Decoding the Timori Codes: A Coded Native Dialect of Cogtong

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Abstract

The Philippines is a country of diverse cultures and dialects. The present study considers the Timori code system, decoding by the speakers, and application in word structure and speech production. The Timori code system uses distinctive patterns like A-O, B-T, D-P, L-R, M-N, N-M, O-A, P-D, R-L, S-Y, Y-B, U-A, and Y-S as it is found through a qualitative-descriptive process. The decoding process from Bisaya to Timori involves writing the alphabet and its equivalent codes, forming words through coding, expanding vocabulary through practice, conversing with native speakers, and developing contextual understanding. Descriptive words best illustrate this code system of a language as indicative of the openness of the Timori dialect despite showing the active convergence of linguistic traditions. The Timori words' discovery is aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) 11-Sustainable Cities and Communities, where upholding Indigenous languages ensures the retention of our heritage for future generations.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines boasts vibrant dialects, each of which has its unique elements of the Philippines' cultural heritage (Rubrico, 2019). Among these is the *Timori*—a coded native dialect that functions for the coastal people of barangay Cogtong. It is a rare linguistic phenomenon combining a traditional vocabulary with a specific coded structure. This coded dialect is not just a cultural expression but is employed as a means of communication in local identification and social integration (Llamzon, 2020). Similar to other localized dialects in the Philippines, the *Timori* dialect has decreased with time through modernization (Alvarez & Ortega, 2021). The younger generation seldom uses this dialect as there is less interest in learning this *Timori* code.

Historically, the Spanish colonizers during the colonial era were Moro bandits who kidnapped children and sacrificed them to "Tirong," their local folklore being. The masses reacted through the emergence of the *Timori* dialect, a complex language system, to defend themselves from harm brought by external forces. With time, the dialect came to represent power and unity, used for maintaining their culture and bonding within the community (Ampo, 2025). Some people who visit Cogtong try to learn the language, but it is not as easy as

memorizing its codes to learn this dialect. The Cogtonganon have used the intricate system of dialect to preserve their culture and keep their people from foreign influence: structure delivery and the history of the dialect used in communication.

Through a meticulous analysis of primary sources, field observations, and interviews with native speakers, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Timori* codes and their significance in preserving the unique cultural heritage of the Cogtong. The study of this coded dialect not only holds academic significance but also has the potential to provide valuable insights into the resilience and adaptability of native languages in the face of colonial and political upheaval (Middelkoop, 1971). The preservation of this dialect not only revives our knowledge of the historical origin of this dialect but also preserves the country's cultural heritage, of which the dialect has been a significant representation.

There has been an existing study on the culture of Cogtonganon using this dialect by Ampo (2025). However, no existing study has determined the equivalent codes, how these codes are formed to develop words, and how these words are used in constructing sentences in *Timori* speech. With the mentioned research gap, the study aims to decode the *Timori* codes through a detailed analysis of their linguistic codes, semantics, and sociolinguistic functions. In examining the linguistic codes, this research contributes to the documentation of indigenous Philippine dialects, adding to the literature on endangered languages and supporting local efforts in cultural preservation.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a Qualitative-descriptive design, which aims to describe participants' experiences, perceptions, or behaviors without heavily interpreting or theorizing beyond the data (Creswell, 2009). In this study, linguistic codes, syntax, semantics, and sociolinguistic functions are uncovered to provide comprehensive information on the role of the dialect in shaping the creative communication skills of the natives.

The participants of this study were the ten (15) native residents of barangay Cogtong, Candijay, Bohol, Philippines. Moreover, the participants were selected using the purposive sampling method wherein the researchers purposely selected individuals from the population based on the criteria to gather the important information that meets the study's objective. The criteria used were as follows: participants are not known by the researchers, are recommended by the local Barangay unit, know the nature of the study, and are into using the *Timori* dialect in communicating with others in the community, native speakers of the dialect. Fifteen participants were sufficient for this study because their responses reached data saturation, meaning no new information or themes emerged from additional interviews. This research

ensures that the gathered data provides a comprehensive understanding of the participants' knowledge about the linguistic structures of the *Timori* dialect.

