

Taboo Words Used in the Movie Entitled "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard"

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Abstract. The title of this research is Taboo Words Used In The Movie Entitled "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard", this study examines the use of taboo words in the movie by categorizing and analyzing their types, functions, and motives. Language in movies plays a crucial role in shaping and reflecting societal norms, and the presence of taboo words serves various linguistic and narrative purposes. The study used a mixed-method approach, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative analysis to classify instances of taboo language. The research is based on Timothy Jay's (1992, 2009) classification of taboo words, which includes cursing, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, vulgarity, slang, epithets, insults and slurs, and scatology. The findings reveal that the movie extensively employs eight out of nine types of taboo words, with obscenity, cursing, and profanity being the most dominant. Additionally, the study identifies six primary functions of taboo words: expressing emotions, relieving pain, establishing social bonding, adding emphasis, insulting and offending, and challenging authority. The use of such language contributes to character development, humor, and dramatic intensity, making it an integral element of the film's storytelling. This research highlights the importance of sociolinguistics in media studies and provides insights into how explicit language functions in cinematic narratives. It also suggests that while taboo words are often perceived negatively, they serve pragmatic purposes that enhance dialogue realism and audience engagement. Future research can explore the correlation between gender, social status, and the use of taboo language in films.

Keywords: Taboo words; sociolinguistics; film studies; explicit language; The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard

1. Introduction

Language is a system of sound symbols that have meaning and arbitrary articulation, used as a means of communication by a group of humans to produce feelings and thoughts (Noermanzah, 2019). In its development, language is not only used in direct communication but also in various media, including film as a form of art that contains audio and visual elements. Movies have become a very influential medium in conveying socio-cultural messages and values to the public (Hafnan, 2021). As a product of popular culture, movies have the ability to reflect, shape, and influence the way contemporary society speaks.

In global cinema, the use of language often reflects social realities including the use of words that are considered taboo in society. Taboo words can be defined as words that are considered impolite, rude, or inappropriate to say in certain situations because they can offend feelings, social norms, or prevailing cultural values (Tumeno, 2017). The phenomenon of using taboo words in movies has become an interesting study in the field of sociolinguistics, especially related to the context of use and its impact on the audience. Bednarek (2019) argues that the use of taboo words in entertainment media such as films often has certain pragmatic functions, such as emotional emphasis, character building, or

humor creation.

The movie "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard" released in 2021 is a sequel to the movie "The Hitman's Bodyguard" (2017) directed by Patrick Hughes. This action-comedy genre film is interesting to study because it contains various uses of taboo words in its dialogue, which are an integral part of characterization and atmosphere building in the film. According to Samadi (2014), the use of taboo words in films is often closely related to efforts to depict certain social realities or create dramatic effects in the story. In action-comedy films such as "The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard", taboo words can also function as comedic elements and markers of a particular character's identity.

Studies on taboo words in movies have been conducted by several researchers before. Fredy & Zidan's (2023) research on the analysis of taboo words in American action films shows that the use of taboo words is often related to aspects of emotional force and is used to express anger, frustration, or the intensity of certain emotions. Meanwhile, a study conducted by Serti (2022) revealed that taboo words in movies can be classified into several categories such as profanity, vulgarity, obscenity, and slang. Furthermore, Bednarek's (2019) research found a correlation between movie genres and the frequency of taboo words. Action and comedy movies tend to have a higher frequency of taboo word usage than other genres.

The Study entitled "Language as a System of Sound Symbols for Communication: Theoretical Perspectives on Human Interaction" by Noermanzah (2019) describes language as a structured system of sound symbols that serve as a means of communication among humans, conveying thoughts and emotions. As communication tools evolve, so does the medium through which language is utilized, extending beyond direct interpersonal interactions to the realm of multimedia, particularly in cinema.

Films, as Hafnan (2021) in his research entitled "The Role of Cinema in Conveying Socio-Cultural Messages Through Language" argues, are unique mediums that integrate both audio and visual elements, allowing language to convey complex socio-cultural values and messages. This dual-element nature of films underscores their potential as reflections of societal behaviors, including the use of specific language elements that resonate with or challenge cultural norms.

