

ISSN 2007-1620

Humanitas

Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León
Anuario del Centro de Estudios Humanísticos

Año 46, No. 46, Vol. II
Enero-Diciembre 2019

Ciencias Sociales



UANL®

**LOS PROBLEMAS EN EL DESARROLLO DE UNA
CLASE DE INGLÉS UTILIZANDO EL MÉTODO
“ENFOQUE CENTRADO EN EL APRENDIZAJE” DE
LA SECRETARÍA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA (SEP)
EN EL PROGRAMA NACIONAL DE INGLÉS EN
EDUCACIÓN BÁSICA**

**THE ISSUES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN
ENGLISH CLASS USING THE METHOD
“LEARNING-CENTERED APPROACH” OF
SECRETARÍA DE EDUCACIÓN PÚBLICA (SEP) IN
THE NATIONAL ENGLISH PROGRAM IN BASIC
EDUCATION**

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Resumen: Esta investigación se realizó para reconocer los problemas en el desarrollo de una clase de inglés utilizando el método de Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje de la Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) en el Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica, se realizó utilizando una metodología de estudio de caso y será útil para los profesores de la segunda lengua y para que las escuelas primarias públicas en México reconozcan los problemas que se

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presentan o se pueden presentar en el Programa Nacional de Inglés usando el método de Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje reconocer los retos y dificultades que enfrentan los profesores de segunda lengua con sus alumnos dentro del aula.

Abstract: This research was carried out to recognize the issues in the development of an English class using the method of Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública SEP in the National English Program in Basic Education. This research was conducted using a case study methodology. This research will be helpful to teachers of the second language and for the public elementary schools in México to recognize the problems that are presented or can be presented in the National English Program using the Learning-centered approach and to recognize the challenges and difficulties faced by Second language teachers with their students inside the classroom.

Palabras claves: clase de inglés, enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje, Programa Nacional de Inglés en Educación Básica, escuela pública primaria, México, Secretaría de Educación Pública.

Keywords: english class, learned-centered approach, National English Program in Basic Education, public elementary schools, México, SEP.

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

FROM MY EXPERIENCE, ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN language has become a useful tool for communication all over the world. México has been implementing several programs in basic education to encourage the learning of a foreign language, in this case, English. The main aim of these programs was the incorporation and accessibility of the English language as a subject in all the curricula in basic education schools derived from the modernization of education systems due to globalization (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).

The official program that is in charge to reach this goal is called National English Program in Basic Education but, the main challenge is that many schools do not follow the program because they do not have enough money, and there is a lack of English teachers.

The main purpose of this research was to discover the issues that can be or are already happening in the development of an English class according to the National English Program in Basic Education in public elementary schools based on the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) method called *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach).

This research had three main objectives to follow, the first one is to examine if schools apply for the National English Program in Basic Education, the second one is to recognize if the Method *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education, and the third one is to describe if the Method *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education, to reached these objectives, it was taken in consideration the main aspects of the National English

Program in Basic Education, and the method *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach), and also the opinion of the English teachers.

1.2 Research problem

Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) is a governmental institution that ensures that Mexican children receive education and create educational programs according to the requirements of the Mexican population. English as a foreign language has become a useful tool for communication all over the world, with that, Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) has been aware of this situation so they have been trying to incorporate English Classes in their basic education level (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

Public schools follow the method “*Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje*” (Learning-centered approach) to teach their students. This method was developed by SEP to emphasize the learning and teaching process not in teachers but in the students. Also, public schools can promote the acquisition of the English language through the application of the National English Program in Basic Education. Additionally, Secretaría de Educación Pública released the book “*Aprendizajes claves para la educación integral: Lengua Extranjera. Inglés. Educación básica*” of Secretaría de Educación Pública,” in 2017 to promote the application of the program.

The principal aim of the program is that students become capable of developing abilities, knowledge, attitudes, and learning strategies by the hand of the four learning skills (writing, speaking, reading and listening) in the foreign language, in this case, English. The program is scheduled for the last grade of kindergarten, elementary and secondary school that is divided into two stages:

- The first one is the stage of familiarization of the language, this stage is developed in the last grade of kindergarten, first and second year of elementary school, and
- The second stage is the one of competence and the basic dominate of the English language, this stage is developed through the rest of the grades in elementary school and the three grades of secondary school (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017, 165).

The importance of this research was to recognize the issues in the development of the National English Program in Basic Education following a Learning-centered approach in elementary public schools.