The researcher asked permission from the local Barangay captain to interview the selected *Timori* speakers in their barangay for legal permission. With the approval, personal interviews with the participants were conducted. Before conducting the interview, the researchers gave a consent form to the study participants. Once the consent was granted, the researchers introduced the study to the participants. During the study, an in-depth interview was administered to gain more in-depth responses regarding their linguistic knowledge of the dialect. Recording of the collected responses stored digitally is deleted to protect the participants' data.

Guide questions were formulated. The instrument included these questions: 1) What linguistic codes are used in Timori? *Unsa ang mga letra nga gigamit para sa Timori ug unsa may kalahian ani kung gamiton kin isa pagkistorya sa uban?* 2) How do individual codes transform into words within Timori, and what rules or patterns govern this formation process? *Giunsa man pagporma ang mga pulong gamit ang Timori nga mga litra ug unsay pamaagi sa pagporma niini?* 3) In what ways are Timori words transcribed and utilized in direct speech to communicate effectively within and across communities, and how do they contribute to its unique communication system? *Sa unsang pamaagi gigamit sa pakistorya ang Timor isa mga tawo sa lugar?* Content and thematic analysis were applied to analyze the responses of the participants.

To ensure the transparency of this research study, the Trustworthiness framework of Lincoln and Guba's Four Dimensions Criteria (1985), which includes credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, was observed. For credibility, the researchers assure participants that the interview is solely conducted for research purposes only and ensure a prolonged engagement to instill confidence that the findings based on participants' perspectives are accurate, reliable, and realistic. For transferability, the researchers see that the detailed descriptions of the participants' lived experiences and contexts of code-switching are captured. The researchers ensure the study's process is traceable and thoroughly recorded for dependability. For confirmability, the researchers ensure that interpretations and findings are unmistakably drawn from the data, necessitating a justification for the researcher's conclusions and interpretations, and that data were double-checked during data collection and analysis and returned to the participants for verification. An inter-coder, not part of this research, was asked to verify the study's results.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part presents the analysis of the data gathered, wherein the linguistic features of codes, rules, and community usage are explored.

The *Timori* dialect offers a distinctive system of linguistic codes that regulates the *translation of Bisaya* words. At its core, this system is accurate letter-based codes that rule how a given *Bisaya* word letter should be translated.
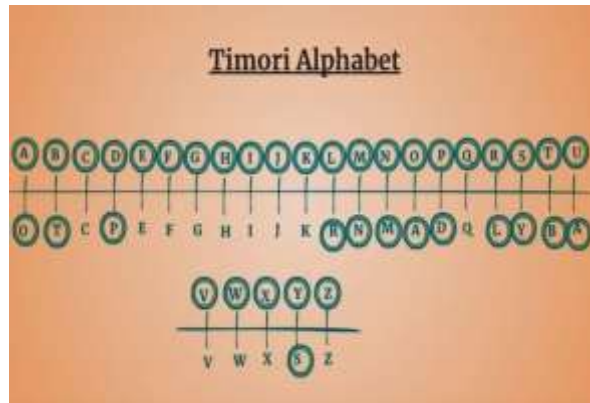

Figure 1 The Timori Codes (Photo Credit: Mary Angelika Lariva)

The *Timori* code system features a selective letter coding process, where certain letters from the A-O, B-T, D-P, L-R, M-N, N-M, O-A, P-D, R-L, S-Y, Y-B, U-A, and Y-S ranges are only accessible for the coded translation. The selective coding process signifies the systematic character of the *Timori* dialect, which seems to be specially designed for the *Bisaya* language. According to one of the participants (K10):

Sa Bisaya phrases rajud ni sija gamiton kay lain litokon ug mag sa tagalog or English ni sija gamiton. (It is only true to Bisaya words, it is not pleasing to the ears when you apply the codes on an English or tagalog words.)

These codes are only used for *Cogtong-Bisaya* because other forms of the *Bisaya* language and its tone variation influence the translation process. According to K7 participant:

Usahay di na nimo need mag base sa letra, mag base rakas pag litok basta kanang di kumaw paminawon unja paramoot. (Sometimes, you do not need to use the codes by letters; you can base it on your pronunciation; make sure it sounds funny).