Another study with the title "Understanding Taboo Language: Cultural Implications and Social Realities in Communication" by Tumeno (2017) provides insight into how language can carry social limitations, specifically through taboo words, words that societies often perceive as impolite, offensive, or inappropriate in certain contexts. These words challenge cultural standards, making them both powerful and contentious linguistic tools. Their presence in film scripts can mirror societal struggles, controversies, or norms, reflecting the realities of diverse communities. In this context, films become a sociolinguistic platform, addressing the boundaries of polite language and the repercussions of crossing these boundaries in the name of art and authenticity.

Research entitled "The Pragmatic Function of Taboo Words in Entertainment Media" by Bednarek (2019) delves into the function of taboo words within entertainment, arguing that they serve more than shock value, they have pragmatic functions, including enhancing emotional emphasis, defining character traits, and contributing to humor.

In films, taboo language strategically amplifies emotions or draws attention to particular aspects of the narrative. This makes films like *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard* a valuable subject for examining how language choices impact viewers' perceptions, as the inclusion of these words often complements the intensity and tone of scenes, especially in action-comedy genres where exaggerated expressions are frequent.

Research by Samadi (2014) entitled "Characterization Through Language: The Role of Taboo Words in Film Narratives" highlights how the deployment of taboo words in cinema can be a deliberate approach to character building and setting the story's emotional atmosphere. In action-comedy films like *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*, such language choices can enhance the humor and reflect the social background or rebellious nature of specific characters. The film genre thus plays an essential role in determining the type and frequency of taboo words used, as certain character archetypes are commonly portrayed with linguistic elements that break social etiquette, creating an authentic or exaggerated identity

for the audience to connect with.

Studies by Fredy and Zidan (2023) with the title "Emotional Intensity and Taboo Words: An Analysis in American Action Films" and Serti (2022) with the title "Taboo Language in Cinema: Categories, Functions, and Audience Impact", both reveal that the use of taboo language often corresponds with genre, particularly in action and comedy, where such language accentuates the storyline's emotional or humorous aspects. Fredy and Zidan (2023) observed that in action films, taboo words frequently express heightened emotional states like frustration, anger, or sarcasm.

Meanwhile, Serti (2022) identified distinct categories within taboo language, including profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, and slang, each contributing uniquely to characterization. This correlation between genre and linguistic choice positions *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard* as a suitable case study for examining how action-comedy films leverage taboo language to resonate with audiences and convey a range of emotions.

2. Method

The primary data source for this study was the movie *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard* (2021). The movie was selected for its rich use of informal, strong, and potentially offensive language, making it a suitable source for analyzing the use of taboo words. The focus was on the dialogue spoken by characters throughout the movie. Additionally, relevant movie scripts and subtitles are used to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and to locate and analyze taboo words systematically.

In the data collection process, the first step involves transcribing all the dialogues from the movie *Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*. This ensures a comprehensive record of all spoken language in the film. Special attention is given to identify taboo words considered to be offensive or inappropriate in particular social contexts.

These taboo words were to be identified using established linguistic frameworks from previous studies on offensive language such as those by Timothy Jay (1992), and Timothy Jay, (2006). The identification process includes recognizing expletives, swear words, and culturally inappropriate terms that appear in the characters' dialogue. Once identified, these taboo words are categorized based on their type and their function within the movie.

For the data analysis, both quantitative and qualitative approaches (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used. Quantitative analysis involves counting the frequency of each identified taboo word and identified which words or categories are used most frequently. This helps determine how pervasive taboo language is within the movie's overall dialogue.

In the qualitative analysis, a pragmatic approach was used to study how the taboo words function in specific contexts. This includes exploring how these words shape character relationships, convey emotion, or contribute to comedic or dramatic effects. The context in which taboo words are used whether in moments of tension, humor, or anger will also be closely examined to understand their narrative role and intended impact. Both types of analysis will offer a comprehensive understanding of the function and significance of taboo language in the film.

