Book reviews

Cliff Goddard, ed. 2006. **Review of Ethnopragmatics: Understanding discourse in cultural context**. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

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With this book, Cliff Goddard has overseen the production of a new milestone in the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) approach to meaning (cf. Goddard & Wierzbicka 1994, 2002; Wierzbicka 1972, 1980, 1996). Here we are given seven original studies of culture-specific norms of interaction in a range of languages and cultures: Anna Wierzbicka on Anglo norms against ''putting pressure'' on others, Cliff Goddard on Australian English irony, Jock Onn Wong on Singapore English values of hierarchy in social structure, Zhengdao Ye on Chinese norms and semantics of emotion and facial expression, Rie Hasada on Japanese norms for the display of emotions, Catherine Travis on Colombian Spanish values of ''trust'' and ''human warmth,'' and Felix Ameka on West African norms for the expression of gratitude. The empirical chapters follow a unitary format, making this volume not a mere collection of papers but a multi-authored report on a major collaborative project. The contributions are theoretically and methodologically uncompromising in their adherence to NSM tradition. Each chapter offers an analysis of a cultural pragmatic principle in a given language-culture, supported with evidence from popular culture, literature, and other sources. Alongside the descriptive notes, each chapter proposes formal statements of these culture-specific pragmatic norms, phrased as NSM explications called cultural scripts (see Goddard's introduction for background; for use of the notion of scripts elsewhere, see for example Fiske & Taylor 1991; Halpern 1994, 1997; Schank & Abelson 1977). The approach is unique in research on pragmatics and culture—nowhere else do we find these kinds of explicit statements of cultural values in a descriptive metalanguage whose degree

of formalism rivals that of predicate calculus, and whose units are as close to directly expressible in (any) natural language as we can get.

The empirical contributions of the book add to a long prior tradition of descriptive and analytical work on culture-specific metapragmatic principles which can be seen to account for cultural variation in speech practice (Bauman & Sherzer 1974; Duranti 2001, 2004; Gumperz 1982; Gumperz & Hymes [1972]1986). The difference is the use of a standard formal reductive paraphrase in an effort to describe pragmatic differences while steering clear of the evils of ''terminological ethnocentrism.'' The theoretical stance is most explicitly stated in Goddard's introduction and in the introductory sections of Wierzbicka's chapter. These authors come out swinging in an attack on ''Universalist Pragmatics,'' personified (or should we say demonified) by the triumvirate of Gricean Pragmatics (Grice 1975), Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson 1978) and Cross-Cultural Pragmatics (Blum-Kulka et al 1989). Goddard and Wierzbicka's critical contentions are important for current pragmatics, and deserve to be heard. But the confrontational style risks contaminating good arguments with surprisingly prejudicial language (cf. Goddard 1998: 139ff). Goddard's introduction pits the ''new paradigm'' of Ethnopragmatics against a dominant axis of evil, whose perpetration of ''deadly sins'' must be stamped out.

Understanding the formalism and its claim to an insider's perspective

As is made explicit in NSM theoretical work (e.g., Goddard & Wierzbicka 2002; Wierzbicka 1972), the NSM is not natural language, but is ''carved out of'' natural language.[1] Those unfamiliar with the NSM methodology may be tempted to view the explications as regular language. But they are not. This stance seems to underlie critiques of the kind made by Lucy (2003) that NSM explications risk introducing an Anglo ''semantic accent.'' But in truth the NSM system has a weird accent no matter what the host language is. This is not a criticism, but a fact about any reductive or other periphrastic formalism. Such formalisms are always a step (or more) away from our most immediate mode of understanding. As Lyons (1977: 12) wrote, ''any formalism is parasitic upon the ordinary everyday use of language in that it must be understood, intuitively, on the basis of ordinary language.'' The goal of the NSM system is to embrace this, and work with it by aiming for the shortest path possible from formal language to ordinary language. (This proximity to natural language is paradoxically what some researchers find jarring, against a cultural preference for maximally technical phrasing.)

