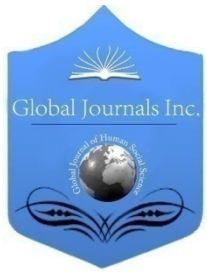
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Comparative Acceptability of GTM and CLT to the Teachers of Rural Secondary High Schools in Bangladesh

By Md. Mahbubul Alam
Sylhet Cadet College, Bangladesh

Abstract- Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been innovated in the secondary (and the higher secondary) level of education in Bangladesh by drastically devaluing the principles of the long-practiced traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM). The present study was carried out on some rural secondary high school teachers in Bangladesh about comparative acceptability of GTM and CLT in respects of achieving four skills, accuracy/ fluency, translating activity, group/pair works, and classroom language. The result of the study reflected their mixed attitude to GTM and CLT, though all of them put emphasis on language learning through translating activity in group/pair works. Their tendency and claims were in favor of the multi-syllabus. On the basis of the data findings this paper also presents some suggestions for appropriate methodology in ELT in Bangladesh.

Keywords: CLT, GTM, translation, group/pair works, learners, teachers, four skills, grammar, classroom- language, multi-syllabus, etc.

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I. Introduction

In English the performance of students is deplorable now in Bangladesh. It has been because our secondary and higher secondary level students are getting neither direct touch of grammar as proposed by GTM nor the fullest supposed advantages from CLT. As a result of both exiled condition of GTM and impracticality of CLT their situation is in between now. The students of rural areas are in more awful circumstance. So, it is high time we adopted a reasonable ELT method. To do so a comparative practical analysis of GTM and CLT is necessary and rural secondary high school teachers of English can contribute significantly by sharing their experience and opinions. The present study is a mirror on which experiences and opinions of the rural secondary high school teachers of English have been reflected.

English teachers at the rural level of Bangladesh may be less trained and enjoy less opportunity but their teaching experience is vast. In respect of the social, economic and cultural reality of this country they know well about the comparative effectiveness and practicality of the traditional GTM and recently innovated high-ambitious CLT project. In addition to it, rural teachers represent the major part of secondary high school teachers of Bangladesh.

In spite of this fact, their voice in methodological policy making for ELT class has barely been made recognizable. No doubt their position is marginal and thus, they suffer from inferiority complex when they are compared to the teachers of urban educational institutions. This pedagogical discrimination must be settled by throwing light on their beliefs and attitudes to the ELT classroom activities and other necessary sides. This is also the rationale behind conducting this research.

II. Review of Literature

The Grammar-Translation Method is a traditional method. It has had different names, but it has been used by language teachers for many years. Earlier in this century, this method was used for the purpose of helping students read and appreciate foreign language literature. It was also hoped that, through the study of grammar of the target language, students would become more familiar with grammar of the native language. (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 11) Proponents of this method believe that learning a foreign language is achieved through the constant and fast translation of sentences from the target language to the learner's first language and vice versa. The GTM holds that splitting the language into parts determined by the grammatical categories of the language has psycholinguistic validity. That is, the task of learning is made easier if one is exposed to one part of the grammatical system at a time. (Brumfit and Johnson 1979, p. 82)

On the other hand, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is a recent innovation in the pedagogical field. It was the product of educators and linguists who had grown dissatisfied with earlier Grammar Translation and Audio-lingual Methods, where students were not learning enough realistic, socially necessary language. For some time after the rise of CLT, the status of grammar in the curriculum was rather uncertain. Some linguists maintained that it was not necessary to teach grammar, that the ability to use a language (knowing 'how') would develop automatically if the learner were required to focus on meaning in the process of using the language to communicate. (Nunan 1989, p. 13)

Author: Lecturer in English, Sylhet Cadet College, Sylhet, Bangladesh. e-mail: palash759@yahoo.com

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III. Achieving Four Skills through GTM and CLT

Language learning is not only concerned with acquiring knowledge (about grammar and pronunciation systems, for example) - it is not just something we learn *about*. Rather, it is a *skill*, or a set of skills- something we learn to *do*, like riding a bike. So, students need meaningful, interactive practice in the skills in order to learn to use the language. (Gower, Phillips, and Walters 1983, p. 85) Traditionally, we speak of four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. In the Grammar-Translation Method the primary skills to be developed are reading and writing. Little attention is given to speaking and listening (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 16). It happens because GTM does not emphasize the ability to communicate in the target language, where speaking and listening is required (Richards, Platt and Weber 1985, p. 126).