1.3 Purpose statement

The purpose of this study was first to examine if public elementary schools in México apply for the National English Program in Basic Education then, to recognize the issues in the development of an English class using the National English Program in Basic Education with the Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública. Also, to describe the difficulties of teaching English as a foreign language with the National English Program in Basic Education.

All of this was developed in a case study research resulting in the study of a program. National English Program in Basic Education is defined generally as the actual program that the Secretaría de Educación Pública has currently to incorporate the English language in their basic education system based on the alignment and standardization of national and international standards, the selection of criteria for teacher training, the establishment of guidelines for the design and evaluation of educational materials, as

well as the certification of English language proficiency (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2017).

1.4 Research questions

1. How does the educational school system apply the National English Program in elementary education?
2. How is the Method enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública developed in the National English Program in Basic Education?
3. Which difficulties do teachers face when applying the National English Program in Basic Education?

1.5 Research Objectives

- To examine if schools apply the National English Program in Basic Education.
- To recognize if the Method Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education.
- To describe the difficulties of teaching English as a foreign language with the National English Program in Basic Education.

Chapter 2. Methodology

2.1 Research design

The research methodology is basically a science whose main purpose is to explain how research is carried out scientifically and to figure a solution to the research problem (Khotari, 2004). There are three different kinds of research methodologies. Quantitative research methods deal with mathematical aspects

such as numbers. Researchers who use a quantitative methodology select different variables according to what they want to discover. The variables need to be set before the data collection.

In contrast, qualitative research is related to some humanistic aspects. Researchers who use qualitative research are interested in knowledge, practice and meaning of specific behaviors. Methods that are used in this type of methodology tend to be flexible and open-ended because they are applied to individuals in certain settings. Researchers can use a different kind of methods to collect data (Cataldo, Kielmann & Seeley, 2012).

The last type of methodology is called mixed-method research. It uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study to understand the aspects involved in the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Researchers tend to use this methodology when neither quantitative nor qualitative are enough to solve the research problem (Creswell, 2012).

To this research: “The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública in the National English Program in Basic Education” a qualitative research methodology was chosen, which produced results that indicate social information, instead of numerical type; also, this type of research is designed to reveal behaviors and the perceptions for specific issues (Creswell, 2012).

Case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more past studies about the same situation without limitations. Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a situation over time. The researcher who decides to use a case study must use different sources of information (Creswell, 2007).

There are three different kinds of case study (Creswell, 2007):

- Single instrumental case study: The research selects an issue and one case to explain the issue
- Collective case study: A specific issue is chosen, and many cases are select to explain the issue
- Intrinsic case study: A specific case with a unique situation is selected.

In accordance with Zainal (2007) case studies can be used in social sciences such as pedagogy, sociology and is related to community problems. In education, case studies are used to show the efficacy and success of educational programs. There exist several categories of case studies. For example, researchers can explore an issue, then they can apply a pilot test to determine the design that will be used.

Zainal (2007) explains that the use of case studies to conduct research has many advantages. One of them is the issue can be observed and studied closely. Instead of selecting and isolating a certain situation, researchers can know the context in which the problem currently happens and notice the complexity of this situation. Another advantage is that researchers can make interpretation using both quantitative and qualitative data to the analysis of data.

2.2 The role of the researcher

It was looked for official documentation of the “National English Program in Basic Education” to see if the material is according to the Learning-centered approach of the Secretaría de Educación Básica. In accordance with Creswell (2007), researchers may be considered an instrument to collect data. The collection of data can be examining a specific document or observing participants' behavior. They must use their own instruments to collect their own data. They do not use instruments made by other researchers.

When researchers are collecting data, they must maintain their objectivity and some distance from the people who are being used as subjects (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Even though they must maintain distance from the situation, researchers must feel identified in some situations according to their background, history or context (Creswell, 2007). Good researchers must listen, analyze and make questions about the situation in order to collect data according to what they want to discover (Simon, 2011).

2.3 Instrument

The instrument that was created for this research was an open-questions interview of fourteen questions. The definition of a qualitative interview according to Robert K. Yin (2011) is that the qualitative interview follows a conversational mode, and the interview itself will lead to a social relationship of sorts, with the quality of the relationship individualized to every participant. Also, Robert K. Yin (2011) mentions that the more important questions in a qualitative interview will be open rather than closed-ended questions.