It is not as widely appreciated as it should be that the NSM is a formal system of representation. This is possibly in part due to NSM scholars' own insistence that the system gives "an insider perspective," a claim stated repeatedly in this book. Do the cultural scripts literally provide an insider's perspective? Well, not exactly. An insider's perspective uses insiders' terms. So, *putting pressure on someone* directly represents an insider's perspective, since the native English term directly labels a culture-specific metapragmatic idea, and does so in the metalanguage that insiders use. A propositionally correct formal decomposition of its meaning (see Wierzbicka's chapter) gives access to this insider's perspective, but does not represent it directly. Nor could it. Assuming that the explication represents the right semantic content, it represents it in different terms from those insider cases, and this alone is enough to break the insider's spell. Again, this is not a critique of the method—there is simply no solution to this problem. And anyway, it is not a significant obstacle for the claims being made in this Ethnopragmatics paradigm. It is just that we may want to replace "intertranslatable" with "maximally intertranslatable." After all, no formal decomposition of English will really be English, since that is not how English speakers speak—and it makes no sense to fault the NSM for this. It is equally "not really Japanese" when phrased using Japanese lexico-syntax, and "not really Spanish" when phrased using Spanish lexico-syntax. In this regard it is still superior to other available reductive paraphrase formalisms (e.g., Jackendoff 1983), the advantage being that natural languages provide the units for direct translation at the primitive level, i.e., the level at which the explications are phrased. The entire rationale for the method as presented in this book is that insiders' terms like *putting pressure on someone* or *complaining* are not directly translatable across languages, but that their formal decompositions *are* directly translatable, because the units for translation are the simplest semantically possible, and are universal (or maximally so). It is on this basis that Goddard attacks the tradition of Cross-Cultural Pragmatics (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper 1989; Kasper & Blum-Kulka 1993) for presuming the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic applicability of such notions such as requesting, offering, or complaining.[2] So, the formal explications offered in the book do not literally supply insiders' perspectives, but rather give us semantic explications of what insiders' metapragmatic terms mean. For many researchers, this difference is significant.

The attack on "Universalist Pragmatics"

As noted above, Goddard frames the volume as an assault on what he calls "Universalist Pragmatics." This should not be seen as a

contradiction given the otherwise staunchly universalist stance of the NSM approach. The claims are clear: first, the fundamental elements of semantic structure are universal, although they number very few; second, the claim to universality of semantic primes (underlying linguistic semantic structure) is not a claim to universality in principles of speech practice. The putative semantic universals constituting the NSM system employed in this book consist of some 60 primes and a finite set of combinatory principles for constructing complex expressions (Goddard & Wierzbicka 2002).[3] The claim made by Ethnopragmatics is that norms of speech practice can and should be articulated in these simplest terms. So far so good, but it does not follow from this that we must banish from our model of pragmatics the kinds of inferential processes assumed by Grice's model and its descendents. A full model of pragmatic interpretation needs to presume (1) conventional symbolic code (word and construction types of a language), (2) value-laden interpretative background norms for speech practice ("cultural scripts"), and (3) inferential processes for arriving at token understandings of instances of (1) against a common background of (2). This book offers case analyses of (1) and (2), and does not address (3).

In his attack on Gricean principles as a species of "Universalist Pragmatics," Goddard risks rhetorical error in taking a poor or defective application of the idea (albeit one supplied in the original formulation) to stand for the idea itself (cf. Goddard 1998: 141ff). Wierzbicka (1987) was more careful in her important attack on a stock example in Gricean pragmatics, the understanding of "tautologies" like "business is business." She was discrediting a bad case analysis, not the essential logic of amplicative inference (Levinson 2000). In critiquing Grice's claim that tautologies are literally uninformative, only deriving their meaning by implicatures which arise from flouting of the maxim of quantity or some equivalent, Wierzbicka wrote: "I am not arguing against the validity, or the significance, of language-independent pragmatic maxims, such as those posited by Grice. I am arguing only against the use to which such maxims have been put" (1987: 96). So, let's toss out the bathwater but make sure we hold on to the baby. The culture-specific norms of speech practice explicated in this book constitute heuristics for interpretation applied to instances of usage of code in context. This is how, for instance, departures from the norms are attributed meaning (whether or not such attributions have been foreseen or invited). Otherwise, how are we to explain the interactional awkwardness and the (no doubt negative) attributions which will be made when a self-respecting Anglo Australian fails to recognize that a deadpan statement was in fact intended ironically? We need the cultural scripts explicated in Goddard's descriptive chapter, but

we can't do without the additional inferential operations which generate enriched interpretations where required.