But the CLT Method is concerned with equal attention to all the four skills. Speaking and listening, along with reading and writing get parallel importance. "…such an approach assumes that language teaching will reflect the particular needs of the target learners. These needs may be in the domains of reading, writing, listening, or speaking, each of which can be approached from a communicative perspective." (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p. 163) The proponents of CLT argue that in the traditional method a learner's speaking and listening ability could not be flourished.

IV. Grammar and Accuracy /Fluency

Although it is true that people learn language in different ways, it seems that many people can learn a language more easily if they can perceive regularities and patterns. Many of the patterns that students learn are particular grammatical items. (Gower, Phillips, and Walters 1983, p. 126) The Grammar-Translation Method deals with learning grammatical patterns of this sort while learner's learning a foreign language. Refinement in learning through immediate error correction is the prime concern in this method, thus, accuracy is emphasized as students are expected to attain high standards in translation. Accuracy refers to the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences but may not include the ability to speak or write fluently (Richards, Platt and Weber 1985, p. 108). In this method grammar is taught deductively- that is, by presentation and study of grammar rules, which are then practiced through translation exercises (Richards and Rodgers 2001, p. 06).

On the other side, the proponents of CLT hold the view that "frequent error correction hinders fluency practice since it breaks the continuity of learners in speaking, reading and writing. They consider fluency very important and argue for the intelligibility of a speech, not for the total correctness of the speech." (Huda 2012, p. 38) Fluency includes the ability to speak with a good but not necessarily perfect command of intonation, vocabulary, and grammar (Richards, Platt and Weber 1985, p. 108). The proponents of CLT stress the value of developing the communicative competence of the learner beyond the mastery of language form, though they do not ignore the value of linguistic competence. They also assert that the principles of CLT include concentration on 'use' rather than 'usage' of English with focus on fluency than accuracy. Grammar is taught inductively in this approach.

V. Language Learning through Translating Activity and Group/Pair Works

In the Grammar-Translation Method translating activity occupies the major part. "Students translate a reading passage from the target language into their native language. The reading passage then provides the focus for several classes: vocabulary and grammatical structures in the passage are studied in subsequent lessons. The passage may be excerpted from some work from the target language literature, or a teacher may write a passage carefully designed to include particular grammar rules and vocabulary. The translation may be written or spoken or both." (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 19) According to Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 06), the sentence is the basic unit of teaching and language practice. Much of the lesson of the GTM is devoted to translating sentences into and out of the target language, and the focus on the sentence is the distinctive feature of the method.

In contrast, group/pair works, dialogues and role-plays are some of the most practiced techniques in CLT classroom. In group/pair works students are divided into several groups and pairs and interact with themselves. Presentation of dialog and several mini-dialogs are also included. Role-plays give students an opportunity to practice communicating in different social contexts and different social roles, so they are very important in CLT. (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 134) Since classroom interaction is solely based on the learners themselves, these activities enable them to become self-confident and self-motivated.

VI. Role of the Teacher and Students

The role of the teacher is a significant determinant of the linguistic environment of classroom learning. Teacher's attitude towards his/her students effects psychological state of the latter. In the Grammar-Translation Method the role of the teacher is very traditional. The teacher is the authority in the classroom. The students do as /s/he says so they can learn what s/he knows. (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 17) Since this method puts emphasis on accuracy, it is very important that students get the correct answer from the teacher.

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On the contrary, CLT is the learner-centered approach. "One of the obvious features about the development of communicative ability is that it occurs through processes *inside the learner*. The teacher can offer the kinds of stimulus and experience that these processes seem to require, but has no direct control over them." (Littlewood 1981, p. 91) The teacher is just a co-communicator or facilitator and he/she establishes situations. To Richards and Rodgers (1986, p. 167), in CLT classroom the teacher is a needs analyst, counselor and group process manager.

