

Improving Translation Quality: A Chinese-English Translation Study on the Profiles of Tourist Attraction in China Based on Cultural Awareness

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Abstract: The bilingual profiles of tourist attraction are used ubiquitously and seen everywhere in China. Whether foreign tourists can have an accurate understanding of and keen interest in a particular tourist attraction hinges directly on the quality of translation. However, various translation studies in this area focus on meaning equivalence of language as a symbol, whose function remains at the level of linguistic symbols' equivalence transformation. This article is mainly concerned with the profiles of tourist attraction enormously adopted in China and their cultural translation from Chinese to English as well as the improved translation output based on data analysis from the perspective of cultural awareness, in an attempt to explore a cultural translation strategy, namely, liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness. Based on examples personally gathered from Mainland China, it is found that the translation of tourist attraction profiles is mainly studied in a linguistically descriptive way, without enunciating the deep culture beneath the surface of linguistic forms. Through detailed analysis of these examples, the study also shows that using liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness in tourism translation is more explicable and intelligible to foreign tourists. The article concludes that cultural awareness must be considered in the liberal translation of tourist attraction profiles so as to communicate clearer and more accurate meaning to the target audience.

Keywords: Chinese-English translation study, tourist attraction profiles, cultural awareness, liberal translation, translation quality.

1. Introduction

With China's deep reform and opening up and the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, China's internationalization has been further enhanced. In the increasingly extensive exchanges between China and foreign countries, China's tourist attractions have become one of the most important windows for foreigners to understand China more comprehensively. Initially, the translation study of tourist attractions is helpful to promote the development of China's tourism industry and expand the economic and trade exchanges between China and foreign countries. Then, the translation studies on tourist attractions is conducive to promoting cultural exchanges between the two sides and eliminating foreigners' misunderstanding and scruples about China. Finally, the in-depth study on the combination of tourism introduction translation and cultural awareness provides a new way of thinking for the research paradigm in this field. Therefore, the translation of tourist attraction profiles is particularly of great significance in terms of economy, culture, politics and academics.

Translation is a linguistic and mental activity that has existed in human society for thousands of years. It arises from the need of communication between different ethnic groups in human society. Not only is it the result of the development of language system, but it also has a significant impact on the development of language and culture. As Bassnett (2007) put it, translation is not a pure linguistic activity but a kind of cross-cultural communication [1]. In other words, translation studies should consider not only the equivalence of target language text (TLT) to source language text (SLT) linguistically, but also the equivalence between them culturally. As a translator, one must have a degree of cultural

awareness or cultural cognition in the process of translation. Actually, there are some researchers studying translation in relation to culture and showing its influence translation, for instance, the cultural turn in translation studies (Bachmann-Medick, 2009; Zhang, 2013; Castello, 2014; Yan, & Huang, 2014; Bassnett, & Johnston, 2019; Ning, 2023) [2-7], the intra-and inter-cultural translation studies (House, 2012; Furukawa, 2015; Robin, 2015; Liddicoat, 2016; Demidova, 2017; Peart, 2019; Zanettin, 2022) [8-14], and the cultural differences in translation, or the cultural translation studies (Sun, 2003; Mizani, 2009; Katan, 2012; Yang, 2014) [15-18]. All these studies reflect that cultural awareness plays an increasingly important role in the development of translation. Similarly, cultural awareness is also preferred in the translation study of tourist attractions both at home and abroad, for example, the study of cross-cultural translation of tourist texts by picking out the existing problems or errors and then proposing certain strategies or methods to improve the quality of translation (Kim, & O'Connor, 2011; Agorni, 2012; Zhang, 2012; AmirDabbaghian, 2014; Cui, 2016; Fang, & Chen, 2018) [19-24]. Additionally, there are also some quantitative studies on the translation of tourist attraction profiles relating to cultural awareness (Narváez, & Zambrana, 2014; Pratama, et al. 2021) [25, 26] and descriptive or interpretive studies based on examples but lacking a support from data analysis (Novikova, 2017; Agorni, 2018; Sulaiman, et al. 2019) [27-29]. Although these researches into the cultural translation of tourist attractions have made progress in qualitative and quantitative analysis, it's crystal clear that there is still room for further study in this area.