It remains implicit in Goddard's overview that we can expect nothing to be universal in norms of speech practice across human groups. But I doubt this is really intended. Wierzbicka states in her chapter, as she has done elsewhere, that "there is nothing wrong with searching for generalizations about human communicative behavior" (33)—it's just that we mustn't take culture-specific norms to be true for human groups generally. The warning is repeatedly stated in this book, as in much previous work in the tradition (see the extensive references in Goddard's introduction). But we are left then with no sense of how an Ethnopragmatic approach might link into such a search for generalizations. Are there no constraints on variation? What is the relation between culture-specific pragmatic principles and universal ones? Why *shouldn't* there be a master plan for human communication? After all, we are one species, with a shared evolutionary heritage. A key puzzle in anthropology is to reconcile this phylogenetic unity with dramatic historical variation in cultural and linguistic structure. Any version of pragmatics will want to contribute to this debate. What sorts of human imperatives might be recurrently captured in cultural scripts? Just to consider one possibility, take Travis's explication of "trust" in Columbian Spanish: the script incorporates a distinction between those whom "I know very well" (203), and those I don't. This could link to arguments by biologists of behavior such as Hill and Dunbar (2003) who propose generic social distinctions in nested "layers" of social structure, marking off decreasing degrees of "proximity" (cf. also Hinde 1997; Enfield 2006; Pomerantz & Mandelbaum 2005). How often are these ideas incorporated in cultural scripts? If the answer is "often," could we pursue distinctions of this kind in looking for universal principles in cultural scripts for pragmatic interpretation? The NSM method could usefully be applied to sharpening and testing such proposals. This and the other questions in this paragraph ought to be on the agenda for future work in Ethnopragmatics.

Conclusion

To summarize, this book promotes the view—uncontroversial to anyone with an inkling of ethnographic diversity—that background norms for pragmatic interpretation are complex and culture-specific. In addition, it proposes that these complex and culture-specific norms can be analyzed and explicitly stated, in maximally comparable terms, by the use of a reductive semantic representation. Cultural norms and presuppositions are

explicated, which is a significant contribution, yet inferential processes typically taken to be central to the pragmatics of human interaction are unaddressed. A ''semantically grounded'' approach to a domain normally regarded as non-semantic by definition is in danger of delivering ''pragmatics without pragmatics.'' But to call it this would be unfair, since I cannot imagine that proponents of the model would want to deny that participants in interaction can (and do) actively enrich the interpretation of token utterances against normative backgrounds. Only Ameka's chapter makes this explicit—Ameka insists on a distinction between ''illocutionary semantic description'' and ''cultural rules of interpretation,'' concluding that we need to understand the interplay between the two in online pragmatic interpretation. Ameka points out that cultural scripts are ''part of the interpretative frame of utterances,'' where (mentally) ''stored meanings undergo various interpretative processes'' (259). This is the interplay that neo-Griceans are trying to capture when they say that interpreters take what is merely ''said'' (i.e., literally encoded) and enrich it in making a fuller token understanding of an utterance (what is ''meant;'' i.e., intended to be conveyed). Rather than addressing this part of the pragmatic process, the book concentrates on another dimension of situated speech practice: the substance of local background presuppositions which feed into these kinds of processes of interpretation. How these complex, culture-specific normative presuppositions play a role in the process of interpretation in interaction is a question for ongoing research, ideally within an integrative, interdisciplinary approach to cross-cultural pragmatics.