Interestingly, the *Timori* system also allows for some flexibility in its translation process. It acknowledges that the coded translation may not always be applicable and that the

translation may sometimes be based on *Bisaya* tonal pronunciations instead, as long as the resulting translation "sounds funny." This suggests a degree of pragmatism in the *Timori* system, whereby the spirit of the *Bisaya* language's integrity takes precedence over the strict following of the letter-based codes.

The *Timori* language system is an advanced language system for translation that has evolved according to the unique needs and distinctiveness of the Bisaya people and language. Understanding the nature and mechanism of the *Timori* rules would be beneficial in researching the process of the evolution of language and the maintenance of the endangered linguistic culture (McFarland, 2004). Following Lightbown and Spada (2013), fluency results as a byproduct of habitual use and exposure in real environments. The presupposition that the learners are immersed in the dialect when they begin laughing at what they have translated themselves attests to improvement and deep immersion in the linguistic and cultural frameworks of the *Timori* dialect. This shared sense of humor with the speakers is a successful accommodation in the speech community and a significant step in the learning process.

Secondly, what is most interesting about the *Timori* coding scheme is that it makes a point of preserving the *Bisaya* language in its original form. Using a selective set of coding rules applied solely for Bisaya terms, the *Timori* system shows deliberate effort towards linguistic Bisaya purity even as the language has evolved (Correia, 2011). This conservation of language is particularly relevant to the Philippines, as the national linguistic variation is perpetually at risk of being overwhelmed by more widely spoken languages.

The *Timori* code system further emphasizes the need to adapt language preservation to the very nature of a particular language. While the *Timori* code system may not per se be practicable in other Philippine languages, its presence indicates the value of language preservation to the particular demands and constraints of individual linguistic cultures (Alcantara & Borra, 2008). The *Timori* linguistics principles constitute a fascinating language conversion system offering informative information compared to linguistic preservation and progress in moribund languages. *Visayan* culture and the *Bisaya* language study significantly benefit from the *Timori* linguistics principles. Understanding the nature of this unusual system allows researchers and linguists to appreciate better the rich linguistic heritage of the Bisaya people and develop more meaningful means of preserving and revitalizing this priceless linguistic legacy (Salvador et al., 1997).

The *Timori* linguistic constructs also have broader implications for language studies on language development and evolution. By decrypting the mechanisms of how linguistic systems evolve to meet the unique needs and the oddities of specific linguistic communities, researchers can better comprehend the subtle interdependencies between language, culture, and identity.

Timori linguistic principles are no cakewalk, however. The selectivity of the coding system and the provision for pronunciation-based translation can cause inconsistency and ambiguity and complicate the construction of a standard Bisaya language translation system. Nevertheless, the *Timori* rules are an engaging and fascinating approach to the conservation of languages, and studying them can reveal the complexity of linguistic diversity and language culture preservation.

3.1. Steps in Learning the Timori Codes

The steps of learning the *Timori* codes provide an organized way of learning the *Timori* language. This section underscores the significance of knowledge base, active practice, social interaction, and contextual application, which align with language acquisition and cognitive development theories that are highly critical in learning the *Timori* language.

3.1.1. Writing the Alphabet and Equivalent Codes

This sets the context for understanding the *Timori* code system. Transcribing the alphabet and its coding equivalents, this language's students provide an internal and visual point of reference that facilitates familiarity with the coding system. Basing the beginning on the alphabet and its coding equivalents creates a foundation knowledge of the system. K1 describes that

> *Sa mga wa pa kahibaw unsaon ang pag bali-bali sa mga letra, mag*
> *sugod sila sa pag suwat sa papel. Ilang sundon ang rules*. (For those
> who doesn't know how to code, they should start by writing the rules in
> a piece of paper.)

One of the most significant challenges is the initial confusion and disorientation associated with finding an unfamiliar speech mode (Hamilton et al., 2018). This activity ensures memory retention and promotes a sense of ownership of the learning process. The procedure indicates the alphabetic principle, which supposes that awareness of the correspondence of letters to sounds is central to reading (Ehri, 2005). Writing also helps to remember because, according to the dual coding theory, blending visual and written information facilitates learning (Paivio, 1990).