Therefore, this article concentrates mainly on the translation of tourist attraction profiles collected personally from tourist texts in China based on data analysis of these real examples, aiming to explore a new strategy for translating

tourist attraction profiles culturally, i.e. the liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness. Despite a challenge to implement this translating strategy, it's still of great significance and possible to improve the quality of translating tourist attraction profiles in China.

2. Definitions of Cultural Awareness

Various definitions of cultural awareness are presented in previous study. The following two definitions are provided to underlie the principles and concepts supported in this study. Goode, et al. (2006) defined "cultural awareness" as being cognizant, observant, and conscious of similarities and differences among and between cultural groups [30]. In other words, cultural awareness is the ability to realize the similarities and differences among different cultures. According to Winkelmann (2005), awareness of cultural differences and their impact on behavior is the beginning of intercultural effectiveness. He stated that "cultural self-awareness includes recognition of one's own cultural influences upon values, beliefs, and judgments, as well as the influences derived from the professional's work culture." [31] To put it another way, individuals should be aware of their cultural differences from other cultural groups and their possible influences on others. Cultural awareness involved in translation means that a translator should be sensible of overcoming the cultural differences or different cultural background knowledge behind the linguistic forms. Thus, whether foreign tourists can fully understand the target language finally depends on the extent to which the cultural information beneath the source language is interpreted.

3. A Literature Review of Tourist Attraction Profiles in Relation to Cultural Awareness

The study of Chinese tourist attraction profiles and their translation has always attracted much attention. This area of study is crucial as it directly impacts the promotion and representation of tourist destinations across linguistic and cultural boundaries.

Actually, there are some researchers studying the translation of tourist attraction profiles or tourist texts from the perspective of culture. Liu (2020) assumed that the cultural translation of a city's tourist texts is beneficial to the spread of cultural values and the conveyance of information to the target audience, and put forward some measures based on existing examples to improve the quality of translation [32]. Tan, et al (2021) summarized two points from the perspective of reception aesthetics that translators should pay attention to, i.e. attitude and language ability, and assumed that the tourist translation should guide foreign tourists to understand the geographical condition and historic culture of scenic spots [33]. He and Su (2022) explored how tourism promotional materials are initially written in the target language to attract tourists in the target culture, and discussed tourist texts chosen from three websites based on six dimensions of culture, namely collectivism/individualism, restraint/indulgence, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, high/low context, and short/long term orientation, putting forward the corresponding translation strategies [34]. AmirDabbaghian (2014) employed foreignization and domestication as strategies to make target audience feel the same as translators do in source language texts, and analyzed the advantages and disadvantages in order to use them more

effectively in translation [35]. Kim and O'Connor (2011) made a cross-cultural analysis to compare the profiles of international screen-tourists by nationalities, and investigated the screen-tourism concept as associated with the *Hallyu* phenomenon [36]. Cui (2016) described the existing problems in tourism translation in terms of four factors, such as cultural difference, complexity of language itself, determination of context, and phenomenon of vacancy, thus proposing such strategies as folk customs, cultural borrowing, and technological application awareness [37].

Additionally, Sulaiman and Wilson (2018) proposed a cultural-conceptual translation (CCT) model to improve translation outcomes in the area of tourism promotion. It contains two key concepts: cultural conceptualization and destination image. The former was drawn from cultural linguistics, mainly manifesting the oft-overlooked 'silent' or 'unconscious' level of culture, while the latter was drawn from tourism studies and identified as a crucial element in tourism promotion and advertising [38]. It was argued that the effectiveness of tourism promotional materials (TPMs) translations relies on the (re)construction of 'favorable' destination images based on the cultural conceptualization of the target audience.