Notes

1. I.e., as ''English'' in this case, since the explications are phrased in English in this book. The appendix to Travis's chapter shows the explications in their Colombian Spanish versions, demonstrating that the formal explications are directly cross-translatable (cf. Goddard &Wierzbicka 2002).
2. Goddard would no doubt level the same criticism at Conversation Analysis (cf. Atkinson & Heritage 1984; Schegloff 1968, 2006), but that tradition of research on social interaction is not cited or discussed.
3. While NSM researchers regard the set to be universal, or near-universal, it is taken to constitute only a tiny fraction of any language's expressive resources, allowing for dramatic variation in semantic structure at more complex levels.

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Dmitrij Dobrovol'skij and Elisabeth Piirainen. 2005. **Figurative Language. Cross-cultural and Cross-linguistic Perspectives**: *Current Research in the Semantics/Pragmatics Interface* 13. Elsevier. 419 pp.

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The breadth of the book under review is remarkable. Divided into a preface, an introductory chapter, fourteen chapters, and a closing section listing the figurative expressions studied in the book, it covers the whole gamut of themes that permeate the authors' mature theorizing on conventional figurative language. A summary of the contents of this book and of its theoretical and practical implications would not do justice to the wide range of topics covered by Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen. Therefore I will limit my discussion to outlining the structure of the book as well as to discussing some of its most outstanding implications for the study of language.

The introduction and chapter one, which provide an overview of technical terms and issues that are central to the analysis of figurative language, lay the foundations for the development of the so-called Conventional Figurative Language Theory. The theory is put forward as an alternative framework for the study of figurative language. The introductory chapters highlight two aspects that merit special attention. First, the results of the analysis provided by the book are based on large-scale empirical work. The authors set themselves the extremely complicated but praiseworthy task of drawing their data from ten standard languages (English, German, Dutch, Swedish, French, Russian, Lithuanian, Greek, Finnish, Japanese) and one Low German dialect called Westmünsterländisch (WML). In this connection, the research that they present is embedded within the so-called usage-based models of language (see Barlow & Kemmer 2000; Dirven 2005; Geeraerts 2005; Langacker 2005) and aims at typological adequacy. Second, cultural knowledge is treated as a central factor to a proper and thorough examination of phrasemes. The book is thus a highly innovative enterprise that brings together two research traditions (a linguistic theory adapted to the specifics of conventional figurative language and relevant elements from cultural semiotics)

that have not been able to converge so far. These features make Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen's work a promising milestone along the road toward the integration of these two perspectives. Interdisciplinary pursuits are becoming more and more frequent (see, for example, Ruiz de Mendoza & Peña, 2005). Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen's book is also to be commended for its interdisciplinary orientation. Finally, chapter one also serves a scene-setting function, addressing other basic questions such as the criteria of figurativeness and the distinction between figurative language and related phenomena (i.e., indirect language, non-figurative metaphors and metonymies, and phraseology). From the outset, the authors delimit the scope of their analysis and make it clear which phenomena will be the focus of their attention, mainly conventional figurative language, and which ones will be disregarded, more specifically non-conventional figurative language and non-figurative language.

The first six chapters provide the reader with the main theoretical foundations, including such topics as the most important types of conventional figurative units (chapter two), the cross-linguistic equivalence of idioms (chapter three), the motivation of conventional figurative units (chapter four), a discussion on false friends and paronyms (chapter five), and the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (chapter six). The rest of the chapters are implementations of theoretical issues raised in the first six chapters. For example, in chapter seven Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen present a cognitive approach to idioms of fear in support of the theoretical ideas summarized in chapter six. In chapter eight, we find a brilliant survey of what the authors call the cognitive modelling of figurative semantics. With this label the authors refer to a metalinguistic tool created with a view to analyzing the processing and formation of figurative units. This tool is then applied in chapter nine, where the concept ''house'' is considered a unit of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural description. Finally, chapters 12 and 13 are case studies on numeral words and number symbols, and on animal metaphors and animal symbols, respectively. These case studies exemplify the theoretical explanations offered in chapters 10 and 11, in which the authors deal with cultural aspects from various perspectives.

