

## AN ANALYSIS OF SPEECH ACTS BY HYPNOTHERAPISTS IN TREATING CLIENT WITH PHOBIA

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### Abstract

This study aims to examine the types and functions of speech acts utilized by hypnotherapists during communication with clients who suffer from phobias. The data was obtained from a hypnotherapist's speech events during a therapy session with a 30-year-old client afflicted with caterpillar phobia. The method used in this research was observation and note-taking, wherein the hypnotherapist's conversation during the therapy session was analyzed. The results of this study reveal that directive speech acts utilized by the hypnotherapist play a crucial role in the hypnotherapy process, from induction, deepening, to termination, to help the client eliminate their phobia through instructions. Furthermore, the hypnotherapist also employs assertive speech acts to convince the client that every time they encounter a caterpillar, they will feel safe and secure. In addition, expressive speech acts such as praising the client when they successfully concentrate on the therapy are used by the hypnotherapist. It should be noted that the use of speech acts in hypnotherapy should be carefully performed and adjusted to the client's mental condition to be effective, and should only be conducted by professionals.

### INTRODUCTION

Hypnotherapy has become increasingly popular as an alternative therapy technique in the treatment of phobias. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), a phobia is an intense and excessive fear or anxiety about a specific object, situation, or circumstance that is actually harmless or not dangerous. Phobias often can affect a person's daily life and can limit their activities and freedom. Phobias can be very disruptive and have a significant impact on a person's quality of life. Therefore, many people with phobias seek the help of a hypnotherapist to overcome their fears.

Many mental health experts also recommend hypnotherapy as an additional or alternative form of therapy to overcome phobias (Sucipto et al., 2019). This is because hypnotherapy allows a person to access their subconscious mind and work with underlying feelings and beliefs to overcome their phobia. In a hypnotherapy session, the client will be guided by a licensed therapist to achieve a trance or suggestive state. This is where a person will feel calm and focused, allowing them to access memories or traumas related to their phobia and delve into the root of the problem (Fauzi & Arini, 2021)

In conducting hypnotherapy, the hypnotherapist uses language as the medium for treatment. Language is one of the key elements in hypnotherapy because through language, the hypnotherapist can help clients gain a deeper understanding of their issues, change negative and unhealthy beliefs, and help clients access their subconscious awareness. Language can also be used to build an emotional connection with clients and help them feel safe and protected

during the hypnosis therapy process. (Lynn & Green, 2011) Based on the fact that language is systemic, it is believed that hypnotherapy methods are systemic and related to the language system which serves as a medium that allows several language techniques to receive suggestions (Damayanti, 2014). Pragmatics is one of the domains in linguistics that can be used to understand the language system used in hypnosis communication, especially in speech act studies because the use of language in hypnosis communication is closely related to its effect on the speech partner (Winarno, 2017).

The speech act of a hypnotherapist is a crucial element in the success of hypnotherapy for phobias. Through carefully designed suggestions and guided visualizations, a hypnotherapist can help clients access their subconscious mind and change their beliefs and thought patterns about their phobia. This process can ultimately lead to a significant improvement in the client's ability to manage and overcome their fears.

Speech act in hypnotherapy refers to the words, expressions, or other actions used by a hypnotherapist to influence the client during a hypnotherapy session. The theory of speech acts in hypnotherapy includes concepts such as suggestion, hypnosis, visualization, and reframing of client beliefs. Hypnotherapists use speech acts to create a safe and open environment for clients, as well as to help clients achieve a relaxed state that allows them to strengthen positive beliefs and overcome their fears.

Speech act theory in hypnotherapy is concerned with how the words and language used by a hypnotherapist can influence a client's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This theory highlights the importance of suggestion in hypnotherapy, as the therapist uses language to suggest certain ideas or beliefs to the client, such as visualizing a peaceful scene or reframing negative beliefs. The use of hypnosis can also be considered a speech act, as it involves the therapist using language to induce a trance state in the client.

In addition to suggestion and hypnosis, speech acts in hypnotherapy can involve visualization, where the therapist guides the client to imagine positive scenarios that help them overcome their fears. Reframing client beliefs is another important aspect of speech acts in hypnotherapy, where the therapist helps the client change their negative beliefs and thought patterns to more positive and constructive ones.

