RESEARCH ARTICLE

Investigating Algerian University Students' Practices and Perceptions of Using Facebook Messenger in EFL Contexts

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Abstract

The present study seeks to examine the practices and perceptions of university students regarding the use and the importance of Facebook Messenger as a platform for English as a Foreign Language learning (EFL). It aims, specifically, to identify how students use messenger application in EFL contexts to improve their communication skills, collaborate with peers, and develop different aspects of their language skills. Moreover, the investigation explores students' attitudes towards the implementation of social media tools and Facebook messenger in particular in academic language learning and their perceptions of the platform's effectiveness in enhancing informal and formal learning experiences. Data were collected through a questionnaire addressed to 120 university students enrolled in the department of English of Belhadj Bouchaib university of Ain Temouchent, Algeria. The quantitative and qualitative research methods have been adopted for the objective of this study. The quantitative analysis identifies the usage patterns whereas the qualitative one insights to capture students perceptions and experiences with Messenger as a language learning tool. The findings reveal that the use of messenger application helps students to learn English in both formal and informal contexts. This platform facilitates the share of information among students, allows the exchange of ideas and promotes discussions with peers and teachers through collaborative communication and authentic language exposure. The findings further indicate that EFL students have positive attitudes towards using messenger as a social media learning tool, considering it an accessible, flexible, and motivating aid that complements traditional classroom instruction. Based on these findings, the study suggests that integrating social media tools like Messenger into EFL curricula can foster language acquisition, learning engagements, collaboration, and autonomy. It highlights the potential of digital communication platforms to create dynamic and interactive learning environments. Hence, educators and curriculum designers are encouraged to leverage social media for enhancing language learning outcomes. The study also calls for further research into best practices for effectively implementing such tools in diverse educational contexts.

1. Introduction

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Recently, technology and social media have noticeably changed human lives at all different sectors such as health, economy, education, etc. Various applications such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Youtube, Viber, Instagram, Twitter, etc. are nowadays available for people of different ages and backgrounds to practice different activities in different domains. In the field of education, Facebook messenger has become so popular for higher education language learners so that it offers the students new opportunities to learn and engage with information, interact with peers, and develop language skills. However, despite its widespread use for communication, the role of social media in English as a foreign language (EFL) learning remains underexplored. In particular, Facebook messenger, though popular among students for informal interaction, has received limited attention as a tool to support language learning.

Social media platforms have opened access to language students to communicate and share ideas at the personal or academic level. They noticeably contribute in developing and improving students' English language learning at different levels. Facebook messenger is specifically used as a tool that supports communication among learners. They particularly use it as a relaxed and flexible environment to share information and knowledge about various subject matters. The messenger application is widely liked and preferred among learners to exchange lectures, presentations, notes, videos, and links as well as asking questions and receiving responses. Further, the platform helps to create groups among students and teachers to facilitate interaction.

Thus, the question that might be asked in this context is whether the use of Facebook Messenger truly contributes in the development of language skills among language learners and how learners perceive these innovative communication tools in relation to their learning outcomes.

In the Algerian context, Facebook application and Messenger in particular are widely used as smartphones applications for different purposes. In fact, since Covid 19 pandemic in the world and in Algeria in particular, Messenger has become so popular and well-liked among University students who use it as an e-learning tool to exchange lectures, presentations, notes, and information links as well as asking questions and getting answers of different subjects to enhance their learning. Likewise, Messenger is well received among higher education learners. It is used as a supplementary tool for EFL learning in Algeria, particularly in fostering collaboration, discussion and language practice. Therefore, the present study seeks to examine Algerian university students' practices and perceptions towards using Facebook Messenger as a tool to learn English. Moreover, the study aims to identify the advantages and challenges encountering students while integrating Messenger application into their language learning process. Ultimately, the objective is to bring out insights that could support the implementation of social media tools into EFL curricular focusing on students' centred learning approaches.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Facebook Messenger as a Social Media Platform for EFL Learning

