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Iraqi EFL Learners' Perception of Syntactic & Lexical Errors,
and Language Anxiety in Oral and Written Classroom Activities

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1. Introduction

After identifying errors, analyzing those errors means finding a way to figure out their sources and causes. This can be considered as a crucial part of revealing why and how errors were made (Shen, 2021). The aim of analyzing errors is to uncover the difficulties that learners encounter in their attempts to acquire language and to describe the characteristics or nature of the system developed by learners. Understanding the nature of errors can indicate the forms and structures that need to be concentrated in the teaching.

One of the essential aims of EA (Error Analysis) is to reveal the reasons of errors, but it's important to be careful about making comments or inferences about those reasons. It should be kept in mind that EA is an attempt to classify and describe errors and there is no any kind of definite and concrete classification. EA is concerned with the deviations or mismatches between the learner's interlanguage and the target language, and it is also as past performance (Corder, 1967).

Error analysis (EA), authored by Corder (1971), led to highly necessary focuses on learning process of a new language, resulting in revealing the internal structure of the learning process of a new language and in identifying causes of errors made by learners during the learning process. Therefore, EA has managed to address the importance of interlanguage and learner's language, and to distinguish errors from mistakes (Pikhart & Habeb Al - Obaydi, 2023). On the other hand, it may be used to design syllabus, improve tests, and teaching materials. It may be also useful to determine language difficulties based on the made errors.

1. 1. Background

Following Collins (2020), foreign language classroom anxiety (FLCA) is believed to be second language anxiety (Young, 1991) but focuses on the foreign language classroom. FLCA is a multi - faceted concept as the name implies. Guy (2017: 70) explains

that: One way to approach FLCA is as a two - dimensional structure, consisting of state and trait anxiety. The former represents learners' feelings of apprehension occurring during specific language - learning events, and the potential motivation reductions accompanying them. State anxiety may cross achievement settings and periods but is temporary, departing when the event is over. In contrast, trait FLCA is interpreted as nervousness in unfamiliar language - learning contexts, specifically interventions - i. e. , unfamiliar study materials, unknown listeners, and indefinite language tasks. Cruz (2021) extended this approach by adding anticipatory and situational states that consolidate learners' pre - task nervousness, occurring in anticipation of confronting foreign language - learning issues, and that stem from language production or reception aspects faced during the learning process.

'Learners' L2 learning experience can be made delightful and interesting, which in turn' encourages the learners even further to learn the target language' (Dashtestani & Khajavy, 2017: 37). Within the context of this discussion, what makes the L2/FL learning environment and the L2/FL learning experience enjoyable and interesting is foreign language enjoyment (FLE), a key concept in the recent directions of the L2/FL psychology agenda (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele, MacIntyre, Boudreau & Dewaele, 2016) (Dong et al. , 2022). Amenouche and Albadry define foreign language enjoyment as a "student's state of enjoyment of the classroom - based [foreign or second language] learning process, which results from appraisals of specific positive emotions experienced during generally challenging and capable - enhancing classroom - based learning activities such as (but not exclusive to): reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities" (2020: 23). Dewaele and MacIntyre (2016) highlighted the complex link between FLE, engagement and success for advanced learners of a foreign language when they underlined that the hedonic perspective is particularly relevant because positive feelings have "immediate consequences for the promotion of deeper thinking, cognitive engagement,

and behaviour”.

There are a host of feelings and emotions that can be associated with individual engagement with the learning process and the classroom atmosphere; among these is anxiety, a feeling that is considered to be part and parcel of the learning process (Shen, 2021). Rashtchi et al. (2019) believed that “Anxiety is considered as an inevitable component of the language learning process, particularly in the foreign language learning environment” (p. 28). From a second and foreign language acquisition point of view, it has been claimed that anxiety can act as an affective filter and obstruct the language learning process as a whole and can prevent comprehension from being converted into language production, modification of individual output, in particular, and it can inhibit language innovation (Brown, 2007); then negative emotions, like anxiety, reduce the performance of communicative abilities for a foreign or second language (Kazemi & Mohammadi, 2016). However, anxiety is part and parcel of people’s academic lives - learners experience varying intensities of anxiety during their educational journeys (Rashtchi et al. , 2019).

