the readers of one's written text. Writing is more than producing accurate and complete sentences and phrases. Writing is about guiding students to produce whole

pieces of communication, to link and develop information, ideas, or arguments for a particular reader or a group of readers (Hedge, 2005:10).

According to Wallace, Stariba, and Walberg (2004: 15) writing is the final product of several separate acts that are hugely challenging to learn simultaneously. Among these separable acts are note-taking, identifying a central idea, outlining, drafting and editing. Writing skill can be defined as an ability to communicate all the ideas or imaginations into the form of structured pattern so that the readers may understand what the writers mean in their writing. Peha (2010) pointed out that a good writing skills should have ideas that are interesting and important, organization that is logical and effective, voice that is individual and appropriate, word choice that is specific and effective, sentence fluency that is smooth and expressive, and conventions that are correct and communicative.

It can be concluded that writing skill is an ability to say the ideas, information, data, and argument in written form. Writing is a process not a product. It needs some stages to be competent in writing. To be able to have writing competence, it needs guidance and practice.

Young and Shaw propose six major dimensions of effective teaching: value of the subject; motivating students; a comfortable learning atmosphere; organisation of the subject; effective communication; and concern for student learning (Young and Shaw, 1999).

The Kentucky Department of Education has been working in teams to develop

Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning as support focused on the instructional core. The teams have organized the characteristics around five components: learning climate; classroom assessment and reflection; instructional rigor and student engagement; instructional relevance; and knowledge of content (Harper, 2012).

Semantic mapping is a diagram used to represent words, ideas, tasks, or other items linked to and arranged around a central key word or idea. Semantic map is used to generate, visualize, structure, and classify ideas, and as an aid to studying and organizing information, solving problems, making decisions, and writing (Buzan, 2010).

Masters, Mori, & Mori (1993) discuss the use of semantic mapping strategy. They define semantic mapping technique as being “used to motivate and involve students in the thinking, reading, and writing aspects. It enhances vocabulary development by helping students link new information with previous experience.”

In this stage, the researcher described the procedure of semantic mapping adapted from Content Area Reading: Literacy and Learning Across the Curriculum by Richard T. and Joanne L. Vacca. The teacher should model mapping a few times before the students do this on their own. There are three components to a semantic map, those are: (1) Core question or concept: this is a key word or phrase that is the main focus of the map, (2) Strands: subordinate ideas that help explain or clarify the main concept. These can be generated by the students., (3) Supports: details, infer-

ences and generalization that are related to each strand. Supports clarify the strands and distinguish one strand from another.

The instructional sequence of semantic mapping is as follows: (1) Select a word central to the topic, (2) display the target word, (3) invite the student to generate as many words as possible that relate to the target word, (4) have the student write the generated words in categories, (5) have the student label categories, (6) from this list, construct a map, (7) Lead the class in a discussion that focuses on identifying meanings and uses of words, clarifying ideas, highlighting major conclusions, identifying key elements, expanding ideas, and summarizing information.

The result of preliminary study shows that the students' writing skill to write text are unsatisfactory. They have problems mostly in organizing the idea and information, selecting choice of words, organizing paragraphs into correct generic structure of the text, and using proper grammar. The students tend to arrange sentences without understanding the coherent between sentences. In the result the texts they made are long but difficult to understand. It is difficult to find main idea in a paragraph, or even there is no main idea at all. The researcher try to find the strategy to help students organizing their idea systematically and logically, choosing appropriate word, organizing the sentence structure, and using correct grammar.

The strategy that the researcher used to improve the student' writing competence is semantic mapping. It is said in the definition that semantic mapping is

diagram used to generate, visualize, structure and classify ideas in order to organize information.

The elements of a semantic map are arranged according to the importance of the concepts, and are classified into groupings, branches, or areas, with the goal of representing semantic or other connections between portions of information. In other words, concept maps are graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge. They include concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of some type, and relationships between concepts indicated by a connecting line linking two concepts. Words on the line, referred to as linking words or linking phrases, specify the relationship between the two concepts.

The strands, which are identified by line linking, arranged according to the importance. It gives guidance to the students to which sub idea should be written first as the opening statement and the next paragraphs. Each strands consists of one single idea to construct a paragraph. There are some supports in each strand which has function to clarify the strands and distinguish between one strand from another.