Obviously, these researchers concentrated mainly on the descriptive translation study of materials, texts or promotions relating to tourism or tourist attractions, in terms of culture, cultural difference, or intercultural communication, to put forward some strategies for improving the quality of translation. Although most of the researchers are focused on correcting the wrong translations based on examples collected from different tourist attractions combined with different theoretical analysis, some of them are concerned with the translation study relating to culture or cultural awareness in tourist translation analyzed in a quantitative way. Narváez, & Zambrana (2014) studied the translation of culture-specific items in tourist promotion campaigns, demonstrating how these items call for specific translation treatment in a way of questionnaire survey and data analysis, highlighting the importance of translation procedure in handling the target culture's expectations to improve translation quality [39]. Pratama et al (2021) studied four categories of cultural words (environment, behavior, values/beliefs, and identity) appearing frequently in tourist source text based on data analysis, assessing the accuracy of translation [40]. Ren (2015) stated that cultural awareness of translators is of great significance in selecting proper translation strategies for translating culture-loaded lexemes in tourist texts, using data and statistics of examples in the corpus to explain the importance of foreignization and domestication in retaining the cultural meaning of the source text [41].

In summary, these studies using data collection and analysis, investigated the development status of tourism text translation from the perspective of cultural differences or cultural awareness, which is conducive to improving the quality of tourism text translation. By conducting a literature review on the translation study of tourist texts, researchers can contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural communication or cultural awareness in the tourism industry, ultimately benefiting both travelers and destinations. However, in spite of their common objectives to improve the translation quality, there are very few translation studies on tourist attractions focusing mainly on profiles from the perspective of cultural awareness based on enough real examples collected from Mainland China, with a view to

formulating a new culturally-integrated strategy for translating the profiles of tourist attractions.

4. Method

The study involves the actual data collection of a great many tourist attraction profiles through a personal visit to various scenic spots or places of interest in Mainland China. In the process of traveling, the problematic or erroneous translation of tourist attraction profiles is carefully observed and selected to take photos of them first, and then to organize them into texts, by which the research and analysis are finally conducted. The research is done in the form of case study based on varieties of examples in terms of liberal translation or free translation integrated with cultural awareness. In other words, tourist attraction profiles to be studied here include only the sentence level and above, and the problems with their translation are analyzed from the perspective of cultural awareness, combined with the strategy of liberal translation only, irrespective of spelling and grammar.

5. Case Studies of Tourist Attraction Profiles Translated Based on Cultural Awareness

Tourism is a multifaceted industry including various services associated with travel for leisure, recreation, or business purposes. What is studied in these cases concludes only the profiles of tourist attraction. An effective translation of tourist attraction profiles requires a nuanced understanding of both language and culture. Cultural awareness is of paramount importance in producing accurate and engaging translations resonating with the target audience with different cultural backgrounds. In the process of translation from Chinese into English, examples are given to be analyzed for the reason why their translation is incorrect or inaccurate in terms of liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness, and then a suggested cultural translation is offered for reference.

Examples from Mainland China analyzed through liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness

CHINESE

乌镇的拳船起源于南宋，因乌镇位于两省三府七县交界之处，镇区河网密布，民间习武于船上，既强身健体，又保一方平安。每年“香市”期间，拳船上的武师免费为当地的百姓表演武术，延续至今。

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

The origin of boxing boat dates back to South Song Dynasty, and this method of exercising was very popular in that time. Because Wu Zhen was the junction of two provinces, three municipalities, and seven counties, the local people exercised the Chinese martial on boats to keep the safety of WuZhen. During the period of every “ragrant market” the people who can perform the Chinese martial would like to give a free performance for the crowd mass.

LIBERAL TRANSLATION INTEGRATED WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS

Kungfu Boat in Wuzhen originated in the South Song Dynasty. At that time, the local folks were used to practicing Kungfu on boat because this town, intersected with many rivers, was located at the junction of three prefectural cities and seven counties of the two provinces. This way of practicing kungfu not only promotes physical fitness but ensures the safety of locals. Every year during the “Local