Also, Robert K Yin (2011) mentions the importance of doing qualitative interviews saying that when doing qualitative interviews, a researcher tries to understand a participant's world, which is likely to include concentrated efforts at mastering the meanings of the participant's words and phrases.

2.4 Population

The Population for this research was English teachers that work in the SEP and the sampling was a group of five English teachers that work in the SEP and that are integrated into a group of English teachers in México of a social media. The selection of the sample was made randomly, as Creswell (2014) mentions that a random sample, in which each individual in the population has an equal probability of being selected (a systematic or probabilistic sample). With

randomization, a representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population.

Chapter 3.

Results

An instrument of 14 questions was applied, and 5 participants were selected for the purpose of this research. The analysis of these data will be by content analysis, this refers to the process of categorizing verbal or behavioral data to classify, summarize and tabulate the data (Research methodology, 2019)¹

For this research, the coding was done manually, and it was developed in a qualitative data coding chart:

Table 1: coding

Research title	Elements to be coded	Codes
The issues in the development of an English class using the method learning-centered approach of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education	English class	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National English Program• Primary school (SEP)• Learning-centered approach• English teaching• Course training

Author elaboration as a research's result: "The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education".

¹ Web page for the information taken of this reference: <https://research-methodology.net/research-methods/data-analysis/qualitative-data-analysis/>

The five codes are going to be analyzed taking into consideration the 5 participants' answers (3 women and 2 men) from the instrument applied. All of the participants have a good range of professional years of English teaching that goes around 4 to 14 years of teaching experience.

3.1 Code 1: The National English Program

All of the teachers have full knowledge about the National English Program that is applied in the public primary schools by the Secretaría de Educación Pública.

The teachers expressed their opinions about the program, two teachers mentioned that the program needs to change completely and that needs to be improved. The three other teachers mentioned:

Teacher 1: It is good but not realistic according to what Mexican students need.

Teacher 2: It needs to increase the classes per week, or lower the level of the books, especially in readings.

Teacher 3: It is a good program. As far as they understand that is too difficult to teach in schools where they were supposed to have some years with English classes.... and they haven't.

The opinions that the teachers mentioned it is completely related to their positive and negative aspects of the National English Program in Basic Education listed in the chart below:

Table 2: Positive and negative aspects of the National English Program

Positive	Negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good acceptance• Good method• Good approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No interesting for students so, they don't pay attention• The students don't have the required English level to comprehend and work with the content the SEP expected to.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of knowledge• The number of classes is not enough for learning the language• No permanent job

Author elaboration as a research's result: "The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education".

To engage the second language acquisition, the following table classifies the main aspects of the National English Program that are fully detailed in the official guide of Aprendizajes Claves para la Educación Integral by the Secretaría de Educación Pública.

Table 3: The main aspects of the National English Program by the Secretaría de Educación Pública

Period of time	This subject is taken during the six years of basic education (Secretaría de Educación, 2011).
Course's organization	The program is divided into cycles, one cycle is equivalent to one year of basic education (Secretaría de Educación, 2011).
The English subject's schedule	There are three sessions per week of fifty minutes each class in all the cycles (Secretaría de Educación, 2011).
Material	From kindergarten to 2 grade of elementary school students have some textbooks and upper grades have a textbook and a reading book (Secretaría de Educación, 2011).

Author elaboration as a research's result: "The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education".

3.2 Code 2: Primary school SEP

Four participants mentioned that the school they work for applied for the National English Program as the SEP suggests in contrast to one participant that said his/her school does not apply for the program as the SEP suggests. Here it can be noticed that some schools decided not to follow some SEP programs as they suggest, and they can have the freedom to do it because the SEP does not have constant supervision of the National English Program inside the schools.

Three teachers did not know for how long is been applying for the National English Program in their school, instead, one teacher said that the program has been applying for 6 years, and the other teacher said for around 10 years.

3.3 Code 3: Learned-centered approach

One of the five teachers did not know how the learning-centered approach works, the other four teachers explained with their own words the following:

Teacher 1: Yes, but I don't think that's the correct information.

Teacher 2: We follow a lesson plan in order to guide the student's learning process based on working to get a final product. The final product is supposed to show what the student has learned.

Teacher 3: Learning is a process in which the student, consciously, constructs knowledge, with the help of a mediator, teacher and classmates.

Teacher 4: Learning to learn. So, you can be autodidact at some point.