2. Literature Review

EFL speaking skills can be improved by providing treatment which aims at shifting the focus of student output from assembled sentences to the process of connecting ideas. Meanwhile, at the point of graduating students, they still face the same challenge by constructing coherent sentences since factors in practicing language, such as college composition class structure, reading exposure, writing repeated practice, and speaking feedback, are not sufficiently satisfying when they lack the exposure to advanced reading materials and unguided verbal output. Students’ speaking ability, including their ability on lexical development and text coherence, will be fully improved if they have exposure to reading authentic English materials, and produce various texts containing coherent ideas despite

the control they may lack.

2. 1. Errors in EFL Learning

Larsen - Freeman and Long pointed out the importance of errors made by EFL learners and underlined the necessity of understanding the distinction between “errors” and “mistakes. ” According to them, this starts from the fact that “decay of the neutral system,” “active interference,” and “negative transfer” cause people learning a new foreign language to make inevitable errors while “mistakes” in learning activities occur less frequently. Furthermore, Corder’s famous observation in the 60’s led to a focus on the “learner language” itself and gave rise to different studies which reveal the learners’ errors and classify them carefully. Corder (1974) also argued that if different language areas exist, which create communication, there should also be a different type of errors. To fulfill this argument, discipline researchers have tried to understand the main sources of mistakes in language activities. With such motivation, the research on correcting errors in L2 learning was carried out with groups of intermediate students.

An error in foreign language learning is generally defined as the production of a wrong form. It is mainly distinguished from a mistake in which the learners are aware of their errors, but are affected by psycholinguistic factors such as nervousness in communicating in the foreign language, attention on other areas during communication, lack of knowledge of grammar, difficulty of a specific grammar rule, or imitation. The areas which may cause the EFL learners to make errors are having negative motivation, transfer of the forms and structures, overgeneralization, confusion in using the rules, etc. What can be mentioned as a major cause is the interlingual transfer. That’s why in the studies conducted so far, it is very important that the studies are on specific language areas.

2. 2. Corrective Feedback Strategies

Recasts are corrective feedback in which the teacher \ tutor reformulates the error systematically in a way that is semantically acceptable and incorporated into the ongoing discourse. It is often noticed by learners, though it is not very intrusive in its natural way of presentation. This issue is a long - drawn debate as to whether learners are aware of recasts as evidence being provided by their interlocutors. Lyster and Ranta (1997, pp. 33 - 66) mentioned that recasts are elicited by non - compliant responses; however, other scholars have refuted this belief by providing results from karaoke studies that indicate recasts are absent. It is pointed out that improvisational studies require more complex measures to reveal the existence of recasts presented by teachers. Some research argues that recasts do not focus primarily on the errors and they are presented to advance interaction rather than a language - focused event, which could be one intricate aspect of generating these inconsistent results.

There are several strategies through which corrective feedback can be presented. Lyster and Ranta (ibid) categorized corrective feedback strategies into twelve strategies: recasts, clarification requests, metalinguistic clues, repetition of error, elicitation, co - overt repair, explicit correction, stalling, negotiation of form, idiosyncratic, and no feedback. The first six types mentioned above are response strategies in which the interactions follow the teachers' initiation of corrective feedback, i. e. , teachers check the learners' utterances then give corrective feedback. Based on these classifications, it is difficult to conclude whether recasts, as one of the most widely used types of corrective feedback, are more effective than other types.

2. 3. Foreign Language Anxiety

Radloff (1997, pp. 386 - 401) and Spielmann (et al. 2001, pp. 259 - 278) claim that it can cause learners to “maintain minimal to little verbally communicative behaviour” because of their “lack of linguistic, paralinguistic and even non - verbal communication

performance”, detectable as they try to avoid becoming observed in interactive activities. Concerning the nature of FLA, investigations show that most EFL learners exhibit “negative emotions as explained by learners with negative perceptions of the communicative activities that will be conducted”. According to some scholars, it is viewed as “debilitating, resulting in isolation, preventing [learners] from learning”, and as it turns into chronic anxiety it may result from fear or panic experienced by secondary school students who are “unexpectedly asked to answer a question or perform a task in the English - language classroom”. Furthermore, Lee states that because of the variance of responses to psychological, physiological, and behavioural interventions, “no two people experience FLA in the same way or express their responses in the same way”.