By using speech acts in hypnotherapy, therapists can create a safe and open environment for clients to share their fears and feelings. The therapist can also use language to help clients achieve a relaxed state, which allows them to access deeper parts of their minds and strengthen positive beliefs. Overall, the theory of speech acts in hypnotherapy highlights the importance of language and communication in the hypnotherapy process, and can help therapists understand how to effectively communicate with their clients to help them overcome their fears and phobias.

When utilized appropriately, speech acts play a crucial role in helping clients overcome their fears and phobias more effectively than other forms of therapy in hypnotherapy. However, it is imperative for hypnotherapists to undergo professional training and adhere to strict ethical standards to ensure that their speech acts do not cause any harm or violate professional

boundaries. Therefore, analyzing the speech acts of hypnotherapists from a pragmatic perspective when treating clients with phobias can prove beneficial for both therapists and researchers who are interested in studying speech acts in hypnotherapy. This approach can provide valuable insights into the types and functions of speech acts used by hypnotherapists, and can also help in identifying effective speech acts that can facilitate the therapeutic process and lead to positive outcomes for clients.

Based on the background information provided, the writer proposes the following research question and objectives:

**Research Question:**

What are the types and functions of speech acts used by hypnotherapists in treating clients with phobias?

**Objectives:**

1. To identify the types of speech acts used by hypnotherapists in treating clients with phobias.
2. To explore the relationship between speech acts and successful outcomes in hypnotherapy for clients with phobias.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

**1. Pragmatic**

According to George Yule in his book "Pragmatics" (1996), pragmatics is "the study of meaning in context". It is concerned with how language is used in social situations, and how the context in which language is used affects the interpretation of meaning. Mey (2001) said that pragmatics is the study of language from the standpoint of users, especially the way language is used in context. It concerns with the study of the relationship between the meaning of linguistic expressions and the context in which they are used. Pragmatics emphasizes the importance of studying how people use language to communicate meaning in context and how context affects the interpretation of language. It also explores the ways in which language users make meaning beyond the literal meanings of words, through implicature, presupposition, and inference. Overall, pragmatics seeks to understand the use of language in social interactions and how language is shaped by and shapes social context.

**2. Speech Act**

Austin (1962) defines a speech act as an utterance that performs an action in the world. According to Austin, there are three aspects to a speech act: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary. The locutionary aspect refers to the literal meaning of the words used in the utterance, the illocutionary aspect refers to the intended meaning or purpose of the utterance, and the perlocutionary aspect refers to the effect that the utterance has on the listener. Austin's theory of speech acts is based on the idea that language is not just a system of signs, but also a means of performing actions and achieving goals. Ibrahim (1993) defines speech act as "an act

of communication that involves the use of language to perform a particular function, such as requesting, commanding, questioning, promising, warning, apologizing, and so on."

According to Yule (1996), a speech act is "an utterance that serves a function in communication." It is an act performed through the use of language, such as making a request, giving an order, or making a promise.

Sumarsono (2007) defines a speech act as a communicative act that a speaker performs by uttering an expression in a certain context, with the intention of conveying a certain meaning or effect on the listener. The speaker's intention in performing a speech act can range from simply providing information to persuading or commanding the listener to take a certain action. In this sense, speech acts are more than just a way of conveying information; they are also a way of influencing social behavior and relationships.

### 3. Types of Speech Act

Austin (1962), a philosopher of language, proposed three main types of speech acts:

- a. Locutionary act: This refers to the act of saying something with a certain meaning and grammatical structure. For example, if someone says "It's hot outside," the locutionary act is the act of producing a sentence with a specific meaning.
- b. Illocutionary act: This refers to the intended function or effect of the utterance, which can be indirect or explicit. For example, if someone says "Could you close the window?" the illocutionary act is to make a request.
- c. Perlocutionary act: This refers to the actual effect the utterance has on the listener or interlocutor. For example, if someone says "I'm sorry," the perlocutionary act may be to make the listener feel better or to acknowledge responsibility for something.

Austin's theory emphasizes that language is not only used to describe or represent the world, but also to do things in the world through speech acts. Understanding the different types of speech acts is important for understanding how language is used to communicate effectively.