VII. Classroom Language

In the Grammar-Translation Method classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language. The meaning of the target language is made clear by translating it into the students' native language (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 18). In GTM "The first language is maintained as the reference system in the acquisition of the second language (Stern 1983, p. 455, quot., Richards and Rodgers 2001, p. 05)."

On the other hand, in CLT the target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study. Judicious use of the students' native language is permitted in CLT However, whenever possible, the target language should be used during communicative activities and explaining the activities. (Larsen-Freeman 2004, p. 132) Since CLT gives priority to fluency in the target language, maximum use of the target language is justified.

VIII. Objectives

The aim of the study was to investigate the comparative acceptability of GTM and CLT to the rural secondary high school teachers of Bangladesh, in respect of achieving four skills, grammatical accuracy/fluency, translating activity, group/pair works, role of the teacher and learners, and classroom language. The following were the objectives of this study:

- To focus the distinct places of GTM and CLT in the rural secondary high school teachers of Bangladesh, and
- To make the voices of the rural teachers heard in the field of pedagogy, especially for syllabus and materials designing.

IX. Methodology

a) Respondents

The participant teachers (two females and eight males) were ten in number who were from six rural non-government secondary high schools of Sherpur, Jamalpur and Mymenshingh districts in Bangladesh. They were of different ages having different levels of teaching experiences. Most of them had teaching experiences of both GTM and CLT, and the others were newly joined. The amalgamation of the two types of teachers was intentional, to ensure a combination of opinions of the generations both past and present. All of the teachers were interviewed individually in their respective educational institutions.

b) Materials

A questionnaire to the teachers was followed. Audio recording devices were used, all the teachers allowed recording. After the end of each interview, audio version was converted into the nearest meaningful word version. Necessary notes were taken during the interviews.

c) Data preparation

To accomplish this empirical study qualitative case study was maintained. Interview was semi-structured as it was flexible, allowing new questions to be brought up during the interview. Most of the interviews were conducted in Bangla for better communication, and then it was translated into English keeping the best intimacy. This article uses an abbreviation ('T', standing for 'Teacher', e.g., T-1= 'Teacher-1' or the First Teacher).

X. Data Analysis

a) Achieving Four Skills through GTM and CLT

All the participant teachers, except one, spoke in favor of GTM in respect of achieving four skills. They denied CLT's claim that in traditional system a learner was weak in speaking and listening. Their common opinion was that those who had learnt English through GTM could use their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills with equal proficiency. A teacher (T-1), having thirty years of English teaching experience, when he was asked whether learners of GTM could achieve speaking and listening skills, said confidently, "Of course, even I think they did better than now". He also affirmed that in respect of the four skills there was no novelty in CLT.

Another teacher (T-2), having twelve years of teaching experience, opined that meritorious students always performed meritoriously. That is, for a good student to achieve the four skills GTM or CLT matters nothing. There is an implication of going beyond any methodological innovation in language teaching-learning in his opinion. However, his mode is cynical more about CLT. Two other teachers (T-3 and T-5) held similar view and stated that their teachers who had learnt and had taught English through GTM could speak fluently. But, they regretted, learners who were being nurtured in CLT could not speak even normally in English.

T-4 was a bit optimistic about achieving four skills through CLT, but she indicated some impracticalities of CLT especially in the rural context of Bangladesh, and preferred GTM. T-6, a newly appointed

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young teacher who had learnt English through CLT, sided with GTM for four skills, and despised frequent changes in syllabus. T-7, having sixteen years of English teaching experience, stated the same to T-6. He also added that the instructions related to speaking and listening skills in CLT were ambiguous.

However, T-10, having fifteen years of teaching experience, spoke in a different way. She supported the claim of CLT that in GTM learners were weak in speaking and listening. "Even graduate students could not speak in English well", she said, "Rather they did well in reading and writing".