Facebook is a social media tool that allows its users to interact and communicate their ideas and information with family members and friends from different parts of the world. It is an online social network created by Mark Zuckerberg on February 2004. It was initially addressed for college students but later on has become one of the most familiar social networks in the world and nowadays, the number of its users is increasing tremendously day by day. Facebook is nowadays the network preferred for not only students but for all people of different ages and backgrounds who use it to share information via documents, videos, photos, audio and written messages and make their works related to communication and social interaction easier and faster.
According to Dare and Gar (2016), Facebook is a social networking site that enables users to communicate with one another online. Octavia (2018) emphasized that Facebook serves as an effective learning medium, facilitating online interactions between teachers and learners. This, in turn, enhances the activity of learning processes and supports students in both their social and academic interactions, making Facebook a valuable tool for online learning.
Moreover, recent studies have stressed the importance of social media platforms in supporting English language learning, particularly in enhancing learners' collaborative and writing skills through authentic interaction (Mucminin et al., 2023)

Facebook and Messenger are well-known social network sites used by many students daily (Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010). Facebook messenger, as an extension of Facebook, widely contributes in the development of the teaching learning process as it creates spaces for interaction and communication. Social media and Facebook in particular are considered in this digital competitive era assistant learning tools that support the teaching learning process. It helps not only learners to learn something but also teachers to share their ideas with their students in a relaxing and confortable way (khan et al., 2020). It combines traditional messaging with innovative strategies that allow the users to share multimedia files and participate in chatting online groups. The application provides potential benefits and

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challenges for language learners. According to So (2016), mobile instant messaging tools foster communication and facilitate social presence by giving learners control over interaction and access to peers and instructors

Social media are particularly appropriate tools to support English Language communication, particularly among higher education learners who often use these platforms to share their thoughts and personal interests with friends (Mina et al., 2023). Indeed, Facebook messenger is nowadays used by EFL learners inside and outside the classroom, in formal and informal language learning contexts to enhance their language skills and proficiency. While the formal learning practice implies a structured classroom context, social media platforms and Facebook in particular create spaces for informal language practice that make the learners feel relaxed, unstressed and confortable to engage on spontaneous communication. As such, the use of social media, particularly Facebook application, is increasing among English language learners informally. This has brought an opportunity to EFL students to enhance their English language skills outside formal classes. Stressing the importance of Facebook in enhancing the reading skill in Nepal, Sijali and Laksamba (2020) argue that Facebook could be helpful to enhance the reading English language skill by creating groups and employing various applications. In addition, Dashti & Abdulsalam (2025) emphasize that language skills can be improved by using social media platforms, particularly the listening, speaking, and reading skills. Hence, social media applications can be reliable in learning a second or foreign language

2.2. Facebook Groups in EFL Contexts

The number of social media users is rapidly increasing in both personal and academic use. Chen and Bryer (2012,p. 89) argue that "social media have grown quickly for academic use and infiltrated the education area". Thus, social media platforms like Facebook are nowadays noticeably used to enhance language learning skills and competences. They are valuable platforms of significant role in English as a foreign language (EFL) context. Facebook groups are created to connect learners either with each other or with their teachers. These groups use Facebook as a supplementary source for language teaching learning process particularly in distance and virtual learning (Khan et al., 2020). Students share lectures and all kinds of information related to their learning contents via files, videos, photos and other multimedia sources. They consider such groups as effortless, confortable and practical spaces for learning. Additionally, Facebook groups create opportunities for learners to do practice of various language activities through peer to peer and also group activities. Using Facebook groups, learners may get assistance from their peers and teachers to do their tasks and share views without any hesitation. The interaction in virtual Facebook groups is not like the face to face interaction due to which students may feel anxiety and this may promote motivation for language learners. Learners are exposed to authentic language use employing informal varieties of language, slang, and cultural nuances. Worthy to note here that when they participate in online revision activities in a Facebook group, EFL learners' are in fact strengthening their social ties overtime (Al Qunayeer, 2020).