This phase highlights the significance of rote learning and visual reinforcement in learning a new language. Learning a new language is a difficult process, but studies say that

some methods can make it much easier. One of these methods highlights the significance of rote learning and visual reinforcement in language learning, especially for students at the concrete operational stage of cognitive development outlined by Piaget's theory (Mantiri, 2015).

The function of language development through reinforcement contingencies has been widely investigated. Behaviorist theories like Skinner's Stimulus-Response Theory propose that language is learned by external stimuli and rewards for correct utterance (Nazir, 2018). This would indicate that repetition of words and sentences with visual stimulus and material reward can effectively reinforce language abilities.

In addition, evidence shows that experiential learning should be central to acquiring a language, while rote learning has no significant influence. (Mantiri, 2015). While rote learning can aid in the memorization of vocabulary and grammar rules, it is the ability to apply this knowledge in real-world communication that ultimately determines language proficiency (Staats & Staats,1962). However, starting with written documentation ensures clarity and eliminates initial ambiguities. It acts as a reference point, enhancing recall and forming the basis for more complex tasks, such as word conversion.

3.1.2. Coding to Form Words

Learners of the dialect apply their understanding of the alphabet-to-code correspondence by converting words using *Timori* codes. This step introduces problem-solving and pattern recognition, crucial for developing linguistic fluency. Selecting words and encoding their alphabets into codes introduces students to application-based learning. K2 elaborates:

> *E change ra ang specific letters sa Jiang corresponding code.* (Change
> the specific letters to their corresponding codes)

While K3 added that

> *Imo rang utrohon ang mga letra. you just have to change the letters* (you
> just have to change the letters).

K2 and K3 observations also indicate the ease of availability of this method, with the ease of replacing some of the letters with their coded counterparts. Language learning is not

simply recognizing alphabets and lexical entries; instead, it is a rich process involving much more than simple word-to-coded-representation mapping. In the systematic word-to-coded-representation mapping that students of the *Timori* dialect undergo, they are not so much using knowledge of alphabet-to-code mapping as also learning productive problem-solving and pattern-recognition skills. This practice adheres to the constructivist theory of learning, where active problem-solving and meaning-making are focal points in the learning process (Xavier, 2020). This application-based learning method brings learners in contact with the actual usage of their linguistic ability in everyday life, which boosts a greater understanding and appreciation of the nature of the *Timori* dialect (Xavier, 2020). These methods improve the learner's functional competence in *Timori* codes and assist them in their general linguistic and cognitive development, feeling a sense of accomplishment and encouragement to keep improving the dialect.

3.1.3. Expanding Vocabulary Through Practice

Learning and mastering a foreign language is not simple, but it is crucial to successful communication and cross-cultural understanding. K5 emphasizes that*:*

  Lisud sija sa kinaunhan, pero kung makahibaw naka, sajon ra. (it is difficult to understand it at first, but if you already know how to use the codes, then it is easy).

In the *Timori* dialect, there is a unique process of ongoing identification and translation of words to build understanding and vocabulary development. This exercise, done repeatedly as an outline, helps build accuracy and rhythm in utilizing the *Timori* code. Vocabulary is the core column of language acquisition, and its construction is ongoing. As Tarigan aptly puts it, "the quality of a person's language depends on the quality of his vocabulary" - the more expansive the vocabulary, the better the chances of one being proficient in the language (Syamsidar et al., 2023).

Effective vocabulary instruction gives learners the chance to practice with unfamiliar words, query their meaning, and construct context (Suprianti et al., 2018). K9 stated that:

  Mas dali ka makahibaw kung naa kay kailan ga makahibaw sapag gamit
  sa timori nga madunggan nimo kada adlaw. (It's easier for you to understand the pattern and the rule if you do have a friend or a relative who knows how to use timori and uses this dialect all the time).

This replicates the *Timori* dialect approach, in which students are compelled to find words over and over and translate them over and over, committing their learning to memory and expanding their word bank. Second language acquisition theory prescribes explicit instruction and many learning strategies for constructing vocabulary. The iterative practice focus of the *Timori* dialect can be considered a "development plus explicit instruction" process, where learners are involved explicitly in vocabulary learning (Afshar, 2020). In addition, the need for vocabulary teaching among English language learners is established. Although the *Timori* dialect does not have any direct relationship with English, the principles of good vocabulary teaching can be used in the field of the *Timori* dialect.