In the introduction, the authors claim that the Conventional Figurative Language Theory can be regarded as cognitive. However, the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor (CTM) is not addressed until chapter six. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen question the CTM as devised by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and reproach such a theory for neglecting cultural knowledge. The authors further propose to substitute the Conventional Figurative Language Theory for the CTM. In fact, the authors take advantage of the essentials of the CTM, but they go beyond this approach by

emphasizing the importance of cultural knowledge. This issue needs further comment. The authors plunge into a discussion of some of the most basic postulates of the CTM and point out that cognitive linguists are to blame for their attempt at universality. According to Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen, the CTM and the Conventional Figurative Language Theory pursue different goals. While the former tries to search for quasi-universal conceptual metaphors, the latter rather focuses on the way the characteristics of figurativeness influence semantic and pragmatic features of conventional figurative units. However, the authors have not done full justice to the CTM because of their exclusive focus on the earliest version of the theory. A more recent version of the CTM is missed. Thus, Grady's theory of primary metaphor would have enriched this book to a great extent (see Grady, Taub & Morgan 1996; Grady 1997, 1999; Grady, Oakley & Coulson 1999). Grady makes a two-fold distinction between primary and secondary or complex metaphors. The former, which are based on image-schematic structure, do aim at universality, but the latter are regarded as culture-specific. In any case, even the purported universality of image-schemas has been a fairly controversial issue over the last two decades (Johnson 1987; Peña 2003; Hampe 2005). It is thus fairer to think of the possible universal character of image-schematic metaphors as an unresolved issue rather than an undisputed claim within Cognitive Linguistics. Moreover, the claim that the cultural component is neglected within the framework of Cognitive Linguistics is only partially true. I agree with the authors that the search for conceptual metaphors has been given priority over the cultural issue. But this should not be taken to mean that Cognitive Linguistics does not take into consideration cultural issues. Cultural linguistics has recently developed within the framework of Cognitive Model Theory. In fact, Lakoff's initial work on cognitive models regarded (non-image-schematic) metaphor, together with metonymy and frames, as essentially culture-bound. Cognitive Model Theory is thus at the basis of cultural studies within Cognitive Linguistics, and more specifically of the study of metaphor and culture, as witnessed by the recent work carried out by such scholars as Wolf and Polzenhagen (2003) and Kövecses (2005), among others.

An additional observation is that Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen only focus on the description of conceptual metaphor but do not go into other cognitive models like metonymy. Their position thus amounts to stating that the only possible blueprint for the understanding and creation of idioms and other figurative units is metaphorical in nature. This is obviously not the case. Other cognitive models described by Lakoff (1987) like metonymy, image-schemas, and propositional models play a prominent role in the construal of figurative units, even though they might not be

so pervasive as metaphor. On page 151 the authors dare to question the distinction between metaphor and metonymy and reduce Kövecses' metonymies of fear to body-based metaphors without further comment or justification. In chapter six, Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen conclude that the CTM proves insufficient as a metalinguistic tool for the analysis of conventional figurative units. It is precisely the aim of their book to devise another metalinguistic tool that is able to capture the irregularities in the realm of conventional figurative language, a problem with which the CTM can only cope with to a limited extent. In chapter eight, the authors outline the basic elements and operations involved in the metalanguage developed by Baranov and Dobrovol'skij (2000), dubbed Cognitive Modelling of Cognitive Semantics, and illustrate it by means of the example "black sheep." The authors themselves are aware of the limitations of this approach since it does not capture the cultural idiosyncratic structure of each conventional figurative unit. Therefore, cognitive modelling proves a sophisticated and complete metalinguistic tool but falls prey to the same criticism made to the CTM with regard to the exclusion of the cultural component. No doubt, Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen take a step forward in the analysis of conventional figurative units, but their metalanguage cannot solve the problem of the identification and explanation of cultural aspects. These are idiosyncratic issues to be accounted for in their context of use. The advantage of this metalanguage over those based on "meaning transfer" is all the more evident (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen 2005: 181) and is a logical consequence of their approach being embedded within the cognitive paradigm.