The methodologies that the National English Program applied according to the synthesis of Carlos Rodríguez-Ramírez (2014): Methodologies. This area includes two basic pedagogical principles as stated in the 2011 Study Plan and these refer to: “Focus attention on the students and on their learning processes and work collaboratively to foster learning” (SEP, 2011, pp. 26-28). Cooperative learning is also highly valued and encouraged, yet it is my opinion that it has not yet been fully adopted by many teachers.

It is supposed that the learning-centered approach is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education, three teachers explained how:

Teacher 1: It is supposed to focus on the student's learning process on the abilities to use the language.

Teacher 2: Yes, the teacher creates the environment to help students construct their own knowledge.

Teacher 3: Focusing on the specific needs of the students.

According to the Secretaría de Educación Pública in their manual ‘Aprendizajes Clave para la educación integral: Lengua Extranjera. Inglés. Educación Básica – Plan y programa de estudios, orientaciones didácticas y sugerencias de evaluación’ children will work with the subject of foreign language: English following this pattern: “learning English using English (learning by doing) in real or near-real communicative interactions, in which students participate as users of this language and are interested in learning how communication is done by interacting with others”. (SEP, 2017 p. 170)

The following table explains the link of the method of Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje and the strategies used at the National English Program in Basic Education.

Table 4: The link between the method “Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje” and the strategies used by the National English Program

The main goal about the Method Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje(Learned-centered approach)	Strategies used at the National English Program in Basic Education
Learning is interpreted as an active process of consciousness rather than a repetitive passive process. The main idea of the incorporation of this method is that students can be more engaged in their education process for that to have better learning (Secretaría de Educación, 2012).	1. Doing with the language. It refers that students produce and interprets oral and written texts participating in specific competencies. (Secretaría de Educación, 2011). 2. Knowing about the language. Involves a series of aspects, concepts, and topics for reflection on features, characteristics, and elements of the language, aiming at students to raise awareness about their knowledge. (Secretaría de Educación, 2011).

Author elaboration as a research’s result: “The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education”.

3.4 Code 4: English teaching

For the requirements for the teachers to enter to teach English in this program/school, two of the five teachers just mentioned that the only requirement was to have enough level of English (Just to speak English) the other three teachers had more requirements to enter, some of those were:

- A specific level of English (B2 or more)
- A bachelor's degree
- Passing an exam
- Having a TOEFL score of 550 or more points
- Be interviewed about their teaching experiences and about their English knowledge
- Having certifications in the language and related to teaching

With the help of the needs analysis developed by Peter Sayer (2013)² it is remarkable that the National Program of English has three teachers' profiles:

1. University-trained teachers who are graduates of a BA in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (BA-TEFL or equivalent, usually called *licenciatura en enseñanza de lenguas extranjeras*) from an autonomous public or private university

² PNIEB Teachers' Profiles and Professional Development: A Needs Analysis MEXTESOL Journal, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2013

2. Normal School students.
3. A heterogeneous group of English speakers who have studied various careers.

Of course, these teachers' profiles will vary because of the local actors at the state level, so a lot of institutions will have a remarkable contrast in the developing of the English teaching in the primary schools.

The teachers explained the difficulties of teaching English as a foreign language with the National English Program:

Teacher 1: The main problem is that it was not graded so students, Spanish teachers, parents, and principals didn't care about it.

Teacher 2: I could say a lot of difficulties, but the main one is that the English level of the lesson plans we must follow, and the suggested activities simply don't match with the level required by the students.

Teacher 3: Disinterest in learning another language.

Teacher 4: The number of classes per week.

Teacher 5: Too high level. Not enough instructors, therefore, the level decrease. Low interest of the principals in having instructors.

Ramírez and Sayer (2016) explained 6 main points of the main difficulties of the National English Program.

Table 5: The main difficulties of the National English Program

Coverage	The National English Program has had a very slow expansion in México mostly because the program has not arrived at the marginalized areas of the country and few states completely follow the requirements of the program (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).
Curriculum	The framework of the program it is still unknown for a lot of teachers, so they do not have the exact patterns to follow to achieve the objectives of the program (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).
Status of the English program	English grades still do not appear on the official report card of the students of basic education because the National English Program still does not cover all the public schools of the country (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).
Textbooks	The distribution of the books it is not proportional for all the public schools of the country (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).
Teacher training	In México there is a lack of English teachers in the Secretaría de Educación Pública, so they adopt to put ordinary teacher without any training to teach the English subject (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).
Attitudes	There is still a lot of regions of the country that do not accept completely the implementation of the National English Program in public schools (Ramírez and Sayer, 2016).