Unlike traditional face to face contexts, virtual social media groups such as messenger offer real life interactive and innovative space for discussion (Ghimire, 2021). They provide real life conversations, multimedia contents and instance access to various linguistic materials. Through Facebook messenger application, for instance, students can access to different pages, connect with language-learning groups, and engage with language-related posts, assisting them foster language learning abilities in different skills in interactive real time conversations (Najafov, Asadov, 2026). Many social media platforms and Facebook messenger in particular encourage collaborative foreign language learning and personalised language learning experiences through group discussion, shared documents, and peer feedback. In this sense, studies also show that EFL learners actively participate in writing exercises through Facebook Groups, improving their skills through peer feedback (Al Qunayeer, 2020).

3. Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate Algerian university EFL students' perceptions regarding the use and importance of Facebook Messenger as a platform for English as a Foreign Language learning (EFL). It aims to:

-       Explore how university students use Facebook Messenger for English language learning purposes to improve their communication, collaborate with each other, share information, and develop their English language skills.
-       Investigate students' perceptions, beliefs, and experiences regarding Facebook Messenger as a tool for EFL learning.
-       Evaluate Facebook messenger contribution to learners' language development, engagement, and motivation in EFL contexts.

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-       Identify the challenges and limitations faced by EFL university students while using Messenger as a source for EFL learning.

The study specifically aims to answer the following research questions:

-       What are the students' perceptions on the integration of Messenger application as a supplementary tool in English language learning process?
-       What is the effectiveness of using Messenger application in English language learning contexts?

4. Research Methodology

The study is based on a descriptive quantitative and qualitative research to allow the researcher to tackle the subject in a systematic empirical analysis. The descriptive approach is more convenient to reveal the important features of students' perceptions about integrating Facebook Messenger as a supplementary tool for their EFL learning. Moreover, a descriptive analysis is more appropriate for the purpose of this study since it uses the likert scale method to elicit the participants' opinions, attitudes and behaviours to investigate deeper insights into specific attributes (Bhandari &Nikolopoulou, 2023). This research strategy focused on thoroughly studying and understanding the variables to evaluate their relevance to the target construct.

The proposed research is a case study conducted at the departement of English of Belhadj Bouchaib University of Ain Temouchent, Algeria.

To collect data and students' comments for analysis, the researcher has formulated and refined a questionnaire addressed to 120 university students of both gender. It required 10 to 15 minutes to be completed.

The questions in the survey were designed to elicit 'Yes' or 'No' responses, while some also asked participants to rate their satisfaction using the following scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Uncertain (U), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). A total of 120 participants, consisting of 40 males and 80 females from different levels of studies namely first, second, third and master level took part in the survey. The sampling method used was purposive, as it was deemed suitable for addressing the research questions. Prior to completing the questionnaires, the survey was directly administered to the selected group of students.

The questionnaires were created in Google Forms format, and the link to the survey was sent to the respondents via email to collect valid information about Messenger as a language learning tool. This format provided convenience, allowing participants to complete the questionnaires at their own time and in a manner that suited them best.

Similarly, random samples were drawn from the open participation pool to assess the reliability of this instrument in the research. To facilitate this, the link to the questionnaires was shared on Facebook, inviting 60 individuals to participate.

5. Findings

In the present study, all the participants completed the questionnaire. The primary objective was to evaluate participants' perceptions of the Messenger application's effectiveness as a learning tool, as well as its anticipated utility for future educational purposes. The data were employing descriptive statistical methods. Overall percentages were calculated in relation to the total sample size, and the findings are systematically presented in the tables below:

Table 1: Perceptions of Facebook as a medium for interaction and communication

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
1- Facebook is a means of communication and interaction				52 43.33%	68 56.66%
2-Facebook helps me keep connected with my family members.	22 18.33%	34 28.33%	28 23.33%	20 16.66%	16 13.33%
3-Facebook helps me keep connected with my friends.			02 1.66%	66 55%	52 43.33%
4-Facebook helps me communicate			2	38	80

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with my classmates.			1.66%	31.66%	66.66%
5-facebook is an important means to communicate with my teachers	14 11.66%	28 23.33%	26 21.66%	32 26.66%	20 16.66%
6- Facebook keeps me in contact with the administrative staff	44 36.66%	40 33.33%	10 8.33%	16 13.33%	10 8.33%