The guided practice can be like this: (1) identify the concept to be taught and inform the students, (2) model how to develop a semantic map by writing the concept (the big idea) on the chalkboard or overhead transparency, ask the students to think of words (the little ideas) that are related to or associated with the concept, write these words and group them into categories, and then have the students label each category, (3) have the students work in pairs or small groups to construct

a semantic map on a designated concept, (4) have the students share their semantic maps with the entire class, and (5) conclude the lesson with a discussion of the concept, the related vocabulary words, categories, and the interrelationships among these words.

By doing these activities student will be hoped to be able to explain the relationships between vocabulary words and concepts. The next objective is they are also able to organize and arrange the words into good paragraph and put it into proper generic structure of text. In different terms it can be said that semantic mapping strategy can be used for at least several different instructional purpose. They can assist teachers in planning for instruction by helping them identify the patterns of organization of ideas and the concepts. A semantic mapping strategy can be useful for introducing the important vocabulary in a selection to be written. It shows students how the terms are interrelated. Teachers can use a semantic mapping to activate and tap student's background knowledge. Based on the theoretical description and review of related literature above, it is predicted that semantic mapping is able to improve students writing skill. The hypothesis of the research is that semantic mapping is able to improve students' writing skill especially in ideas and content, vocabulary, organization, writing convention and sentence grammar.

Methodology

Time, Place, and subject of the research

The research was conducted for seven months, starting from July to January 2012. It was started with pre-research

done in July and finished with reporting the research in January. It was conducted at SMA Negeri 2 Cepu, Blora, Central Java, which is located in Jl. Randublatung km 5 Cepu, telp (0296) 423745. SMA Negeri 2 Cepu is situated in strategic place to study. It is about 5 kilometres to the west of Cepu, far from the busy road and crowded town. Although it is the second choice for students from Cepu as it is located a little bit far from the town but SMA Negeri 2 Cepu is well known because of some achievements it got from some championships held in Blora.

The subject of the research was XI IPS1 students' of SMA Negeri 2 Cepu in the academic year of 2011/2012. This class consists of 34 students: 14 male and 20 female. They are diligent students. Compare to three other social classes, the attendance of the students are the highest. They are interested in coming to the English class but this class has the lowest cognitive achievement. The average score in writing tests or assignments were the lowest among others.

Research Method

This study is a classroom action research. Typically, action research is undertaken in school setting. Eileen Ferrance (2000, 1) states that action research is a process in which participants examine their own educational practice systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. It is a reflective process that allows for inquiry and discussion as components of the "research." Often, action research is a collaborative activity among colleagues searching for solutions to everyday real problems experienced in

schools, or looking for ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. Rather than dealing with the theoretical, action research allows practitioners to address those concerns that are closest to them, ones over which they can exhibit some influences and make changes. The action Research is arranged as follows:

Early reflection

Lately, the researcher found that most students did not have progress in their writing skill. They still had difficulties in arranging words into good and correct sentences, organizing ideas into good paragraph, organizing paragraph into proper generic structure of text, and choosing interesting vocabulary. In doing writing test or writing assignment, the same problems seemed always show up. The text was unsystematic, and difficult to understand. Even, they repeated to write the same idea more than one in the same paragraph. Sometimes it was found that they chose the words directly from the dictionary, wrote them in the sentences without thinking the context of the sentence. The result was, their sentences did not make sense. Another problem was related to organization of text. there was no coherency in their writing.

Field analysis

Based on the preliminary study, it was found that the writing scoring rate was 47. They had main problems in ideas and content, organization, words choice, writing conventions, and grammar. The problems that came up in their writing assignment also appear in the pre test of preliminary study. The scoring rate was 18 point be-

low the KKM, 65. Based on the questionnaire and interview, it showed the same result. Their answer matched with the result in cognitive test.

Planning

Based on the problems and the cause, the researcher planed to use semantic mapping to teach writing. In this stage, the researcher did some steps: (1) Looking for references to semantic mapping and writing skill, (2) arrange the schedule, (3) making the instrument: test, questionnaire, and interview, (4) writing lesson plan, (5) making scoring rubric, (6) making field observation.

Acting

Semantic mapping was conducted at the stage of planning or outlining in written cycles. The students were divided into groups by using random sampling technique. As there were 34 students in class they were grouping into six groups. Six groups consisted of five person while one group consisted of 4 students. The technique of grouping was choosen to make the natural condition. Explanation to the purpose of text, exercises on language features, and the generic structures were given in the stage of pre-writing, while analysing the language features and generic structure was given in steps of revising.