When used in a foreign language setting, anxiety, or foreign language anxiety (FLA), is described as “a unique subset of anxiety because there are so many unknowns in foreign language learning and use”. Given that “a variety of negative effects that are associated with language contact often lead to anxiety”, such as anxiety about speaking in the target language, anxiety about learning, and anxiety about testing, learners are expected to have direct or indirect reasons to be unwilling to participate in interactive classroom settings (ibid).

3. Methodology

The survey is commonly employed to find out learners’ opinion about an issue. In the EFL context, it is utilized to investigate EFL learners’ attitudes towards different aspects of EFL learning, such as language teachers, language learning, language anxiety, or errors in learning a language. The survey tool can be conducted through different means, such as questionnaires, interviews, or observations. The anonymity of the results allows participants to inform and express their views in an orderly manner. In this study, the survey tool was conducted through a self - report survey. A questionnaire was designed

as an instrument used to accomplish the objectives of the thesis, providing a detailed list of research questions based on the identified research question of the study. Data were collected via a seven - point Likert scale questionnaire which consisted of three parts: Part 1) Demographics, Part 2) the Foreign Language Learning Anxiety Scale (FLLAS), and Part 3) The Perceptions of Learning English Scale (POLES).

This section discusses the methodology followed for analyzing Iraqi EFL learners' perception of errors, corrective feedback, and foreign language anxiety. It includes a description of the research design, the aims of the study, the participants of the study, the instrument utilized, and the data collection process. It starts by an overall view of the research design. There are different types of research designs, such as qualitative design, quantitative design, and mixed - methods research design. The type of design determines the plan that the researcher used to collect and analyze data. This study utilized a quantitative method; it aimed to examine and quantify Iraqi EFL learners' perceptions of errors, corrective feedback, and foreign language anxiety, and to investigate whether there are any significant differences in their attitudes based on their different educational level variables.

3. 1. Participants

A total of 90 participants took part in the questionnaire on the perception of written corrective feedback (CF). All the participants were undergraduate students who were studying English language and literature. The participants were chosen randomly. They represented a variety of professors who belonged to four sub - professors and universities from the well - known universities, Al - Mustansiriyah University, Mosul University, Iraqi University, and Baghdad University. The participants were aged from (18–23). They got 60% from the English proficiency index, and they were at different stages (1 - 4 stages). It was found that the EFL students at the freshman level of the departments

at these universities' public educational facilities are required to receive 20 hours of instruction per week in grammar, writing, reading, literature, speaking, and listening during their first and second semesters. The main reason for choosing this group of freshmen in Iraqi universities is to discover whether the first - year university students are given enough instruction in English so that they can begin to communicate effectively in the language. At the same time, it is crucial to choose experienced EFL instructors on Error Correction to investigate feedback practices because they are major steps in the writing curriculum and they regulate the departments to set aside a large number of instruction hours for writing. They are then given enough time to read, write, complete writing assignments, and attend class readings.

3. 2. Data Collection

The direct observation method is used while the oral data are collected. Data are taken to confirm the result of Iraqi EFL learners' perception toward the language errors done during the speaking and written tasks. This method is employed in order to know the accurate response of the Iraqi EFL learners, in each of the speaking tasks, to have enough linguistic competence to deal with the errors. It enables the researchers to apply the real contexts to find out Iraqi EFL perceptions of each type of foreign language anxiety. In order to collect the oral data, semi - directive interviews, audio and video records, these audio and video records are used to analyze the turns and turn - takings of both teachers and learners.

The data of the present study were collected by using three types of instruments, which are error analysis, survey questionnaire, and direct observation. The researchers employed the written data, which are three - paragraph writings done by Iraqi EFL learners in English, to analyze their errors. These pre - speaking errors of the EFL learners were used to know three types of errors that were made by the participants of the study:

grammatical, lexical, and content errors. Survey questionnaires were employed during the speaking tasks to know the participants' attitudes toward each type of corrective feedback.