3. Discussion

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of taboo words in *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*. To address the first research question, identifying the types of taboo words, this study follows the classification proposed by Timothy Jay (1992, 2009). Jay categorizes taboo words into nine types, including cursing, profanity, blasphemy, obscenity, vulgarity, slang, epithets, insults and slurs, and scatology. His framework emphasizes the social and psychological impact of these words, highlighting their varying degrees of offensiveness and usage across different contexts. For the second research question, analyzing the function of taboo words, this study applies Jay's (2009) theory on the social functions of swearing. Jay argues that taboo words serve multiple linguistic and pragmatic purposes,

including expressing emotions, relieving pain, establishing social bonding, adding emphasis and persuasion, insulting and offending, and challenging authority. These functions help explain how the use of taboo words contributes to character development, humor, and narrative progression in the film.

According to Timothy Jay (1992) in *Cursing in America*, taboo words are words and expressions that are considered inappropriate, offensive, or unacceptable in certain social contexts due to their connection to sensitive topics such as religion, sexuality, bodily functions, and insults. Jay categorizes taboo words into nine types:

Cursing

The intent of cursing is to invoke harm on another person through the use of certain words or phrases. These words are imbued with power granted to them mainly through religious or social demarcation.

Data 1

I hope you have a very good reason for pulling me out of a UN Security Summit. Goddamn right I do. Seen the news? (00:14:21)

This model of utterance is found in *The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard* movie in minute 14:21. This utterance is employed by Bobby. His role in this movie is as Interpol Secret Agent. Word "Goddamn" is one of religious type of cursing. It curse brings about physical or mental harm. In this case, the use of cursing exhibits an increased degree of angry and brings mental harm to the listener. This cursing, which is said by the speaker, as the quick respond of anger of the news delivered. his intent is likely to strongly affirm something probably his belief, frustration, or a determination to get things done his way. Given his character's personality, he often expresses his irritation with how chaotic things become, and this line fits his direct, aggressive style of communication. The function or word "Goddamn" in this utterance by Bobby acts as an intensifier, making his response much stronger than just saying, "Right I do." Bobby O'Neal is an impatient, tough character. His use of "goddamn" conveys his exasperation, he's likely fed up with the situation or with someone questioning him. By using "Goddamn," Bobby is asserting dominance in the conversation.. It has a relation that connect feelings of anger through cursing with taboo words. Using the word "Goddamn" in an utterance can be functioned as an expression to draw attention to oneself and also a response to give feedback on bad response.

Data 2

Boring is always best. Understood? Of course not. What? Jesus Christ! (00:17:10)

The phrase "Jesus Christ" is commonly used as an expletive in moments of shock, frustration, fear, or disbelief. Since Michael is often caught in absurd and dangerous situations, his use of this phrase at this point in the movie act to show Disbelief or Annoyance because Sonya unpredictable and doing something particularly ridiculous like breaking in into enemy base, his "Jesus Christ" is a sarcastic or exhausted response. Word "Jesus Christ" is one of religious types of cursing. In this case, the use of cursing expresses sarcastic, disbelief and annoyance and gives rise to a frame of mind harm to the listener. This cursing amounts to relatively short, simple, and direct. For this reason, word "Jesus Christ" is categorized into cursing category of taboo words. Word "Jesus Christ" is form of religious cursing. At this point in the movie, Michael is already deep into the madness of working with Darius and Sonia. He's out of his element, unarmed because he's on a psychological break from using guns, and constantly being thrown into dangerous situations. If he says "Jesus Christ" here, it's likely due to something outrageous happening possibly involving violence, danger, or Sonia's unpredictability.

Profanity

Profanity is based on a religious distinction. To be profane means to be secular or behaving outside the customs of religious belief. To be profane means to be ignorant or intolerant of the guidelines of a particular religious order.