The implication of their opinion is clearly manifested. Except one, nobody is convinced that GTM cannot produce learners having good speaking and listening skills, as claimed by CLT. Rather they have doubt about the same skills achieved through CLT.

b) Grammar and Accuracy /Fluency

Out of the ten teachers nine were critical of CLT's giving priority to fluency. They argued that the reason of the learner's failure in fluency in CLT was its negligence to accuracy. They believed that without grammatical accuracy no learner could produce correct fluent English. T-5 said, "Grammar is the soul of language. Without grammar how can you speak perfectly?"

T-1 put emphasis on the knowledge of grammar. "You have to have complete knowledge of grammar. This accuracy will bring your fluency. The fact is that you have to *know* before everything. The learners of the traditional method could speak fluently because they had grammatical accuracy." He also cited the recent report on GPA-5-holder students' sorrowful performance in English of Dhaka University admission test. He criticized inductive process of grammar in CLT that all learners were not equally enough meritorious to cope with learning grammar indirectly. T-6 maintained the same and said that in fluency "grammar is a must".

A young teacher (T-3) tried to express different view. "We cannot go with tradition for long. We have to embrace globalization. In traditional method students used to memorize rules and sentences. Now they are to be creative." But he also added that grammatical activities should, by no means, be ignored even in fluency practice. Another young teacher (T-4) expressed her neutral observation: "CLT is good, but not by excluding tradition." By 'tradition' she meant grammatical accuracy.

T-7 was critical of the fact that the emphasis on fluency in CLT was a matter of abrupt innovation, which caused a huge gap between the teachers and the pedagogical requirements. He explained that GTM could surely ensure fluency as it upheld accuracy, which was ignored in CLT. He also believed that frequent methodological changes were not satisfactory to the teachers, and they were making the teachers reluctant to teaching. T-2 tried to speak in favor of fluency in CLT, but soon he held that since rural students felt shy and were *less* meritorious they could not cope with the demands of CLT. About accuracy and fluency T-8 simply said, "I think both of them are necessary."

But, T-9 expressed different view that the learners in GTM could not speak fluently. When he was asked whether CLT could ensure fluency he answered that after learners' complete interaction with CLT it would be possible. T-10 again stood by the side of CLT. She emphasized that while practicing speaking learners would certainly encounter grammar naturally. And so, formal grammatical accuracy prior to fluency was not a must.

So, most of the teachers' claim is that without accuracy no learner can achieve pure fluency. Once grammatical accuracy is achieved, fluency will automatically be achieved- it is their common ground.

c) Language Learning through Translating Activity and Group/Pair Works

The teachers showed their impartial position in this respect. All of them opined that group/pair works as classroom activities are not fruitful alone. Now again they went back to the grammatical side. Their point was that in addition to these classroom activities, learners should be given various translating activities. They argued that through translating activity a learner could learn grammatical rules, vocabulary and other necessary linguistic items. So, translating activity should be mingled with group/pair works.

T-1 said, "You cannot drive away the evil, along with it, the good will also disappear." He wanted to mean that if we avoid translating, group/pair works in present CLT method will also be ineffective. T-2 maintained that translating activity and group/pair works both sides are effective. But, "there must be a close connection between them. Translating activity may be incorporated into group/pair works." T-3 and T-4 maintained the same where they emphasized simultaneous practice of translating and group/pair works. T-5 was more on the side of translation activities and cynical about the possibility of learning language through group/pair works by the rural learners.

T-6 also favored translating, and opined that group/pair works can ensure only partial fulfillment. T-7 held the same, and included that group/pair works were not effective completely. T-8 said, "In group/pair works students have opportunity to practice grammar" and translating might help for this practice a lot. Similarly, to T-10 mastery of English depends upon practice, and translating activity is a fruitful practice. So, she opined, group/pair works might be more effective if translation could be included in it.