According to George Yule (1996) the locutionary act is the basic act of producing an utterance with a specific meaning and grammatical structure. The locutionary act involves the production of a series of sounds or written symbols that are combined according to the rules of language to convey meaning.

In Yule's theory of speech acts, the locutionary act is the first of three related acts that make up a complete speech act, with the other two being illocutionary and perlocutionary acts. The locutionary act can be seen as the "literal meaning" of the utterance, and it is necessary for understanding the illocutionary and perlocutionary acts that follow.

For example, if someone says "The cat is on the mat," the locutionary act is the production of this sentence with a specific meaning and grammatical structure. Understanding this locutionary act is necessary for interpreting the illocutionary act, which could be to inform someone of the cat's location, to ask someone to move the cat, or to make a joke, depending on the context and the speaker's intentions.

The illocutionary act is the intended function or effect of an utterance, which can be indirect or explicit. In Yule's theory of speech acts, the illocutionary act is the second of three related acts that make up a complete speech act, with the other two being locutionary and perlocutionary acts.

The illocutionary act is the primary focus of many types of speech acts, as it is the intended function or purpose of the utterance. It can be used to perform a wide range of functions, such as making a request, giving an order, asking a question, expressing an opinion, making a promise, or issuing a warning, among others. For example, if someone says "Could you pass me the salt?" the illocutionary act is to make a request. However, the illocutionary act can also be indirect, as in the case of sarcasm or irony, where the intended function may be to express the opposite of the literal meaning of the words. The illocutionary act is important for interpreting the meaning and intention behind an utterance and for understanding how language is used to communicate effectively.

The perlocutionary act is the actual effect or impact of an utterance on the listener or interlocutor. In Yule's theory of speech acts, the perlocutionary act is the third of three related acts that make up a complete speech act, with the other two being locutionary and illocutionary acts. The perlocutionary act can vary depending on the context, the listener's interpretation, and the speaker's intentions. For example, if someone says "I'm sorry," the perlocutionary act may be to make the listener feel better or to acknowledge responsibility for something. However, the perlocutionary act may also fail if the listener does not believe the speaker's apology.

The perlocutionary act is often closely related to the illocutionary act, as the intended function or effect of the utterance can influence its actual impact on the listener. Understanding the perlocutionary act is important for understanding the communicative effectiveness of an utterance and for evaluating the success of a speech act.

#### **4. Classification of Illocutionary Act**

John Searle (1969) proposed a classification of illocutionary acts based on their functions and effects. According to Searle, there are five main types of illocutionary acts:

- a. **Assertives:** These illocutionary acts are used to make statements or express beliefs about the world, such as asserting, stating, or claiming something. For example, "The sun is shining."
- b. **Directives:** These illocutionary acts are used to influence the actions of the listener, such as giving orders, requests, or suggestions. For example, "Please pass the salt."
- c. **Commissives:** These illocutionary acts commit the speaker to a future course of action, such as promising, vowing, or guaranteeing. For example, "I promise to be on time."
- d. **Expressives:** These illocutionary acts express the speaker's psychological state, such as thanking, apologizing, or congratulating. For example, "I'm sorry for being late."
- e. **Declaratives:** These illocutionary acts change the world by means of the utterance, such as marrying, firing, or naming someone or something. For example, "I now pronounce you husband and wife."

Overall, understanding the different types of illocutionary acts is important for understanding how language is used to perform different functions and achieve different effects in social interactions.

## 5. Functions of Speech Act

According to Searle (1969) speech acts have different functions or purposes in communication. In his theory of speech acts, Searle identifies five main functions of speech acts:

*Representatives:* These speech acts are used to make statements that can be either true or false. Examples include asserting, claiming, describing, and stating.

*Directives:* These speech acts are used to get the listener to do something. Examples include ordering, requesting, suggesting, and advising.

*Commissives:* These speech acts are used to commit the speaker to a course of action. Examples include promising, guaranteeing, and vowing.

*Expressives:* These speech acts are used to express the speaker's psychological state or attitude. Examples include thanking, apologizing, congratulating, and welcoming.

*Declarations:* These speech acts are used to change the world by means of the utterance. Examples include declaring, naming, marrying, and firing.