Data 1

Oh my God, a child would be so lucky to have you as its host. (00:29:08) Thank you, Breece. Thank you

In *Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard* (2021), at minute 20:08, Michael Bryce says "Oh my God" in reaction to something shocking. It happens when Sonia Kincaid is talking about wanting to have a baby and sees Bryce as a potential surrogate or guardian figure in some ridiculous way. His line "Oh my God, a child would be so lucky to have you as its host" is dripping with sarcasm and disbelief because he's terrified of the idea seeing Sonia is violent, unhinged, and impulsive. The thought of her being a mother genuinely horrifies him and the phrase "host" makes pregnancy sound like an alien invasion rather than motherhood, which makes Bryce's reaction funnier. The function of profanity in this utterance by Michael is to build emotional intensity and comedic timing. "Oh my God" is a common expletive of strong emotion, it makes his reaction funnier because it sounds like he is genuinely horrified. The timing of his delivery enhances the humor, making it clear he thinks this is the worst idea ever and completely absurd to him. The conversation takes place under a bridge. Sonya is very happy because Michael agree to the idea that Sonya would be a great mother. Sonya is excited to have a baby because that is her desire for a long time. Seeing the mission given by Bobby as a honeymoon, Sonya plans to spend the money Bobby given to her with her husband, Darius Kincaid.

Obscenity

Obscene words are considered the most offensive and rarely, if ever, used in public places. Obscenities are pointedly sexual in nature. This kind of expression is indecent. Most of the time, it is offensive and repulsive.

Data 1

I can't believe I graduated therapy. I know. Congratulations. *Slamming door* Jesus Christ! Fuck. (00: 05:29)

The therapist says "Fuck" in reaction to something that happens during Michael Bryce's therapy session. The therapist's use of "Fuck" in this moment is significant because therapists are typically composed, professional, and measured in their responses. However, her outburst serves as a comedic and character-driven moment that reveals deeper layers of both her frustration and Bryce's chaotic nature. This "Fuck" word is used to call someone a deviant founded on sex acts. The statement "Fuck" is also used as an expletive expressing anger, anxiety or disgust. Word "Fuck" is classified into the taboo of obscenity because it is one of sex act. Roughly all about sex words are offensive in the culture, especially for the sexual digression.

Data 2

I didn't have to be here, you know? I had fresh cucumbers on my eyes! I had a linen robe with an insanely high thread count. It was like sleeping in a cloud. Namaste, motherFucker. (00:20:41)

Michael Bryce is trying to embrace a peaceful, non-violent lifestyle after losing his AAA bodyguard license, he is on a self-imposed "spiritual journey", following his therapist's advice to avoid guns and violence. Darius, who is the complete opposite of Bryce, finds this ridiculous and teases him for it. Darius is not a peaceful person at all, he is a violent hitman who enjoys chaos. By saying "Namaste, motherFucker," he is mocking the idea of peace while asserting his dominance over Bryce. It's his way of saying, "Look at you, trying to be peaceful. That's cute, but it won't last." This "motherfucker" word is used to call someone a deviant founded on sex acts. The statement "motherfucker" is commonly used as an expletive expressing anger, anxiety or disgust. Word "motherfucker" is classified into the taboo of obscenity because it is one of sex act.

Data 3

What the Fuck is he doing here? (00:19:03) I believe it's pronounced "thank you" For what? Uh, for saving your life. Again and again and again. I never asked you to save shit! Baby! What in the absolute Fuck is Michael Bryce doing here?(00:19.15)

When Darius Kincaid says, "Baby! What in the absolute Fuck is Michael Bryce doing here?" at

minute 19:15 in *Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard*, Darius is shocked and frustrated to see Michael Bryce because he wasn't expecting Bryce to be involved. Darius had no idea that Sonia brought Bryce into the situation and his reaction suggests that he believes Bryce is the last person who should be there. In the first movie "The Hitman's Bodyguard", Darius and Michael had a love-hate relationship where Michael was forced to protect Darius. Now, after Bryce lost his "AAA" bodyguard status, Darius sees him as weak and unreliable. His frustration implies he doesn't believe Bryce is capable of helping.

The word "Fuck" is in the obscene type. The word "Fuck" is taboo in English because it relates to the act of sexual connections. It is hurtful and should not be used in any situations because it is embarrassing. Function of the taboo word "Fuck" in the conversation above is to be provocative. In the phrase "What in the absolute Fuck is Michael Bryce doing here?", the phrase "absolute Fuck" serves several functions. Normally, someone might say "What the Fuck is he doing here?", adding "absolute" makes it even stronger, emphasizing that Darius is completely shocked and frustrated by Bryce's presence.