A remarkable aspect of the book is the amazing number of examples taken from many and varied sources and languages. The authors should be praised for presenting a highly insightful analysis of many conventional figurative units, particularly idioms, and for choosing languages which are culturally distant. In this way, in chapter seven the authors criticize some studies on the conceptualization of anger (see Kövecses 1986, 1990, 1995; Lakoff 1987; Lakoff & Kövecses 1987), which are based on misconceptions regarding social and cultural factors. To the debit side, two issues merit attention. First, the book deals with conventional figurative units, but on most occasions exclusive attention is paid to idioms on the grounds that they are the prototypical figurative units because of their high degree of irregularity. As a consequence, particular idiosyncratic aspects of other conventional figurative units like proverbs are lacking. As is well known, in Cognitive Linguistics attention to peripheral aspects comes to the fore as an enriching factor when studying the functioning of a language and this fact contributes to avoiding the unwelcome tendency to focus exclusively on the core aspects of language. Second,

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen attempt to examine in depth all conventional figurative units associated with some conceptual domains, as is the case with the domain of "house" in chapter nine. However, it is questionable that even the most exhaustive method of gathering data can capture all the possible figurative elements of a given domain. Finally, a third issue to be discussed is the little use which is made of examples from Low German if compared with the ten standard languages taken as sources of empirical data. Nevertheless, it is true that, as pointed out by the authors themselves, this dialect is less productive in terms of conventional figurative units than the ten standard languages.

The topic of the abstract nature of the domains involved in metaphor is of great interest. Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005: 139–140) disagree with Murphy's (1997) criticism of the prevalent assumption in Cognitive Linguistics that all source domains are less abstract than their corresponding abstract domains. While pioneering versions of the CTM argued in favor of the idea that source domains tend to be more concrete than target domains and thus provide the basic blueprint for the understanding of abstract targets, more recent developments of Cognitive Linguistics have focused on a distinction of metaphor and metonymy based on the genericity of source and target domains. Kövecses and Radden (1998) and Radden and Kövecses (1999) state that metonymy may work at different levels of genericity. Thus it is reasonable to claim that different kinds of metonymy result from the different level of abstraction of their source and target domains. Low-level metonymies such as ORDER FOR CUSTOMER (e.g., *The ham sandwich is getting restless*) and RULER FOR ARMY (e.g., *Nixon bombed Hanoi*) exploit non-generic cognitive models, whereas high-level metonymies like POTENTIALITY FOR ACTUALITY (e.g., *I can see the river from my window* [Panther & Thornburg 1999]), EFFECT FOR CAUSE (e.g., *What's that noise?—It's a burglar* [Panther & Thornburg 2000]), and PROCESS FOR ACTION (e.g., *The door opened* [Ruiz de Mendoza & Pérez 2001]) work at a higher level of abstraction since they involve generic cognitive models. This is also the case with metaphor, which might be classified into low-level metaphor (e.g., *John is a chicken*; PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS) and high-level metaphor (e.g., *They laughed him out of the room*; EXPERIENTIAL ACTION IS EFFECTUAL ACTION) (see Ruiz de Mendoza & Mairal, 2007).

Another issue that deserves particular attention is the psychological reality of mappings, which is questioned throughout the book. This is an issue that, in principle, goes beyond the scope of linguistic research. Nevertheless, some empirical work in this respect has been undertaken by a number of psycholinguists. Thus, the authors should consider the work carried out by Bergen and his collaborators within the framework of Em-

bodied Construction Grammar (see Bergen & Chang 2005) or the studies by Gibbs and Colston (1995) and Gibbs (2005), who have discussed the main types of empirical evidence currently available for image-schemas. Similar findings might prove useful to demonstrate the psychological reality of conceptual metaphorical mappings that are not image-schematic in nature.

As noted at the very beginning of this review, the book concludes with an attempt to find a synthesis between some aspects of the CTM and the semiotics of culture. These two research traditions are integrated into the Conventional Figurative Language Theory. The book offers quite compelling analyses of problems which have hitherto lacked a ready solution (e.g., criteria for idiomaticity). Moreover, the work as a whole is a brilliant survey of the various studies on conventional figurative language, in particular on idioms. The authors are certainly skilful in their handling of data from many different sources and in packing a large amount of information and analytical insights in a limited amount of space. In sum, this work is a must for researchers interested in the relationship between figurative language and culture, especially because of the depth of its theoretical foundations and the large amount of cross-linguistic analysis it offers.

Acknowledgment

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