By repeatedly rotating through the exercise of word identification and translation, Timori language students are practicing their knowledge of the language and building their vocabulary in a concrete and functional manner. K10 mentioned that:

Sajon ra kay kalingaw man ko makadungog sauna. (For me, it is easy because I was able to hear it way back when I was just a little kid, up until this day.)

This process aligns with the general vocabulary development literature, where it is highly advised that dialect learners have rich opportunities to engage with and use new words in a wide range of contexts. The repetitive practice emphasis of the *Timori* dialect, where learners repeatedly find and translate words, can be considered an extremely efficient vocabulary enrichment method. The advantages of this process are many. It improves accuracy and the student's fluency and speed in applying the *Timori* code (Purwanto & Despita, 2022). Constructing vocabulary in the *Timori* language through continuous identification and reinterpretation of words is an attractive language learner strategy.

3.1.4. Conversing with a Native Speaker

Successful language learning is a complex process, and for *Timori* dialect students, communication with native speakers is an important method that provides instant, concrete feedback and comprehension of the language and cultural nuances of the dialect. K3 stated that:

Kung di ka kahibaw unsaon, mag patudlo kas nakahibaw. (if you don't know how to use it, ask for help from those who know how to use the dialect).

The feeling of foreignness may give the impression of being misplaced or curious since the dialect will feel strange or even outlandish to other people unfamiliar with its standards (Kim et al., 2018). This lack of familiarity with the dialect also engenders suspicion because the non-natives are unsure of the codes and conventions involved in its use. Dewaele and MacIntyre (2014) emphasize the motivational and affective advantages of such authentic communication as students build their language competence and develop a more intense affective bond to the language. Talking to competent-level native speakers, *Timori* offers immediate feedback to dialect learners about their grammar, pronunciation, and use of vocabulary so that they can correct and develop their skills (Saptiyanto et al., 2022). Additionally, the interactions expose learners to authentic usage, enabling them to sense contextually related meaning, idiomatic and cultural allusions usually not provided in formal instruction (Saptiyanto et al., 2022). These experiences are important in building confidence and an overall impression of the dialect within its cultural context.

This method is among sociolinguistic theories focusing on the significance of social interaction in developing communicative competence (Derakhshan et al., 2016). Speakers can only communicate and acquire knowledge about following prevailing social and cultural norms through proper communication. Interactive teaching processes, as Ristati et al. (2019) indicate, which initiate learners' conversation and idea sharing, are extremely effective in initiating linguistic ability and enhancing learners' experience.

For the empowerment and preservation of the *Timori* dialect, interaction with competent speakers guarantees proper transmission of linguistic and cultural information, which is critical to learners utilizing the dialect.

3.1.5. Contextual Understanding

Recognizing the dialect in their broader contexts is important, and not as separate symbols (Younas et al., 2022). Qualitative researchers have recognized contextual coding as essential, including the early reading of data in the mother language, choosing socially and culturally appropriate words and phrases, and making early codes (Younas et al., 2022). K10 mentioned:

> *Mas dali ka makahibaw kung naa kay kailan ga makahibaw sapag gamit sa timori nga madunggan nimo kada adlaw.* (It's easier for you to understand the pattern and the rule if you do have a friend or a relative who knows how to use timori and uses this dialect all the time).

This strategy allows a clearer understanding of the sociocultural significance of their data earlier on, compared to only in the later stages of theme development while situating the findings. Contextual coding is especially significant when participants come from different sociocultural backgrounds (Younas et al., 2022). Considering the linguistic, cultural, and social contexts of the *Timori* codes will help gain a more prosperous and broader understanding of the data.

Codes are not tags or labels but key concepts embedded in the general context in which they emerge (Bradley et al., 2007). Only by examining the *Timori* codes within the situational context can dialect learners construct a good and credible usage of the dialect.

3.2. Timori Vocabulary Commonly Used in Conversation

Bisaya Words	*Timori* Translate
Kwarta	Kwolbo
Itlog	Ibrag
Utang	Abomg
Kutas	Kaboy
Kaon	Koam
Balik-balik	Torik-torik

The terms presented are the common *Timori* terms that the people commonly speak in the barangay. K1 exemplified that the *Bisaya* word *kwarta* (money) is translated to *kwolbo*, *itlog* becomes *ibrag*, and *utang* is rendered as *abomg.* This process of the *Timori* dialect highlights the dynamic interplay between the two linguistic traditions.