SD: Strongly Disagree /   D: Disagree / U: Uncertain /A: Agree   SA: Strongly Agree

According to the findings presented in Table 1, EFL learners perceived Facebook as a medium for communication and interaction. One of the primary reasons they used Facebook was for these purposes. The majority of learners used Facebook to communicate with their friends (98.33%) and current classmates (98.32) through the platform. However, the level of interaction declined further when it came to family members (30%) and teachers (43.32%). Most notably, EFL learners did not use Facebook to communicate with school administrators (70%) disagree and strongly disagree with the statement.

Table 2: The attitudes and perceptions towards the use of Facebook Messenger application

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA
1-Learning language through Facebook messenger is enjoyable				40 33.33%	80 66.66%
2-Using the Messenger app for language learning is a positive idea				34 28.33%	86 71.66%
3-It is really easy to use messenger				20 16.66%	100 83.33%
4-Messenger provides a quick and efficient way to share information			2 1.66%	28 23.33%	90 75%
5-Messenger facilitates the sharing and discussion of information				26 21.66%	94 78.33%
6-Interaction via messenger is clear and understandable				16 13.33%	104 86.66%
7-Learning English through Messenger app is a convenient option.				24 20%	96 80%
8-Messenger is an effective tool for academic use.				20 16.66%	100 83.33%
9-The Messenger app facilitates engaging group discussions with peers and teachers at any time.				34 45%	66 55%
10-Using the Messenger app improves my English learning proficiency				32 26.66%	88 73.33%

The data above reveal a strong consensus among participants regarding the effectiveness of the Messenger application as a learning tool. Of the 120 participants, 94 (78.33%) strongly agreed that the Messenger app facilitated easy sharing and discussion of information in language learning, indicating a highly positive attitude towards its use. Only two participants (1.66%) expressed uncertainty about this. Similarly, regarding the effectiveness of messenger application as an academic tool, 100 (83.33%) students strongly agreed with the item; and the majority also consider the application a convenient tool to learn English (80%).

In terms of engagement and the ability to participate in group discussions with peers and teachers at any time, 54 students (45%) agreed, while 66 students (55%) strongly agreed. Overall, the data reflect predominantly positive attitudes and perceptions towards using Messenger as an integrated tool for learning English. The majority of students expressed agreement or strong agreement with the items assessing their views on Messenger's role in enhancing their language learning experience.
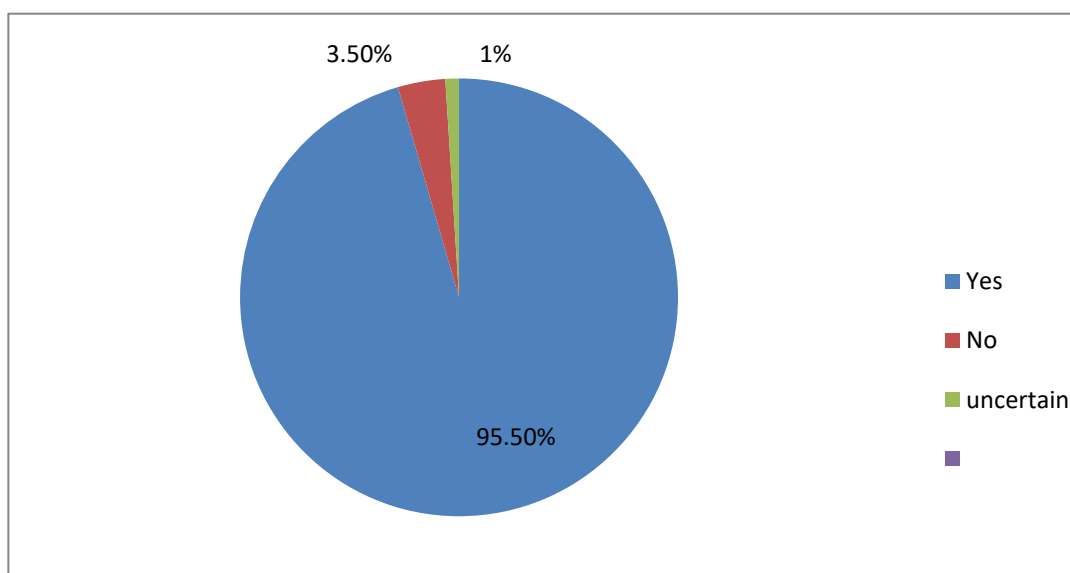
Table 3: Enhancing students' proficiency and motivation via Facebook messenger application