Kirmess”, the masters kept performing kungfu free of charge for these locals.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Firstly, the word “拳 (quan)” here should represent Chinese martial arts or Chinese Kungfu, and in the past, what the folk called “打拳 (da quan)” was actually a way of practicing martial arts in traditional Chinese culture. In addition, it should be noted that martial arts include judo, taekwondo, etc., so it is more accurate to use “Kungfu” to refer to Chinese martial arts or kungfu. Secondly, “municipalities” in the original translation mostly refer to autonomous cities or municipalities directly under the central government, but “府 (fu)” here should be equivalent to the current prefectural cities, which are not controlled directly by the central government. Moreover, if the map is unfolded here and its’ crystal clear that the three provinces and seven counties belong to the two provinces Jiangsu and Zhejiang, so it should be translated as “... the junction of three prefectural cities and seven counties of the two provinces.” Finally, there is a totally wrong understanding of “香市 (xiang shi)”, which has nothing to do with “fragrant.” “香市 (xiang shi)” is a “temple fair”-style temporary market of the temple of local god of land that begins on the 1st of March and ends on the 15th of this month in the lunar calendar. The country people come to burn incense, pray for god’s blessing, and stroll around while eating, drinking and having fun there. Therefore, “local Kirmess” is preferred in translation for its equivalence in cultural meaning to the West.

CHINESE

“丁兰刻木事亲”的故事发源地，南宋以来相传，就是皋亭山下的丁桥镇，讲述了一则“子欲孝而亲不待”的故事。原文：“丁兰母冢，故居在艮山门外三十六里丁桥之右，母死，刻木事之如生，冢在姥山之东。”

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

“Ding Lan carved wood matter,” the story of origin, since the Southern Song Dynasty, is the Dingqiao town under the Gao Ting Mountain, tells a story of “son to filial piety and not to be close.” The original texts are written like this: “Dinglan mother mound, former residence outside the Genshan gate thirty-six miles Ding bridge on the right, mother died, wood carving things such as life, the mound in the east of the mountain.

LIBERAL TRANSLATION INTEGRATED WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS

Legend since the Southern Song Dynasty has it that the story of Ding Lan, who carved wooden statues of his parents for worship, originated in Dingqiao town at the foot of the Gaoting Mountain of Hangzhou. It is a story of the Chinese old saying that “the tree would like to be quiet but the wind is blowing while children would like to support but parents can’t wait”.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

The original translation is nearly done in a word-for-word way, for example, the translation “Ding Lan carved wood matter,” which is not a matter or event, but a classic story. Though the target text is almost consistent with the source text in linguistic forms, it’s not intelligible in meaning to the target audience due to the lack of communicating cultural knowledge behind both languages. In this example, the liberal translation of “子欲孝而亲不待” based on the cultural background of this story is vital to foreign tourists’ exact understanding of it. Compared with the original translation, the cultural translation can be recommended like this: “The

tree would like to be quiet but the wind is blowing while children would like to support but parents can't wait". The reason is that an easier understanding of the former clause is conducive to tourists' better understanding of why parents can't wait when their children hope to support them. Culturally, there is an implication in the sentence that once their parents died early before children grew up; no chance was given to support them when children wished to do so. Similarly, the tree cannot stand still quietly when the wild wind is always blowing violently.

CHINESE

骑门雕花大梁是用整段香樟木制成，总长为4.1米，宽0.66米，厚0.36米，重达341公斤，大梁雕刻精细，两头草龙纹饰与鱼鳃纹线修长流畅，全家福人物造型形象生动，为郭子仪七子八婿全家团圆的生活场景。

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

Qimen Flower-crane Beam with a height of 4 meters stands in the exhibition hall, and the crossbeam is to weigh camphor. A complete scene of birthday party of a Tang Dynasty general's family is vividly presented on the crossbeam.

LIBERAL TRANSLATION INTEGRATED WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS

Qimen Sculptured Crossbeam, made of a whole piece of camphorwood, is 4.1 meters long, 0.66 meters wide, 0.36 meters thick, and 341 kilos in weight. The Crossbeam is finely carved at the both ends, where the dragon ornamentation and fish gill's streak line is slender and smooth. On the Crossbeam exists a family portrait which vividly shows a scene of birthday banquet for Guo Ziyi, a famous general in Tang Dynasty.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