The *Timori* vocabulary also encompasses a range of everyday terms that have been uniquely crafted. The word *kaboy* is the *Timori* equivalent of the Bisaya word *kotas* which means hunger. Similarly, *torik-torik* is the *Timori* translation of the Bisaya *balik-balik,* denoting the notion of always repeated.

The *Timori* dialect's distinctive character can be attributed to its strong ties with its people, a unique linguistic variant that has influenced the overall tone and style of the *Timori* lexicon. This influence is particularly evident in how certain words are pronounced, such as the silent "g" in *abomg* and *taomg*.

Through the study of *Timori* vocabulary, cultural researchers can learn more about the cultural heritage of the region. The dynamic encounter site of *Bisaya* and *Timori* speaking practices is a unifying factor mediating past use and current practice. The articulation of this

research emphasizes the importance of the dialect in maintaining a unique cultural identity despite adjustments to the changing linguistic requirements of its speakers (Nation, 2001).

The *Timori* dialect plays a pivotal role in shaping the culture of the Cogtonganon people, serving as a powerful thread that weaves their identity, community, and sense of belonging. According to the study of Ampo (2025), even when Cogtonganon individuals find themselves in faraway places, hearing the *Timori* dialect instantly evokes a feeling of being "home," making the distance feel less daunting. This linguistic connection transcends physical boundaries, creating a shared cultural space where they feel rooted and united. As highlighted in the study, the dialect is not just a means of communication but a coded system that encapsulates their traditions, values, and social cohesion. The dialect strengthens their bond, as speaking *Timori* brings joy and a sense of camaraderie, especially during leisurely pastimes. It becomes a medium of enjoyment, where conversations are filled with humor, wit, and a unique cultural flair. Gossiping in *Timori*, for instance, is not just a form of communication but a cultural practice that allows them to playfully engage with one another playfully, often poking fun at themselves and others in a lighthearted manner. This tradition of humor and storytelling through *Timori* has become integral to their cultural fabric, fostering a sense of closeness and shared history. Over time, the dialect has evolved into more than just a language—it is a living testament to their heritage, a source of pride, and a way to preserve their collective memory. Through *Timori,* the Cogtonganon people carry their culture wherever they go, ensuring that "home" is never far away. The study underscores how the *Timori* dialect reinforces social solidarity and cultural identity, making it an indispensable element of the Cogtonganon way of life. The dialect, as a reflection of the cultural practices and beliefs of the society, is a necessary component in bridging the inside and outside processes that constitute the collective identity of being Filipino.

Since language is closely associated with culture, the application of codes is a way of maintaining and honoring the distinctive heritage and traditions of the society (Luza, 2023). Effective utilization of the *Timori* is membership and creates social solidarity, as with the overall sociological ideals. Linguistic identity is immediately connected to cultural heritage, which makes the dialect a model aspect of the Filipino culture in this specific society.

4. CONCLUSION

The interpretation and communication process of *Timori* codes must be supported by knowledge of its linguistic developments and cultural context. Specifically, its use of *Bisaya* vocabulary demonstrates the ingenuity of Cogtonganon speakers in maintaining their cultural identity. Practice, exposure to speakers, and understanding of its sense of humor and richness

enable mastery of *Timori*, and thus learners can make meaningful connections with *Timori*-speaking communities. This aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs), precisely Goal 4 (Quality Education) and Goal 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), because promoting language diversity and safeguarding local languages such as *Timori* promotes inclusive education, cultural heritage conservation, and sustainable community development. Future studies may examine the influence of modernization on *Timori*, the functions of technology in the preservation of *Timori* language, the place of *Timori* in school syllabuses (particularly in the area of Candijay, Bohol), and the cultural values of its vocabulary. Not only do such endeavors promote linguistic studies, but they also contribute to world sustainability by supporting social coherence, identity, and cultural durability. Finally, the research and revival of *Timori* are crucial to maintaining linguistic diversity and cultural heritage for generations to come.

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