Author elaboration as a research's result: "The issues in the development of an English class using the method of enfoque centrado en el aprendizaje (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) in the National English Program in Basic Education"

3.5 Code 5: Course training

About the training that the teachers had about how to apply for the program, only one teacher mentioned that he/she did not have any training and the rest of the teachers mentioned that they have a one-week training.

According to Peter Sayer (2013), the teacher training is the responsibility of local actors at the state level (in this case every single primary school) the coordinators of the Nacional English Program at the Secretaría de Educación Pública have determined a minimum acceptable profile for teachers, including a base level of English proficiency; however, state coordinators are the ones charged with hiring and providing in-service professional training [...] most states do not have the resources to hire enough supervisors or coordinators to organize professional development programs.³

Also, four of the teachers said that they had the necessary material to reach the goal of teaching English, and the other teacher mentioned that he/she didn't have any material to reach the goal of teaching English. The National English Program states that:

Teaching materials play a highly significant role in the program. As it can be inferred from the characteristics and definition of the components in the English syllabuses, the quality and types of materials that the students will use (printed or multimedia) influence greatly on their learning of English.

It is well known that teachers always consider the use of didactic materials while they are planning a class because can be used to reach the objectives of the class. The didactic material can be textbook, workbook, flashcards, storybooks, songs, worksheets as suggested in the National English Program. The aim of didactic material is also to help the teacher “bring the real world into the essentially artificial classroom situation and thus to relate the language items he is teaching to actual usage”. (Ellis & Tomlinson, 1980, p. 301)

³ PNIEB Teachers' Profiles and Professional Development: A Needs Analysis MEXTESOL Journal, Vol. 37, No. 3, 2013.

Chapter 4.

Conclusions

In conclusion, all the answers for each doubt or inquisitiveness that was presented at the very beginning of this paper were solved. Some limitations that were experienced during this research were: first, that was hard to manage because the limitations that public schools, in this case, elementary schools have in sharing information to help the researchers developing the study. And second, the information about the official programs are not well organized in the web pages of the Secretaría de Educación Pública.

The objectives for this research were 3 that will be explained each one later. It is important to mention that these objectives were accomplished by the data analysis and the literature review with the theoretical framework worked in this research.

The first objective was to examine if schools apply the National English Program in Basic Education, almost all the participants mentioned that the program was applied as the SEP suggests but there were participants that admitted that the school they work for do not apply for the program.

According to the official program published by the Secretaría de Educación Pública about the National English Program, it is supposed that the National English Program in Basic Education was fully implemented by the Secretaría de Educación Pública in 2009 to incorporate the learning and acquisition of a second language, in this case, English in basic education (from kindergarten to secondary school). The program is well organized but most of the schools do not follow the correct order of development for a good process.

The second objective was to recognize if the method *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach) of Secretaría de Educación Pública is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education. The main purpose of the Method *Enfoque Centrado en el Aprendizaje* (Learning-centered approach) is that students

are more engaged in their education process to have better learning. It is important for us to know how this method is developed in the National English Program in Basic Education because according to *Aprendizajes Claves para la Educación Integral* by the SEP (2017) children will work with the subject of foreign language: English following the pattern of learning English using English (learning by doing) in real communicative interactions, in which students participate as users of this language and are interested in learning how communication is done by interacting with others.

The third objective was to describe the difficulties of teaching English as a foreign language with the National English Program in Basic Education. According to the information recovered by Ramírez and Sayer (2016), it was realized that even though México has created different English programs over the years, none of these programs were completely successful.

There are many reasons why all the programs failed such as the lack of material (books), planning of curriculums, the enrollment of poorly trained teachers (sometimes they are not even certificated English teachers), among others. Educational authorities must notice the importance of the characteristics mentioned above to have a proper implementation of the National English Program in Basic Education.

In my personal opinion, the program could work better if the schools were totally engaged to reinforce the language subjects, in this case, English. There are several difficulties that affect the developing of the English classes following the National English Program, the main difficulty is the lack of English teachers in the SEP, the reasons are several but the most remarkable is that the teachers do not have a stable job and that they do not have access to employment benefits, also, most of the teachers do not know the curriculum of the program, and the schools that are implementing the program

do not have enough material (textbooks) for the development of a good English class.

As a final point, the SEP should be more coherent in applying the correct English level for each school grade, so students can learn English using English and that they can be more engaged in their learning process of a second language, so they do not fall in the repetitive passive process.

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