4. Results

The fact that it is important to determine the unproductive output, agree or partially disagree with students, and address arguable points carefully because teachers cannot do this by correcting writings, meaning that only the first two of their characteristics related to speaking and interaction can be targeted in writing. Fourth, students know the nature of their metalinguistic knowledge and can rely on it while writing in a foreign language, which, in turn, supports their ability to respond to corrective interventions during writing tasks fluently. Given this, when addressed the students' interaction and their ability to respond to interventions, the focus of each study was on either second language acquisition, error analysis, or language assessment research of some kind. Cognitive psychological, social, and sociocultural concerns were beyond the scope of the present investigation. Further investigations will be required to determine where further links between communicative and metacognitive strategies used by EFL learners during speaking practice tasks and by EFL teachers during their oral corrective feedback in those contexts are involved.

The present study aimed to investigate Iraqi EFL learners' perception of errors, corrective feedback with their aspects, and foreign language anxiety, in addition to finding if there is an effect of gender and specialization on these constructs. Using three research instruments, consisting of a 20 - item Errors Perceptions Survey (EPS), prepared by Yilmaz, et al. (2021), the 24 - item Corrective Feedback Perceptions Survey (CFPS) made by Sato and Loewen (2021), and the 33 - item English version of the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) for foreign language anxiety, the researchers could

gather ample data and noted several interesting findings. The present study has some important implications. The investigation revealed that Iraqi EFL students might have a different perception of type and error than speakers of other foreign languages. It implies that individual students might have different lenses through which they perceive errors. In general, even when the total scores indicate students' shared beliefs concerning various instruction facets, teachers need to treat each of their students as individuals who have unique beliefs about instruction. In doing so, the present results and/or instructions for applying the EPS to other researchers could be used by experienced teachers to make informed decisions about their current and future language instruction.

4. 1. Perception of Errors

Previous ESL and EFL researches were mainly focused on examining teachers' attitudes and perception of language errors. Studies show that teachers' beliefs about errors and how they should be corrected have affected their corrective practices. In developmental research on errors and corrective feedback, a shift has occurred among most EFL and ESL researchers—especially in LMF—concerning teachers' perceptions of students' uptake of corrective feedback. However, many of them preferred certain types of errors to be focused on. This preference has not always been confirmed by researchers, except for negative responses. For example, Sheen (2008, pp. 835 - 874) found that output was better than recasts, confirming the teachers' preferences to a certain extent. Various studies have found that students may need only “pushed output” to produce both vocabulary and grammar - supplying. These theories, however, were not supported by a handful of studies in ESL contexts suggesting that recasts could increase students' negations and repeated link study.

This section aims to explore the viewpoint of EFL students in Iraq towards errors and corrective feedback. It seeks an answer to an important question involving when and

how these students prefer to have errors noted and modified. This has two advantages. First, students' viewpoints might reveal the kind of feedback that is potentially harmful or beneficial and the most valuable techniques for language learners. Second, it has the potential to inform the creation of a feedback technique that could potentially be useful for large - scale English teaching.

4. 2. Effectiveness of Corrective Feedback

In a study like this one, learners' attitudes, perceptions, and reactions are vital in helping researchers to understand the types of anxiety and psychological safety levels elicited by both EFL correction and error typology even instructors' practices seem to be the main sources of producing a positive learning atmosphere in the classroom. In order to gain a better understanding of student preferences regarding CF (Corrective Feedback), it may be important for EFL instructors to develop a better recognition of how learning anxiety affects CF choices and what aspiring teachers, who are future classroom practitioners with one not - so - distant experience of being L2 learners, believe in learning environment stressors.

Corrective feedback (CF) is essential for L2 learning, as it helps learners identify and avoid errors. It is important to note that adult learners can benefit from various types of CF. Several studies suggested different types of CF to be useful, while all being attributed to CF incorporated in learners' interlanguage development. Dornyei (2005) highlights the function of CF as the mirror of classroom relationships by drawing special attention to the act of balancing courtesy with directness in CF. Yang (2006) in his study on EFL learners' CF in China revealed similarities in the role of "face" as a factor influencing the learners' anxiety levels in classrooms. The technique of recasting errors in an indirect way to avoid targeting learners' faces was used in his research. Han (2002, pp. 542 - 572) points out that CF affects the overall atmosphere (rapport), and L2 teachers

should be clear about their CF strategies to make everyone comfortable speaking and interacting.