The core idea of their claims is that classroom activities should be consisted both of translating and group/pair works. Through these mixed activities

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learners will acquire structural knowledge of language as well as be familiar with its practical use.

d) Role of the Teacher and Students

Among the ten participant teachers nine were in support of the teacher's noninterventionist role in classroom as prescribed by CLT. They supported the view that the teacher is facilitator or co-communicator in a language classroom. T-1 said that there should be the least distance between teacher-students relationships. T-3 opined, "The present prescribed role of teacher has given learners more freedom, so, they do not want to honor their teachers enough. However, I do not like the earlier authoritative role of the teacher, because, there was fear and sense of inferiority in the learners' mind." T-4 said that she liked friendly attitude of the teacher. "It is better, I like it." T-6 and T-7 preferred learner center class but warned that sometimes teacher-student relationship must be restricted. Indicating to the learners T-7 said, "Too much freedom is not good always."

T-8 stated, "To make learners active in the classroom is good, I support it." T-10 maintained the same and said that teacher's role as an instructor was desirable, but s/he must make the lesson smooth and comprehensible, otherwise, learner-oriented classroom environment would be disintegrated. "But, it will be much better if learner center class can be ensured from the root level of our education", she added.

But, T-5 preferred the traditional role of the teacher in the classroom. He argued that students depended upon their teacher for everything. His belief about the role of the teacher in the classroom was less liberal. About the learners he said, "They are like monkey. If you indulge them too much, they will want to be carried on your shoulders."

In this respect, the majority of the teachers held the belief that the teacher's friendly and liberal role in the classroom is better and more welcome.

e) Classroom Language

There was mixed opinion about the classroom language. Some teachers (2) believed that English might be possible as the classroom language. T-1 held the belief that students could cope with English in the classroom, but, "It won't be possible if the innovation is sudden. This should be practiced from the root level, class I or II. I saw many learners using English fluently during their tasks and activities. I believe they will be able to cope with it." He added another condition that teachers should interact with students as much as possible to use English in the classroom. T-3 echoed the same. He maintained that though learners could not use English in the classroom fully, the situation was changing and their position was being developed. "If the teacher shares English with the learners, they can use English better."

However, T-6 opined that English as classroom language might be possible in some urban schools, but it was not so in the rural schools. T-8 maintained that fulltime use of English in the class would make the learning process sometimes incomprehensible, especially, in the rural schools of Bangladesh. He also affirmed that most of the teachers lacked in fulltime use of English in the class, so naturally it would be problematic to the learners too. T-9 also strongly opposed the argument that only English must be the classroom language- "along with English learners need to use Bengali; learning does not mean that it must thoroughly be in English." T-10 stated that according to the class situation we need Bengali. T-5 and T-7 held that students like rural areas were more legged behind in using English, and using English as classroom language was an ambitious project.

The opinions above reflect that classroom language depends upon situational contexts. According to the context of Bangladesh, Bengali must be the classroom language, as most of the teachers opined.

f) Summary of Data Analysis

Sub-topics	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
GTM is less effective for achieving four skills than CLT.	10	90
Perfect fluency is possible without accuracy.	10	90
Without translation group/pair works are not fruitful alone.	100	0
Learner center class can be productive in Bangladesh.	90	10
Only English should be the classroom language.	20	80

XI. Critical Analysis of the Findings

The participant teachers clearly manifested their position in the respective fields of this study. In achieving four skills almost all of them (90%) denied the claim of CLT that GTM method could not produce the learners capable of using good speaking and listening skills in English. Their position was not against CLT, rather against its impractical view that only it can ensure achieving the four skills simultaneously. Their claim is relevant to the context of Bangladesh. Here, though CLT has been being practiced for many years, learners have not been able to perform satisfactorily according to the

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expectation. It seems that CLT is ironical in its theory and practice.

Unlike CLT they (90%) put more emphasis on grammatical accuracy than fluency. Their argument was that accuracy is the key to pure fluency. Fluency is a natural skill that comes automatically if accuracy is achieved. We should note that their point was 'pure' fluency. Without sufficient grammatical knowledge this type of fluency is not possible. In the context of Bangladesh it is very relevant because, accuracy in speaking and writing is connected to our moral accuracy (Huda 39). So, their claim is relevant.