Data 4

I understand some people get cold feet on their wedding day. But I would have never thought that you'd get cold dick on our honeymoon night! (00:23:56) Baby, baby. I said I was sorry.

This Phrase is said by Sonia Kincaid to Darius Kincaid during a conversation where she mocks him for being unable to perform sexually on their honeymoon night. The word "cold dick" is categorized as an obscene expression because it refers to male genitalia in a way that is not in accordance with norms of decency in English communication. The phrase is a play on "cold feet," which means getting nervous or hesitant, but here, Sonia twists it into a sexual context to mock Darius. Using this phrase in a public or formal setting would generally be considered inappropriate due to its explicit nature. The function of the taboo phrase "cold dick" in this context is to mock and express frustration toward Darius.

Vulgarity

Vulgarity means the language of the common person, which is the unsophisticated, unsocialized, or under-educated. Vulgarity does not serve any particular need or function beyond the normal communication demands of the common human. Vulgarisms are not necessarily obscene or taboo, they just reflect the crudeness of street language.

Data 1

My pussy is just too tight. (00:11:52) Oh. Oh. And since Darius uses all this testosterone, he eats macho shit, the whiny sperm abort the mission halfway up my pussy pipe.

This utterance is said by Sonia Kincaid to Michael Bryce during a conversation where she explains her struggle to conceive a child with Darius Kincaid. The word "pussy" is categorized as a vulgar type of taboo word because it refers to the female genital, which is considered inappropriate and offensive in most social contexts. The use of the word "pussy" in this context highlights Sonia's frustration over fertility struggles. Instead of expressing it in a conventional way, she exaggerates the issue using crude and explicit words, making the conversation feel more intense and dramatic. Her choice of words also reflects her bold, unfiltered personality, as she is someone who speaks openly without hesitation, even about intimate matters.

Slang

Slang is a vocabulary that is developed in certain sub-groups (teenagers, musicians, soldiers, drug users, or athletes) for ease of communication. The slang code serves to identify members of the group, while misuse or ignorance of it identifies non-members, which may be especially important in illegal transactions.

Data 1

Darius Kincaid. A little birdie told me that you were in town. Remember me? Your old pal Carlo. (00:16:07) I remember killing a bunch of motherfuckers who worked for you

The phrase "A little birdie told me that you were in town" is used by Carlo to indicate that he has sources who informed him of Darius's presence. Slang is a unique set of words or expressions used within specific social groups, such as criminals, law enforcement, or underground circles, to establish a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. It helps strengthen group identity and allows members to communicate in a way that outsiders may not easily interpret. The phrase "a little birdie told me" is a casual way of saying that someone has received information from a secret or unidentified source. The function of slang in this utterance said by Carlo is to subtly intimidate Darius by implying that he is being watched and that Carlo has connections capable of tracking his movements. The phrase adds an element of mystery and power, making Carlo seem well-informed and possibly dangerous.

Data 2

The hitman, the bodyguard and the con woman. You dumb fucks just killed Carlo, the informant that was going to punch my ticket home. (00:20:48) Who the fuck are you?

This utterance is said by Bobby O'Neill to Sonia Kincaid. The word "Con Woman" is used by Bobby to describe Sonia. The phrase "Con Woman" in this utterance refers to a deceptive and manipulative female who engages in fraud or scams to achieve her goals. The function of slang in this utterance, as used by Bobby, is to express his frustration and distrust toward Sonia by labeling her as someone untrustworthy and skilled in deception.

Epithets

Epithets are brief but forceful bursts of emotional language. They are powerful in presentation (loudness or duration) and in offensiveness than other

types of cursing, for example, joking.

Data 1

Jesus, what the fuck are you doing? Son of a bitch. Last time I saw something like this, Bruce Willis was drilling a hole in an asteroid. (00:30:00)

The phrase "Son of a bitch" in the dialogue above is categorized as an epithet because it is commonly used as an insult or an exclamation of frustration. The word "bitch" originally refers to a female dog, but when used as an insult, it conveys anger, disbelief, or annoyance. The phrase "Son of a bitch" does not literally imply that someone is the child of a female dog; rather, it is an informal way to express strong emotion, whether frustration, admiration, or shock, depending on the context. Bobby reacts to a shocking event by saying: "Son of a bitch. Last time I saw something like this, Bruce Willis was drilling a hole in an asteroid. In this scene, Bobby is witnessing a chaotic extreme situation, and he uses the phrase to express disbelief and frustration. He then compares the situation to the movie Armageddon, where Bruce Willis' character must drill into an asteroid to save Earth. This pop culture reference serves as humor, exaggerating the absurdity of what he is seeing.