5. Discussion

The corrective feedback is proven to reduce English language anxiety of the learners in EFL context. The results indicate how valuable CFP is and how it is perceived by the EFL students. The students' meta - cognitive perception of CFP has substantial connection with their anxiety within their L2 learning. The low English language anxiety will help the students to develop their interlanguage. This enhances the belief of EFL students in their English learning and limits the side effect of anxiety. Herewith mentioned the students' perception of CFP will be more imperative within the learning period for a proficient EFL learning carrier. It is beneficial to use CFP as a tool to mitigate the anxiety and enhance the engagement of the learners within the EFL learning process. Consequently, it is recommended that EFL classroom can use it as a means of language instruction and EFL learning regulator to engage and motivate the learning within L2 classroom. The various types of feedback are perceived differently for either all students or some. If possible, it is wise to have appropriate methodologies to provide different kinds of feedback as per each student's need (Lyster, Lightbown & Spada, 2013). This is also specifically supported by the needs analysis session that should be conducted by each EFL classroom instructor before implementing any kind of feedback practice in their EFL classroom in the future. This also supports humanistic approach language teaching (Demirel, 2006).

Each aforementioned factor of anxiety dimension was tested by their respective indicator variables. The analysis of the EFA indicates the validity of each factor of anxiety dimension is confirmed and reliable in reality. This means the indicator variables capture the variation in each component of anxiety. The outcome of the reliability assessment

was promising as all SDLQUNLO (Structured Query Language: Decimal data) (See Chart 1 below) values exceed the recommended scale of. 70. As a result, the internal consistency magnitude for these instruments was found satisfactory. The impact of errors has found a room for feedback and potential enhancement in the field of EFL instruction. Students in EFL classroom need a feedback tool to gauge their learning, to reduce anxiety. Oftentimes, the feedback would be on specific isolated aspects such as grammatical or spelling errors in Polytechnics. Even if it is so providing corrective feedback on written productions means it gives students the indication of what they actually could do accurately in their production. Paltridge (2016) suggests that the real value of the feedback is to produce the general sense of the mistake tendency in a particular production. It also reduces the debatable sense of errors. Likewise, other scholars believe the feedback is an act of error resolution (Bush, 2015). Thus, the feedback part is not only to fix the errors produced directly, but it also bears a task of producing awareness of what one is actually unaware of (Earwole, 1981) (Abdulrahman Almuhimedi & Alshumaimeri, 2023).

Chart 1. Participants Assessment Result

This paper has illustrated the potential factors that led to various forms of English language learners' disengagement and low proficiency in EFL class. The initial assertion in this study was if it could identify the Iraqi EFL learners' English language anxiety components based on three factors of indicator variables by using the data collected from 90 Iraqi EFL students (Jiang et al. , 2022). Apparently, anxiety is not beyond language learners' psychological ability (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Kallenborn, 2010; Egbo, 2015). It is reasonable for the majority of language learners to be anxious because they yield to external and internal factors, which corrupt the learning process in turn. The findings on the descriptive statistics of the measured indicator confirm anxiety is a problem for the students in their efforts to minimize potential deficiencies in their both

vital language skills and developing inter - language knowledge.

5. 1. Relationship between Errors and Anxiety

In many EFL contexts, students are often found to experience a high level of speaking anxiety. For example, in a study by Gregersen (2005), 39% of the 529 Danish high school students who participated in a language proficiency test reported that they felt tense when presenting foreign - language speech content in front of foreign - language speakers. In a study of Japanese students with 305 questionnaires, Murphy and Okamoto (2004) found that the students felt more anxious in situations where they had free discussions, whereas Okamoto and Case (1996) found that their Japanese EFL students who experienced high levels of anxiety during speaking activities also felt anxious during both proficiency and aptitude tests. In the language testing domain, one common modality - specific language anxiety is test anxiety (e. g. , Elkhafaifi, 2005; Price et al. , 1991). For example, Elkhafaifi (2005) assessed Arabic - speaking ESL university students in the USA and found that they reported specific feelings of tension concerning an English listening and reading language proficiency test (TOEFL) that were related to the influence of family background. In another study, Price et al. (1991) found that English - speaking American university students of Spanish reported feeling more anxiety for the oral test than the actual test. In general, communication and test anxieties seem to constitute the two principal anxiety areas for EFL/ESL learners in the relevant literature, although different learner groups may express anxiety in different ways (Gregersen, 2005).