Statement	SD	D	U	A	SA

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Using messenger application is useful in my language learning				10 8.33%	110 91.66%
Messenger helped me learn more effectively			4 3.33%	36 30%	80 66.66%
My language learning performance improved through the use of Messenger			4 3.33%	34 28.33%	82 68.33%
Using Messenger helped me improve my writing skills.			2 1.66%	28 23.33%	90 75%
Using Messenger helped me improve my speaking skills			6 5%	20 16.66%	94 78.33%
The Messenger group discussions and interactions increased my motivation as an active learner				74 61.66%	46 38.33%
The interaction and discussion within the Messenger group enhanced my confidence in language learning activities.				42 35%	78 65%
I will continue using the Messenger app to improve my English language proficiency in the future.			10 8.33%	60 50%	50 41.66%
I will stop using the Messenger app for language learning in the future	64 53.33%	40 33.33%	16 13.33%		

The survey findings suggest that Messenger is perceived as a highly effective tool in the context of language learning. Among the 120 participants, 110 strongly agreed with the statement regarding Messenger's usefulness in language learning representing the highest level of perceived effectiveness (91.66%). Concerning the impact of Messenger on enhancing language learning efficacy, 80 participants (66.66%) strongly agreed, 36 (30%) agreed, and 4 (3.33%) expressed uncertainty.

Graph 4: The usefulness level of Messenger application

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Similarly, yes/no questions were included to explore participants' perceptions of Messenger's usefulness in English language learning. The responses indicated that 95.5% of participants answered "Yes," 3.5% responded "No," and 1% expressed uncertainty. These findings are illustrated in the pie chart below.

In relation to the development of specific language skills, particularly writing and speaking, the majority of the participants (75%, 78.33%) strongly agreed and approximately (23.33%, 16.66%) agreed that Messenger contributed positively to their improvement in these skills. Additionally, 74 (61.66%) participants agreed and 46 (38.33%) strongly agreed that interaction and discussion within Messenger groups promoted their engagement as active learners. Importantly, all the students agreed and strongly agreed that the interaction and discussion within the Messenger group enhanced their confidence in language learning activities. Regarding the future use of messenger application in English language learning, 16 (13.33%) students expressed uncertainty, while the remaining respondents indicated their intention to continue using it as a learning tool that improved their language proficiency.

6. Discussion

The aforementioned results indicate that EFL students primarily use Facebook for communication and interaction, particularly with friends and current classmates. This suggests that Facebook serves as an effective tool for maintaining peer connections within academic settings.

The findings of this study reveal that students held highly positive attitudes and perceptions towards the integration of Messenger as a tool for English language learning. Its ease of use, accessibility, rapid knowledge sharing, and facilitation of discussions were identified as key factors contributing to its effectiveness. As a result, the majority of participants either agreed or strongly agreed with its usefulness, reflecting a high overall level of acceptance. The data further demonstrated that Messenger significantly supported productive language learning and contributed to improvements in learners' performance.

Furthermore, engaging learners in interaction and discussion through Messenger groups proved to be highly beneficial, as it encouraged active participation and enhanced learners' confidence in language-related activities. The Messenger application was found to be particularly effective in facilitating the delivery and reception of information, enabling students to ask questions and receive responses promptly and efficiently (Rasulev, Shomurodov, Babajanova, Abdukadoriya, Najafov, & Asadov, 2026). In support of these findings, Samani and Noordin (2020) highlight that Messenger offers a range of attractive features—such as the ability to share text, audio, video, and images which can significantly enhance the teaching and learning process. Consequently, Face book Messenger application is useful not only during times of crisis and remote learning but also in traditional face-to-face instructional settings. The study further revealed that most students expressed a strong likelihood of continuing to use Messenger as a language learning tool in the future. Moreover, Messenger serves as a valuable platform for knowledge acquisition, enabling the rapid dissemination of subject-related content, whether shared individually or within groups. This capacity to facilitate efficient information exchange further reinforces its role as an effective educational tool (Najafov, Asadov, 2026).