About translating, group/pair works their position is liberal. They never demanded that group/pair works in CLT should be excluded from classroom activities, rather they proposed a kind of classroom activity where translating will be incorporated into group/pair works. Their implied suggestion goes to the innovation of the multi-syllabus.

About the role of the teacher and students most of them manifested their liberal outlook. They (90%) were in favor of friendly and frank role of the teacher in the classroom. Though their belief has no one hundred percent proximity to the real context of Bangladesh, thing is changing now. No one can deny the fact that CLT provides more self-confidence and self-motivation for the learners, and these psychological factors are essential pre-requisites for a successful learner, and learner center class can ensure them.

Majority of the teachers (80%) spoke in favor of using Bangla, along with English, as the classroom language. Their argument was that according to necessity Bangla should be introduced in the class. It is true that in the real situation of our country using English as the only language is very challenging; however the teachers who wanted to accept this challenge suggested that the practice of using English as the classroom language should be started from the very root level of education. This suggestion seems to be logical, because the English medium schools in this country bear the evidences.

XII. Some Suggestions

The present CLT syllabus of the secondary education level of Bangladesh is gradually being updated; still there is insufficient scope for direct practice of grammatical accuracy. Since our social, cultural, economic and psychological realities are important factor for the limited implementation of CLT and since grammatical accuracy is expected, re-innovation of translating and other grammatical activities, by the side of group/pair works, as the classroom activities, is necessary. That means, a multi-syllabus, where an amalgamation of translating and other grammatical activities and group/pair works, is more effective in our context. In this type of syllabus the classroom language may be English, but in that case, from the root level (Class-I) of education English must be practiced as the English- class language. To fulfill this condition the National Curriculum Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh can take necessary steps.

If such type of multi-syllabus is introduced, the position and role of the teacher in the classroom will simultaneously be altered. The role of the teacher in the classroom will go beyond just a facilitator and classroom manager to the source of error correction. He/she will establish situations as well as help the students obtain correct grammatical and other linguistic knowledge. Certainly, the teacher's role of this sort will not be unwelcome to the learners, since the teacher then will neither be the authority-figure nor mere facilitator, rather a figure mixed with the both.

Hopefully, the pressure on teachers' training will be lessened in the above proposed multi-syllabus, since most of the teachers in our context are already familiar with the traditional method of teaching.

XIII. Conclusion

This study shows that comparative acceptability of CLT and traditional GT Method to the teachers of rural secondary high schools in Bangladesh goes to both of them. They want re-innovation of traditional grammar practice and are doubtful about CLT's claim of achieving fluency, as well as prefer teacher's friendly role and simultaneous practice of translating and group/pair works in the classroom. However, the most significant outcome of this study is their putting emphasis on going back to direct practice of grammar. In this respect, their position goes to the proverb: "Old is gold".

This study also shows that the participant teachers have correctly identified the lack of practicality of CLT in the context of Bangladesh. They were of different ages and teaching experiences. So, their opinions about and suggestions for English teaching-learning processes bear authenticity and acceptability, though their identification and description of the state of the present ELT classrooms at the secondary level may not be representative of the whole scenario. But, it is notable here that they belong to the rural secondary high schools of Bangladesh. They represent the whole scenario of the rural secondary high schools, and this scenario is the major part of the secondary education of Bangladesh. Hence, education policy makers of Bangladesh can by no means ignore their opinions and suggestions related to ELT class. In this way, this study can help the rural teachers raise their voices in the area of methodological innovation in language pedagogy.

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Appendix

Topic:

Comparative Acceptability of GTM and CLT to the Teachers of Rural Secondary High Schools in Bangladesh

Questionnaires to Teachers:

- Can you observe differences between traditional English teaching-learning system and present communicative approach?
- CLT is more appropriate for achieving reading, writing, speaking and listening skills equally than GTM, do you agree?
- Do you support that perfect fluency is possible without grammatical accuracy?
- Are group/pair works alone more beneficial for language learning than translating activity?
- Learner center class is realistic and successful in Bangladesh, do you support?
- Do you think that only English should be the classroom language?

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