Overall, understanding the functions of speech acts is important for understanding how language is used to achieve different effects and purposes in social interactions, and how speakers can use different types of speech acts to achieve their goals.

## 6. Hypnotherapy

Hypnotherapy is a form of therapy that uses hypnosis to induce a trance-like state in which the patient is more receptive to suggestion and can access the subconscious mind to facilitate healing or change. The therapist guides the patient into a state of deep relaxation and then uses various techniques to help the patient make positive changes in their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Hypnotherapy is used to treat a variety of conditions, including anxiety, depression, phobias, addiction, and chronic pain. American Psychological Association (2015) defines hypnotherapy as the use of hypnosis in psychological treatment, either in brief psychotherapy directed toward alleviation of symptoms and modification of behavior patterns or in long-term reconstructive psychotherapy aimed at personality adaptation or change. Hypnotherapy may use one or a combination of techniques, typically involving the administration by a properly trained professional of therapeutic suggestions to patients or clients who have been previously exposed to hypnotic induction. Although discussions of its clinical applications engender controversy, there is scientific evidence that hypnotherapy can be applied with some success to a wide range of health problems (e.g., hypertension, asthma, insomnia, bruxism), chronic and acute pain management, habit modification (e.g., overeating, smoking), mood and anxiety disorders (e.g., some phobias), and personality disorders. There is also some positive evidence demonstrating its effectiveness as an adjunctive therapy. Also called clinical hypnosis. Hypnotherapy is the use of hypnosis to help patients overcome



psychological and physical problems, such as anxiety, depression, pain, and addiction. Hypnosis is a trance-like state of consciousness in which the patient is highly relaxed and focused, and is more open to suggestion and guided imagery. The therapist uses this state to help the patient access and work through their subconscious mind, promoting healing, change, and personal growth (Elkins, 2018)

## 7. Phobia

According to American Psychological Association (2019) defines a phobia is an intense and persistent fear of a specific object, situation, or activity that is out of proportion to the actual danger posed by the stimulus. Phobias can be classified as specific or social, and can significantly impair an individual's daily functioning, as they may go to great lengths to avoid the feared stimulus. A phobia is an irrational, intense, and persistent fear of a specific object or situation that leads to marked distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning. Phobias can develop from a variety of factors, including genetic, environmental, and learned influences, and are associated with hyper activation of the amygdala and other brain regions involved in fear processing

## METHODS

The research methods for are as follow:

- Literature review: A thorough review of relevant literature on speech acts, hypnotherapy, and phobias could provide a foundation for the study, help identify research gaps, and inform the research design.
- Participant recruitment: Participant was recruited from hypnotherapy or practitioner who has experience in treating clients with phobias. The participant was a 30-year-old woman who usually helps her family work in a cornfield often encounters caterpillars that sometimes make her faint. Therefore she needed a therapy to eliminate her phobia of caterpillars.
- Data collection: data were collected through audio or video recordings of hypnotherapy sessions. The recordings were transcribed and analyzed for finding the types and the functions of speech acts used by the Hypnotherapist.
- Data analysis: The speech acts identified in the data was analyzed qualitatively to identify types and function and to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of different types of speech acts in treating phobias.
- Ethical considerations: Ethical considerations should be taken into account throughout the research process, including confidentiality, informed consent, and ensuring that the research does not cause harm to participants.
- Limitations: Limitations of the study should also be considered, such as the potential for observer bias, the small sample size, and the generalizability of the findings.

Quantitative research methods was used to analyze speech acts by hypnotherapists in treating clients with phobias, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of hypnotherapy interventions.

## FINDING

- (1) Hypnotherapist : *"Apa warna favorit ta?"*  
 Client : *"Kuning"*  
 Hypnotherapist : *"Baik saya akan hitung lima sampai satu dan di setiap hitungan membuat kita jadi fokus dari sekelilingnya karena kita akan menghilangkan ketakutan terhadap ulat bulu."*
- (1) Hypnotherapist : *"What's your favorite color?"*  
 Client : *"Yellow"*  
 Hypnotherapist : *"Alright, I will count from five to one and with each count, we will focus on our surroundings because we will eliminate fear of caterpillars."*

Based on Searle's classification of illocutionary speech acts, there are several types of speech acts present in the data (1):

### *Directive Speech Act*

The illocutionary speech act used by the Hypnotherapist in the first sentence is an assertive speech act that functions to request information about the client's favorite color.