There are too many basic errors in the original translation, such as "complete scene" and "Tang Dynasty", and there is also a lot of information missing, such as the loss of these specific data "总长为4.1米，宽0.66米，厚0.36米，重达341公斤," and the exact description of the sentence "大梁雕刻精细，两头草龙纹饰与鱼鳃纹线修长流畅". It's striking that these descriptions play a pivotal role in displaying the luxurious life of Guo Ziyi when his family reunites at the banquet. In the meantime, Guo Ziyi is the central figure of the Crossbeam, and if you don't tell his story, or even not mention him, it is very difficult for visitors to understand the cultural meaning behind it, and you will never know what on earth it is. Finally, although it is a carved crossbeam, "雕花 (diao hua)" here does not refer to the carved "flower," but to the exquisite carving just like a flower, or in the shape of flower, which is typical of the stunning traditional Chinese craft. Thus, the literal translation of it will definitely make the foreign visitors confused a lot.

CHINESE

三坊七巷，百余年来这里走出的名人志士对中国近代史产生过重要推动作用，如林则徐、沈葆楨、严复、林旭、林觉民等等，因而又被誉为“一片三坊七巷，半部中国近代史”。

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, more than a hundred years out of the famous people here have played an important role in promoting China's modern history, such as Lin Zexu, Shen Baozhen, Yan Fu, Lin Xu, Lin Juemin and so on, so it is also known as "Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, half of China's modern history."

LIBERAL TRANSLATION INTEGRATED WITH

CULTURAL AWARENESS

Three Lanes and Seven Alleys witnessed many major events in China's modern history (1840-1949), in which Lin Zexu, Shen Baozhen, Yan Fu, Lin Xu, Lin Juemin, and other prominent figures from this neighborhood had played important roles.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Formally, there is no problem with the translation of this tourist profile from Chinese to English because the equivalence of both languages is unproblematic, for example, the names of these famous figures, and especially the reputation that Three Lanes and Seven Alleys have earned in history. However, the question is that foreign tourists have no knowledge of the so-called "Three Lanes and Seven Alleys, half of China's modern history" if the basic historical and cultural backgrounds relevant to these old lanes and alleys are not given here. Culturally, foreign tourists will easily understand the prominent role that these old lanes and alleys have played in China's modern history while seeing the concrete historical period from 1840 to 1949 when those major events happened in China.

CHINESE

二十四孝之一的“董永卖身葬父”的故事，在杭州江干区境内传统丝绸业从业人员中广为流传，“天仙庙”铭记和表现的正式这段佳话。

原文：董永，家贫，父死，卖身贷钱而葬。及去偿工，路遇一妇，求为永妻。俱至主家。令织缣三百匹乃回。一月完成。归至槐荫会所，遂辞而去。

有诗为颂：葬父贷孔兄，仙姬陌上逢。织缣偿债主，孝心动苍穹。

ORIGINAL TRANSLATION

The story of "Dong Yong selling his body to bury his father", one of the 24 Filial Piety, is widely spread among the traditional silk industry practitioners in Jianggan District, Hangzhou, and the official story of "Tianxian Temple" is remembered and expressed. There are poems for praise: burial father loan Kong brother, fairy strangers meet. Weaving the Lord of debt, filial piety moves the sky.

LIBERAL TRANSLATION INTEGRATED WITH CULTURAL AWARENESS

The Story of Dong Yong, who sold himself for burial of his father, one of the 24 Stories of Filial Piety, is widely circulated among traditional silk industry workers in Jianggan District, Hangzhou. It is to commemorate this moving story that people built the "Fairy Temple".

The whole story: Dong Yong was born in a poor family, so he had to sell himself to bury his dead father. On his way to the rich man's home working for debt, he met a woman who asked Dong Yong to marry her. Then, the couple went to the rich man's house together. There it took them a month to finish 300 pieces of silk as required by the master and paid off the debt. On the way home, arriving at the locust tree where they had met each other before, the woman said goodbye to him.

Thus, there are poems in praise of him like this: Loaning money for burial of his father, while encountering a fairy woman halfway. Weaving together for paying off the debt of the master, filial piety moves the heaven.