The genre of text was based on the material that should be given in the first semester. The researcher chose to deliver narrative text as this text had been studied by the students in the previous grade. It was easier for the students to remind the generic structure of the text, so that the

treatment based on how to solve the problems faced by students by using semantic mapping. The problems of arranging words into good and correct sentences, organizing ideas into good paragraph, and choosing interesting vocabulary could be treated by using this technique.

Observation

The researcher used test, questionnaire, observation, and interview to see the effect of semantic mapping technique to teach writing. The data then were analyzed descriptively. In a whole, the program was evaluated based on the data analysis.

Reflection

The researcher and the collaborator analyzed the strenghts and weaknesses of the action in the first cycle. If there was found unsatisfying result, the action was continued to the second cycles. Based on the reflection of the first cycle, it was then started from planning then continue to acting and reflection.

Collecting Data

There are two kinds of data in this research, those are quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were in the form of writing test score from pre-test and post-test. The range of the score was 10- 100. The test was in the form of an essay test to measure the students writing skills. The qualitative data

were in the form of information of

the effectiveness of the teaching learning process through the field-note of observation, answers of questionnaire and record of the interview.

The data were collected by using test, observation, questionnaire, and interview. The quantitative data were collected by using test, while the qualitative data were collected by using questionnaire, observation, and interview.

Both data were analyzed by using different techniques. The quantitave data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics, the validity of data were analyzed by using triangulation while the qualitative data were analyzed by using constant comparative method. In this study, the researcher described the lowest score, the highest score and the average score. It was also decsribed here, the increasing score of each indicators of writing skills. To get the mean score, the researcher used this formula:

$$M = \frac{\Sigma X}{N}$$

Note : M : Mean
 ΣX : Total score
 N : Number of the students

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Reseach Findings

After conducted cycle 1, it was known that there was improvements in both of the student' writing skills and the effectiveness of teaching learning process when semantic mapping technique applied. Here is the table of improvement:

	The highest score	The lowest score	The average score
Pre test	6.50	3.00	4.75
Post test	7.00	5.00	6.20

Students writing skills increased when the score they got in post-test better than those they got from the pre-test. It was mentioned that writing skills increased when the result in a test met with the requirements of a good writing. As it was stated in previous chapter that the indicators of a good writing were as follows: (1) writing should have main idea, (2) the

sentences should have correct grammar and usage, (3) the organizational structure fits the topic, and the writing is easy to follow, (4) there are accurate or appropriate words choice or vocabulary, and (5) the correct usage of writing convention, such as spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Here is the table of increasing of average score and table of the increasing of each indicators.

Indicators	Pre-test	Post-test
Content/ideas	45.0	51.5
Organization	47.0	52.0
Vocabulary	50.0	52.0
Conventions	55.0	55.2
Grammar	38.0	43.0

Based on the observation, it could be seen that there was an increasing of the students' writing skills. Through semantic mapping it was seen clearly what the students should do step by step. Researcher's questions related to the topic helped them to generate ideas. The line connected to the core concept helped them to organize the ideas. The words in each category helped them to choose the proper words. This technique gave direction to the students to which sentences could be the main idea of the first paragraph, which one could be the second, and so on. The students were not confused to start their writing any longer.

As it was stated in the construct of theories that a teaching learning process called effective when it met these requirements: (1) an effective communication,

(2) learning climate or atmosphere, (3) classroom assessment and reflection, (4) instructional rigor and student engagement, (5) instructional relevance and knowledge of content, (6) motivated and excited students who are active in the teaching learning process. The improvement could be seen from the observation that there were an effective communication. There was interaction between the class members. There was communication between the researcher and the students, and among the students. The learning climate or atmosphere of the class was more alive. The student felt relax in joining the class. Classroom assessment and reflection ran well. The researcher and students collaboratively gather information and reflect on learning. The researcher gath-

ered data about students understanding and ability by asking them to report their project. The researcher used the students works or data to reflect on and improve teaching practice. The students used researcher and peer feedback to improve their works.

There were Instructional rigor and student engagement. The researcher provided meaningful learning opportunities for students. The researcher instructed processes using differentiated strategies that make instruction accessible to all students. While the instruction in English was difficult to understand, the researcher said it in Indonesian. The researcher provided questions check list to help them in doing mapping. The instructional relevance and knowledge of content held effectively. The researcher applied the technique of semantic mapping that helped them to write narrative text easier. The students felt that writing was not as difficult as they thought so it improved their self-confidence in doing writing assignment. There were motivated and excited students who were actively joining the class.