The Hypnotherapist in data (1) also uses a directive illocutionary speech act by giving instructions or commands to the client. This is evident from the hypnotherapist's sentence that asks the client to focus and eliminate fear of caterpillars.

- (2) Hypnotherapist : *"Kalau sudah fokus, bagus. Sekarang dalam hitungan satu sampai tiga, munculkan bayangan ulat bulu. satu.. dua.. tiga.. munculkan warnanya dengan jelas, rasanya dengan jelas dan entah mengapa mulai ada di tangan anda."*  
 Client : *(badannya bergetar sangat ketakutan)*
- (2) Hypnotherapist : *"If you're focused, great. Now, in the count of one to three, bring up the image of the caterpillar. One.. two.. Three.. Vividly bring up its color and texture and for some reason it's now in your hands."*  
 Client : *(trembling in fear)*
- (3) Hypnotherapist : *"Tarik napas yang dalam. Hembuskan.. Belajar kontrol dirinya. Sekarang kita mulai. Sekarang bayangkan ulat bulu tersebut perlahan-lahan berubah menjadi warna kuning, perhatikan baik-*



*baik mulai dari ekornya, badannya, sampai kepalanya berubah menjadi warna kuning. Dan sekarang dia punya kaki ada sepuluh. Bayangkan saja. Kita akan pasangkan kaos kaki yang juga berwarna kuning di kakinya satu per satu. ....”*

- Client : (tersenyum senang)
- (3) Hypnotherapist : "Take a deep breath. Exhale. Learn to control yourself. Now, let's begin. Imagine the caterpillar slowly turning into yellow. Observe carefully as its tail, body, and head change into yellow. And now it has ten legs. Just imagine. We will put yellow socks on each of its legs. ..."
- Client : (smiling happily)
- (4) Hypnotherapist : Mulai sekarang dan seterusnya setiap melihat ulat bulu, memegang ulat bulu, bahkan sekedar melihat gambarnya saja semuanya dalam pikiran ta berubah menjadi warna kuning dan akan baik-baik saja aman-aman saja bahkan membuat kita gemas karena sangat lucu sekali. Bahkan di wajahnya ulat bulu tersebut saya tambahkan pita-pita warnanya pink sehingga semakin lucu dan semakin menggemaskan. **Mulai sekarang dan seterusnya kalau lihat ulat bulu semakin lucu dan sangat-sangat menggemaskan”**
- (4) Hypnotherapist : "From now on, every time you see a caterpillar, touch it, or even just see its picture, in your mind, it will turn into yellow and be perfectly fine and even make us feel fond of it because it's very cute. I even added ribbons of pink colors to its face, making it even cuter and more adorable. **From now on, whenever you see a caterpillar, it will be cuter and more adorable than ever."**

### ***Expressive Speech Act***

In (2), the hypnotherapist used an expressive speech act, which is used to express the speaker's feelings or emotions. The hypnotherapist praised the success of their client's focus during therapy by saying "If you're already focused, great".

### ***Directive Speech Act***

Data (2) and (3) show that the hypnotherapist used directive speech acts to ask the client to visualize the caterpillar as instructed, imagining it turning yellow from its tail, body, to head, having ten legs, and wearing yellow socks.

### ***Assertive Speech Act***

Data (4) shows that according to Searle's classification of illocutionary speech acts, the hypnotherapist's statement falls under assertive speech acts. This speech act is an effort to state the truth of something using precise and factual sentences. In this statement, the hypnotherapist

tries to convince their client that caterpillars are not dangerous, but cute and adorable, by manipulating their client's mind. This is the suggestion for the client to overcome their phobia.

In assertive speech acts, Searle (1969) states that there are three essential elements: illocutionary proposition, linguistic proposition, and factual proposition. In the hypnotherapist's statement, the illocutionary proposition is to change the client's perception of caterpillars from being scary to cute and adorable, the linguistic proposition is "Mulai sekarang dan seterusnya setiap melihat ulat bulu, memegang ulat bulu, bahkan sekedar melihat gambarnya saja semuanya dalam pikiran ta berubah menjadi warna kuning dan akan baik-baik saja aman-aman saja bahkan membuat kita gemas karena sangat lucu sekali" (From now on, every time you see, touch, or even just see a picture of a caterpillar, it will turn yellow in your mind, and it will be harmless and cute, even making you feel affectionate), and the factual proposition is that caterpillars are not dangerous but cute and adorable.