It is a universally recognized fact that foreign language learners could be affected by different types of emotions, including anxiety (Yu, 2022). Of the major types of language anxiety identified by Horwitz et al. (1986), (a) communication anxiety, (b) test anxiety, and (c) fear of negative social evaluation (FNE), perhaps the most frequently researched type in the foreign language teaching, learning, and testing domains is com-

munication anxiety (e. g. , MacIntyre & Rack, 2008). Recent research interest in other types of language anxiety, particularly English language listening and speaking anxieties, in diverse cultures including those in various parts of Asia has been growing. The fact that foreign language learners are often evaluated based on speaking and listening skills makes the study of these language anxiety (LA) types particularly important (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002b).

5. 2. Implications for EFL Teaching

It is also argued that since individuals' perceptions greatly influence their behaviours, it is important to shed some light on how our students perceive the error correction provided by us. As Farrokhi (2013) and Gürpınar and Ornek (2010) argue, this insight can inform us about students' responses to error correction on the one hand, and clarify how students' learning may be either positively or adversely affected by different types of CF, and different timing techniques of CF. Drawing on these arguments, theoretically, tenses, articles, word order and preposition areas of like are especially difficult for Arabic EFL students who are also known to be reluctant to take participation in English - speaking activities, and this, in turn, makes EFL instructors more careful when correcting students' errors so as not to affect them negatively for future performances, especially in a foreign language environment. Consequently, knowing EFL students' perceptions towards error correction conducted by instructors are just as critical as agreement level among instructors to recognise whether a particular area is to be corrected.

In light of the findings of the present study, several implications, both theoretical and practical, can be drawn with regard to correcting students' errors in EFL classes and language teaching. Theoretically, error correction is an inevitable part of language learning. (Abdulrahman Almuhiemedi & Alshumaimeri, 2023) Emphasizing correcting errors may stimulate students to make more mistakes and as such they will be aware of them and try

to adopt the correct way of expressing themselves. Hence, correcting errors will be the starting point for additional language learning. In addition, identifying and correcting errors could help ESL/EFL teachers acquire insights to learners' learning problems which can be considered when introducing new language items. Finding out EFL learners' perspectives about receiving error correction would guide their decisions about adopting their own procedures, therefore enabling teachers to bring corrective feedback to the curriculum more efficiently, and individually. This perspective of equalizing rights to participants can open new venues in EFL classroom authority relationships, leading to more collaborative teacher - student roles vis - à - vis error correction issues.

6. Conclusion

Finally, the present study also found that there is a significant negative relationship between positive affectivity and communication apprehension among the participants. The strength of the relationship was moderate and it was found that positive affectivity and academic disengagement predict 18.8% of the variance in communication apprehension. Therefore, when students have a stronger sense of joy and interest in performing new skills, they facilitate or minimize cognitive and physiological stress when they are engaged in communication.

This is because the way that students perceive their affectivity is more important than their affectivity itself such that perceiving positive emotions predict fewer disengaging behaviors (especially academic procrastination); an interpretation that aligns with Fredrickson's (1998, pp. 300 - 319) broaden - and - build theory. Perhaps too, it is the case that those students who have a tendency to academic procrastination are also more likely to reflect and appraise their feelings in a negative way, which might help in explaining why these two constructs are significantly related.

This study aimed at investigating the relationship between positive affectivity, aca-

ademic disengagement, and communication apprehension among a sample of Iraqi EFL learners. The results of the study showed that there indeed exists a significant negative relationship between students' positive affectivity and their academic disengagement (Ma, 2022). This implies that when students have a particularly strong sense of happiness and energy, they are more likely not to procrastinate, be excited about learning and develop a greater interest in learning activities, which in turn contributes to the minimization of academic disengagement (World English Journal & Khatter, 2019). However, the analysis also revealed that the perception of positive affectivity is more important than positive affectivity itself. In other words, it is not the case that the students who experience the strongest sense of joy, excitement and energy are necessarily the ones who are least likely to procrastinate and disengage from their studies.

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