The successful things

There are some successful things related to the use of semantic mapping in improving writing skill in narrative text, those are: (1) semantic mapping enabled the students to generate the ideas. It helped the students to decide which words of phrase should be generating as main ideas, (2)

it was easier for the students to construct sentences because semantic mapping help them to provide the proper vocabulary, (3) it enabled the students to

organize the ideas into good paragraphs by using the provided words. It was easier for the students to construct a text since they knew how to start and how to end it, (4) an effective communication occurred. There was interaction between the class members. The researcher gave them much time to share, to discuss, and also to interact with the other students, (5) learning climate or atmosphere was comfortable. The student felt relax in joining the class. The researcher allocated time to them to engage in hands-on experience. The students collaborated to other students in doing group project and presentation, (6) classroom assessment and reflection ran well. The researcher and students collaboratively gather information and reflect on learning. The researcher gathered data about students understanding and ability and used the students works or data to reflect on and improve teaching practice. The students used researcher and peer feedback to improve their works, (7) instructional rigor and student engagement ran well. The researcher provided meaningful learning opportunities for students. The researcher instruct processes using differentiated strategies that make instruction accessible to all students, (8) instructional relevance and knowledge of content helped the students to understand the material. The researcher applied the technique that helped them to write narrative text easier. The students felt that writing was not as difficult as they thought so it improved their self-confidence in doing writing assignment, (9) motivated and excited students who were actively joining the class. The students were also active in

every activities and do it enthusiastically.

Unsuccesfull things and the causes

Despite the fact of many improvements when semantic mapping applied in the teaching learning process, there were found somethings that had not been achieved. Those are: (1) semantic mapping less helped in improving writing conventions and grammar, although it was succesfully increasing the indicator of generating ideas, selecting vocabularies, and organizing the ideas, (2) it seemed that work project in group was not effective. There was a group which was dominated by the leader while the members depended much on him. Another group was too much chat rather than discussed the project.

There were some causes why those conditions above happened. Those are: (1) The students' mastery of grammar were low. They sometimes forgot the past form of verbs or even didn't know the correct one, (2) some students felt reluctant to get involved in group project because of different abilities. The students who had low abilities didn't have enough self-con-

fidence while discussing with others. On the other hand, the students who had high ability seemed to feel impatient to guide other students whose competence far below them.

The Recomendation

As a matter of fact, there was a better progress of students achievement in constructing a narrative text. The researcher, however, could not deny that there were some targets that had not been achieved. To gain the target, the researcher revised the plan as follows: (1) conducting the second cycle focusing more on grammar as it was the biggest weakness found in the first cycle,(2) dividing the students in pairs to make the discussion ran effectively, (3) in the part of revising, it would given more time to talk about writing conventions.

After cycle 2 was conducted, it was found that the unsuccessful things achieved in the first cycle has been solved. The achivement indicators of the students' writing skills and the effectiveness of the teaching learning process met with those in the class. It meant that the problems has been solved. Here is the table of increasing.

Table of the increasing score from cycle 1 to cycle 2.

	The highest score	The lowest score	Average scores
Post-test 1	7.00	5.00	6.20
Post-test 2	8.00	6.00	7.07

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of this action research, the researcher could conclude that using semantic mapping in writing a narrative text was successful in some ways, those are: (1) Semantic mapping could

improve the students' writing skill in writing narrative text. They understood the generic structure of the text. They were able to generate ideas, organize the sentences, choose the proper vocabulary, write the english writing convention well, and use

the correct grammar. The improvement of the students' ability could be seen from the improvement of the score achieved by them. It was known that all five indicators of writing skill improved. From the first cycle, it was known that the average scores of the indicators was 50.7, while in the second cycle the average scores was 54.2. The average score from first cycle to second cycle was also increased. In the first cycle was 62.0, while in the second cycle was 70.7, (2) The teaching-learning process activities using semantic mapping was effective. It seemed the students had great self-confidence since the teacher accompanied them through all the process of writing from the very beginning to the end step of writing. Started from planning up to hand in the assignment, the teacher always there to facilitate and help them whenever necessary. However, the classroom's atmosphere was very alive because the researcher conducted student-centered learning. Teacher didn't dominate the class so the students could interact with their friend freely. They were also possible to express their opinion bravely in discussion activity and during present the result of group or pairing discussion. Based on the questionnaire' answer, 95% of students said that this technique gave significance improvement to their learning process.

Despite the fact that there were high improvement, it could be denied that there was problem found by the researcher from the slow- learners. The slow-learners tended to just imitate the text model. They were less creative to construct their own essay. It might be because they were

lack of vocabulary. It needed much more time for the slow-learners to get better improvement.

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