The results of an open-ended question regarding the challenges and limitations associated with the use of social media in general and Facebook Messenger in particular, for language learning revealed that participants identified several key issues. Among the most frequently mentioned challenges were inadequate Wi-Fi access, low bandwidth, limited availability of computers, and the high cost of internet data bundles. These factors were seen as significant barriers that can impede the efficient and consistent use of social media platforms for educational purposes.

7. Conclusion, Implications and Recommendations

Facebook is widely seen as one of the most modern communication tools, and it is widely adopted among university students, who often use it for both connecting socially and enhancing their language learning. The present study has concluded that Facebook messenger application is an effective tool in enhancing students' English learning skills. It boosts their confidence, increases their motivation and encourages authentic language interaction. Messenger is an effective tool for language learning purposes, as it enhances learners' engagement through sharing information, discussing, and participating in collaborative interactions with peers in real life contexts. University students often use Facebook to share projects, photos, lessons, resource materials, and announcements. In addition, the application facilitates teacher-learners communication as a team based learning environment. The present study has identified different levels of perceptions, implications, challenges, and attitudes towards using Facebook messenger in language learning.

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The data indicated that Messenger application promotes active engagement, improves communication, increases learners' confidence and motivation, and contributes to the development of both writing and speaking skills. These results suggest that the integration of Messenger into language learning can support the creation of more interactive, student-cantered learning environments, an essential component for effective language learning. The participants' overwhelmingly positive attitudes suggest that digital tools like Messenger can serve as effective complements to traditional classroom instruction, enriching the overall language learning experience. Nevertheless, the study also highlights several infrastructural limitations, such as inadequate internet access and the high cost of data; which may pose significant barriers to the consistent and equitable use of such platforms in educational contexts.

Since the findings of this study reveal students' positive attitudes and perceptions towards the use of Messenger application in language learning, the study holds significant implications for school administrators, teachers, and students. The integration of Messenger should therefore be encouraged among all language learners. The platform facilitates collaboration between high-achieving and struggling students through group-based interaction, fostering peer support and cooperative learning. Moreover, Messenger serves as an effective teaching tool for the dissemination of educational content, including visual materials, hyperlinks, and instructional resources. The study also revealed a high level of Messenger usage among students, further emphasizing its practical applicability and relevance in modern language education.

Therefore, language educators and curriculum developers should explore the integration of Messenger and similar platforms into formal language learning programs to boost students' engagement and promote collaborative learning. Educational institutions and policymakers should focus on enhancing access to digital infrastructure, including reliable internet connectivity. They should afford data plans, to ensure equitable participation in mobile-assisted language learning. Messenger should be used to complement, rather than replace, traditional teaching methods. A blended approach that combines face-to-face instruction with mobile-assisted learning can foster a more flexible and inclusive language learning environment. In addition, further researches should be undertaken to examine the effects of using Facebook Messenger application in various educational contexts, as well as its effectiveness in enhancing specific language skills such as reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and grammar proficiency.

Overall, integrating Facebook messenger in language learning has been proved to be beneficial for students, teachers, and administrators for an effective language learning that engages students in an online learning community.

Ethical Considerations

This study was conducted in accordance with established ethical principles for educational and social science research. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and all respondents were informed of the purpose of the research prior to data collection. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any stage without any negative consequences. To protect participants' privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained. No personal identifiers were collected, and all data were used exclusively for academic research purposes. The collected information was securely stored and analyzed in an aggregated form to prevent individual identification. The study did not involve any physical, psychological, or social risks to participants and complied with institutional ethical standards for research involving human subjects.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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