Using hypnotherapy techniques, the hypnotherapist aims to change their client's perception and belief about caterpillars from scary to cute and adorable. In this case, the hypnotherapist used assertive illocutionary speech acts to express their conviction and directive illocutionary speech acts to give instructions to their client. In the context of hypnotherapy, such speech acts can help clients change their beliefs and behaviors related to the problem they are facing. By using persuasive and suggestive language, the hypnotherapist can help clients reach their subconscious level of awareness and improve their problems.

- (5) Hypnotherapist : "Saya akan bantuk untuk membuka mata dalam hitungan satu sampai lima dalam keadaan bahagia. Satu.. dua.. tiga.. empat.. siapkan dirinya untuk membuka mata. Dan lima silahkan buka matanya"
- (5) Hypnotherapist : "I will help you open your eyes in a happy state within one to five counts. One.. Two.. Three.. Four. Prepare yourself to open your eyes. And five, please open your eyes."

### ***Directive Speech Act***

In the termination phase, according to Searle's classification of speech acts, the hypnotherapist's statement in (5) belongs to the directive speech act. This speech act is an attempt to command or instruct someone to do something. In this statement, the hypnotherapist instructs the client to open their eyes in a happy state within one to five counts. In directive speech act, Searle (1976) states that there are three important elements: illocutionary act, illocutionary force, and performative conditions. *In the hypnotherapist's statement, the illocutionary act is commanding the client to open their eyes in a happy state, the illocutionary force is to assist the client in the hypnotherapy process, and the performative conditions are that the client must be ready and able to open their eyes within one to five counts.* Upon undergoing hypnotherapy, the aforementioned client displayed a positive change in her response to caterpillars. When exposed to a picture of a caterpillar once again, she merely smiled in contrast to her previously severe reaction. Subsequently, the hypnotherapist who provided the treatment received information indicating that the client perceived a reduction of 90% in her phobia, which enabled her to work in the garden without experiencing distressing thoughts of caterpillars.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, the author concludes that directive speech acts used by hypnotherapist play an important role in the hypnotherapy process, from the induction, deepening, to termination stages to help clients overcome their phobias through instructions given to them. The importance of directive speech acts in this therapy was also found by Crawford, Kneebone II, & Schubert (2017) that directive speech acts can help improve therapy effectiveness.

Therapists use directive speech acts to provide guidance or directions to clients to take certain actions, such as changing negative behaviors or thoughts (Apodaca, et al, 2016). The results of the study show that therapists who use directive speech acts in therapy have better outcomes in reducing mental disorder symptoms and improving client well-being (Fourie, 2009). In addition, directive speech acts can also help speed up the therapy process and reduce the number of therapy sessions required.

In addition to directive speech acts, assertive speech acts were also found in this study used by hypnotherapist when treating client with phobia. Assertive speech acts are used to convince clients that every time they see a caterpillar, they will feel safe and okay. This is the hypnotic suggestion for the client to change her perception of caterpillars from something unpleasant to something cute and adorable.

According to Dabrowski, Pilecki, and Zalewska (2019), hypnotic suggestions can be an effective tool to reduce anxiety and fear in patients undergoing dental treatment. In this case, dental therapists can use hypnotic suggestions as part of their therapeutic approach to enhance the patient's experience during dental treatment. Moreover, Gopalan et al. (2010) found that assertive speech acts can help improve client mental well-being in therapy. Therapists use assertive speech acts to help clients express their needs and desires clearly and firmly without violating the rights of others (Labinaz & Sbisá, 2014). The results of their research also show that therapists who teach clients to use assertive speech acts in social interactions can help improve confidence, reduce anxiety levels, and improve interpersonal relationships.

Although speech acts play an important role in hypnotherapy, therapy should only be performed by professionals who are careful and tailor the therapy to the client's mental condition to effectively help them overcome their issues.

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