CULTURAL ANALYSIS

Firstly, the main content of the story is omitted in the original translation, though it's not the key point in this study. However, the loss of information must form an obstacle to tourists' better understanding of this story. Therefore, a

suggested translation of the whole story is still provided for reference. Then, the translation of the title: “Dong Yong selling his body to bury his father” is very inappropriate for the easy misunderstanding of “body” as dead body. It’s important for visitors to know that Dong Yong just lost his identification as an independent person till he paid off the debt. Another problem is the translation of “天仙庙 (tian xian miao)” into “Tianxian Temple” which cannot clearly show what it is to foreigners. If it is translated as “Fairy Temple,” they can immediately understand it because of the cultural equivalence of 天仙 (tian xian) in Chinese to “fairy” in English (an imaginary creature with magical powers). Finally, none of the foreign tourists are able to know the true meaning of “孔兄 (kong Xiong)” when it is translated as “Kong Brother.” In traditional Chinese culture, it is an ancient Chinese currency made of copper, usually in a round shape but with a hollow square in its center. Metaphorically, it gradually becomes a name of currency in classic Chinese and later stands for money in modern Chinese.

6. Discussion

The descriptive study on Chinese-English translation of tourist texts relating to culture or cultural difference is not uncommon in China. However, the previous study of this area is mostly confined to the linguistic equivalence in form between Chinese and English below the sentence level, for example, the public signs, the name of scenic spots, and slogans, etc. which have little cultural influence on the whole discourse analysis except certain culture-loaded words. In other words, what is concerned at most in the translation study is the comparison and contrast in both languages at the semantic level, where words and expressions are decontextualized. Nonetheless, the translation study of tourist attraction profiles above the sentence level or at the level of paragraphs is focused on the pragmatic analysis based on cultural difference, which is helpful to effect successful communication between the linguistic texts and foreign tourists.

Moreover, this study emphasizes not only the cultural differences between source language and target language in tourist texts, but it also strives to regard a translator as the subject of cultural cognition. With this cognitive mind, a translator can enhance his cultural awareness and cognitive ability gradually by applying the knowledge of background and culture that has been mastered to the translation of tourist attraction profiles as well as the data analysis based on a certain number of examples collected from the Mainland China.

More importantly, this translation study of tourist attraction profiles is mainly committed to enunciating the deep culture beneath the surface of linguistic forms. By means of case studies, this research attempts to explore a new strategy for tourist translation, i.e. the liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness, which is far more different from those previous studies that pay more attention to the literal translation and free translation at the level of words and phrases. One of the contributions of this study is to provide a new point for the translation of tourist profiles at the sentence-level rather than the study of words or phrases. Additionally, consciously cultivating a translator’s cultural awareness from the perspective of taking a translator as the cognitive subject is helpful to avoid cross-cultural communication barriers in the process of translation, thus enhancing his cross-cultural

understanding. Finally, the liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness is a new attempt to create a distinctive or creative strategy for bettering the quality of translating tourist texts.

However, the study still has some shortcomings to be further improved. Firstly, Data analysis mainly relies on examples and cannot be quantified due to the long sentences and paragraph analyzed in a descriptive and explanatory method. Besides, whether the strategy of liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness can enhance the translator’s cultural awareness and effectively improve the quality of tourism translation depends entirely on the amount of cases selected for study and the depth of their analysis.

7. Conclusion

By analyzing the relationship between language and culture in translation in the form of case study, it is found that culture has played a pivotal role in Chinese-English translation especially when some culture-loaded words often appear in the source language. If a translator lacks basic cultural awareness and knowledge when translating a classic Chinese or modern Chinese containing some classic words, he or she cannot produce an excellent translating work that is enjoyable for the target readers.

Secondly, the findings also show that sometimes a good command of pure linguistic code switch between the source language and target language cannot create a wonderful and idiomatic translation work. The translator’s cultural awareness is the bridge between the language form and the cultural connotation, and it’s also the link that promotes the cross-cultural understanding between two different languages.

Then, the new strategy of liberal translation integrated with cultural awareness is conducive to the improvement of target audience’s understanding of the translated profiles of tourist attraction in China. Also, it has a positive impact on the betterment of Chinese-English translation quality in tourism industry.

Finally, most of the case studies as well as the suggested translations are empirical in essence. The cultural translation of these tourist attraction profiles not only provides a cognitive strategy for other tourism translations, but also provides a valuable complement and reference for the theoretical research on cultural awareness.

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