Insult and Slur

Insults and slurs are verbal attacks on other people. These words are spoken to harm the other person by the word alone. These insults and slurs do not necessarily gain their powers from religious sanctions or social taboos.

Data 1

Baby, I need help. Get anyone...but Michael Bryce. What? Didn't he save your cucaracha's ass? (00:19:36) Doesn't mean I got to be best friends with him.

This utterance is said by Sonya Kincaid to Darius Kincaid during a conversation about Michael Bryce. The conversation occurs when Sonya reacts to Darius' dissatisfaction with Bryce. She challenges Darius' attitude by reminding him that Bryce helped him, using the phrase: "What? Didn't he save your cucaracha's ass?" The phrase "cucaracha's ass" includes an insult, as "cucaracha" is the Spanish word for cockroach. In this context, Sonya is likely using it in a teasing or mocking way to refer to Darius, implying that he is tough, stubborn, or hard to get rid of, just like a cockroach. However, it also carries a slightly

derogatory tone, making it a verbal jab at Darius. The phrase "cucaracha's ass" falls into the category of taboo insults, which are used to demean, mock, or provoke someone. Insulting someone by comparing them to an insect can imply negative traits, such as being annoying, unkillable, or ungrateful. This type of slang-based insult is common in informal speech, especially in playful or aggressive banter. Function of the insult in this utterance The insult "cucaracha's ass" in Sonya's utterance serves to challenge Darius' ungratefulness, using mockery to emphasize that Bryce helped him.

Scatology

Scatological terms refer to human waste products and processes. Such terms are among the early words that children hear and use when they are toilet trained. Americans have a great penchant for coining childish terms rather than using standardized terms or those of scientific origin.

Data 1

You are sicker fucks than I thought. Here, you. Sign there. Wait, what is this? This is... Hold on a second. You guys got my license back? Come on! I'll let her explain. Enjoy your honeymoon, shitheads. (01:31:08)

Bobby O'Neill says "Enjoy your honeymoon, shitheads" Bobby utters this line sarcastically to Michael, Darius, and Sonya at the end of the film. The word "shitheads" is categorized as a taboo insult, used to express frustration, annoyance, or contempt toward someone. The term "shit" originates from scatological references, which involve bodily waste and are often considered vulgar or offensive. Scatology, as a form of taboo language, is commonly used to mock, insult, or degrade others by associating them with something dirty or undesirable. While scatological terms are often learned in childhood as a means of insult, adults continue to use them in a more exaggerated or comedic manner. In this case, Bobby's use of "shitheads" serves multiple functions. First, it is a sarcastic remark, mocking the idea of Michael, Darius, and Sonya peacefully enjoying their honeymoon despite the chaos they've caused. Second, it expresses Bobby's frustration, as he has been dealing with their reckless behavior. Lastly, it maintains the comedic tone of the film, using humor to soften the insult and make the scene entertaining.

4. Conclusion

Discerned from the research analysis, the total of data in this research is twelve form the taboo words in term of the types and functions of taboo words. In the analysis The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard movie, which the types and functions has other characteristic. Each classification has differences because each types and functions has differences in characteristic depending on how to convey it. In the result of analysis, the types of taboo words based on the theory point of view, there are nine types of taboo words but, there only eight types of taboo words found in The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard movie analysis such as cursing, profanity, obscenity, vulgarity, slang, epithets, insult and slur, and scatology. Furthermore, the result of analysis the function of taboo words based on the theory point of view, there are six function of taboo words found in The Hitman's Wife's Bodyguard movie such as to express emotion, to relieve pain, to establish social bonding, to add emphasis and persuasion, to insult and offend, and to challenge authority and social norms.

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