

Review Article

## Analysis of English noun substitutes: The Case of some Indefinite Quantifiers

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**Abstract:** The work has explored some indefinite quantifiers in English. The study of these indefinite quantifiers has important implications for semantics, syntax, and morphology. This first chapter summarizes the morphological use of some indefinite quantifiers, whereas the next one deals with the syntactic analysis. One significant finding is that most languages have indefinite quantifiers and their shapes are fairly uniform across languages. In particular, these quantifiers are divided into two types: either derived from interrogative pronouns by the means of an indefiniteness marker or based on generic nouns such as 'person' or 'thing'. The study has also shown that functional explanations are prominent in negative indefinite pronouns, and that the regularities of diachronic change are explained by the theory of grammaticalization. The main synchronic typological generalizations took the form of universal implications among different functions of indefinite quantifiers. The purpose of the research enable to the non native speakers of English to know and understand the usage of any indefinite quantifiers in a sentence.

**Keywords:** Indefinite Quantifiers, Language, Indefiniteness Marker, Generic Noun, Universal Implication.

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## INTRODUCTION

Learning a language requires discovering the rules of that language, how words are ordered in clauses, and how sentences are formed. Then, language is composed of some basic elements particularly grammar, which is a system of rules followed by speakers. It permits the learners to get a quick and an effective expression, and provides a well-developed means of encoding and transmitting complex and subtle ideas. Indefinite substitutes are a part of grammar that replaces nouns without specifying which noun they replace. Many languages use generic nouns like 'person', 'thing', 'place', 'time', etc. to express notions like 'someone', 'something', 'somewhere', 'sometime', etc. It is not always easy to tell whether we are really dealing with pronouns or whether true nouns are used as alternatives to indefinite pronouns, because the differences are quite subtle. Many writers have studied indefinite pronouns based on different approaches such as the diachronic method, the structuralism approach etc.

The diachronic process by which a generic noun is turned into an indefinite quantifier is quite straightforward. A generic noun is first used in a noun phrase without modifiers to yield meanings like 'somebody', 'something'. In some cases, an indefinite determiner like 'one', 'some', or 'any' is combined with a generic noun in a new pronominal form. Some indefinite quantifiers are always singular, some are always plural, and some can be both depending on the

surrounding text or context. In English, there is a particular group of indefinite pronouns formed with a quantifier or distributive preceded by *any*, *some*, *every* and *no*.

In affirmative sentences, indefinite quantifiers such as *some* are used to describe an indefinite quantity, the indefinite pronouns with *every* are used to describe a complete quantity, and the pronouns with *no* are used to describe an absence. Indefinite pronouns with *no* are often used in affirmative sentences with a negative meaning, but these are nevertheless not negative sentences because they are lacking the word *not*.

According to *Ron Cowan*, a quantifier used as an indefinite pronoun is a word that refers to an unspecified or unidentified person or thing. It doesn't have an antecedent. Indefinite pronouns include quantifiers (*some*, *any*, *enough*, *several*, *many*, *much*); universals (*all*, *both*, *every*, *each*); and partitives (*any*, *anyone*, *anybody*, *either*, *neither*, *no*, *nobody*, *some*, *someone*). Many of the indefinite pronouns can function as determiners. Positive indefinite pronouns ending in *-body* can be interchanged with those that end with *-one*, such as *anybody* and *anyone*. The indefinite articles and *an* are also a part of indefinite quantifiers.

The study is based on the structuralism approach, the study of meaning in the spirit of Ferdinand de Saussure's foundational work. While linguists in the

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nineteenth century developed theoretical perspectives in many areas of semantics, pragmatics, and syntax, the functions of indefinite pronouns were not among them. The descriptions of indefinite pronouns in pre-structuralism reference grammars are too incomplete to intensify the discussion.

In contrast to the other approaches, no particular analysis in this approach has become famous and widely discussed. However, Since Gottlob Frege's and Bertrand Russell's writings, modern linguistics has been influenced by the thinking and notational devices of mathematical/philosophical logic. Indefinite quantifiers are one of the areas where logical semanticists have had many things to say, based on the predicate calculus of modern logic. There are two main aspects of indefinites substitutes, which have been discussed from a logical-semantic point of view: free-choice indefinites and non-specific indefinites. In general, logical formulae containing an existential quantifier correspond to sentences with specific indefinites, and logical formulae containing a universal quantifier correspond to sentences with universal pronouns. Let's take the example of *any* and *every*.

According to Reichenbach and Quine, *any* differs from *every* in that the universal quantifier to which it corresponds always has wide scope with respect to other logical operators. In the below example of the free-choice use of *any*, there is no additional operator, so that *any* and *every* are logically equivalent.

Otherwise, the issue of the present study is to view the feature of English indefinite quantifiers. How are they used in a sentence? What is the function of indefinite quantifiers in English grammar? This question needs to be lighted up in this work. Thus, this study aims at examining the indefinite quantifiers particularly the ways they are used in an utterance.

As far as the methodology is concerned, this scientific research is based on English courses taken from the English Department of Cheikh Anta Diop University, reading and reference of some grammar books and articles. In this study, the researcher has made a descriptive analysis of some sentences with English quantifiers. The strategy used in generating ideas was the exercises and the written texts transcribed so that the researcher can look carefully what sentence structures are evident with indefinite modifiers.

Besides, the researcher considered only the grammatical sentences and are subjected to linguistic analysis. Modifiers words are regarded in determining the grammaticality of the sentence they modify. The data are collected from a corpus drawn from English grammar books.

### 1. Semantic analysis of English Indefinite Quantifiers

A quantifier is a word that usually goes before a noun to express the quantity of the object. Most

quantifiers are followed by a noun, though it is also possible to use them without the noun. There are quantifiers that describe large quantities (*a lot, much, many*), small quantities (*a little, a bit, a few*) and undefined quantities (*some, any*). Some quantifiers express the idea of a sufficient amount such as *enough, plenty*. There are some quantifiers that have a similar meaning but differ because one is used with countable nouns and the other is used with uncountable nouns. Countable nouns are things that we can count but uncountable nouns are things that cannot be counted and only have a singular form.

The indefinite articles *a* and *an* are used before a noun that is general or when its identity is not known.

They are used to indicate any non-specified member of a group or category

*a* is used before a singular noun beginning with a consonant sound and *an* before a singular noun beginning with a vowel sound.

*I think an animal is in the garage*

*That girl is a legend.*

*I have eaten an apple.*

The article *a* or *an* can also be used to indicate one in number (as opposed to more than one).

*I have a girl and two boys.*

Some English indefinite pronouns may be used as quantifiers. Generally, the term "pronoun" refers to the fact that the meaning of a pronoun comes from its antecedent, the noun or pronoun to which it refers. Indefinite quantifiers are little words that precede and modify nouns. They tell us how many or how much things. Selecting the correct quantifier depends on your understanding of the distinction between Count and Non-Count Nouns.

If learners could not distinguish different languages, they might make mistakes concerning the properties of what they hear. In this case, they need to learn the linguistic items, phonetics, grammar and the words 'meaning of other languages. The study of language meaning is concerned with how language users make the inferences required to understand another's speech, how meaning is assigned and processed, and ambiguity.

Many languages distinguish some forms of indefinites used in affirmative contexts from those used in non-affirmative contexts. For instance, in English "*something*" can only be used in affirmative contexts while "*anything*" is used otherwise. Some negative sentences that include an indefinite pronoun with *any* can be turned into affirmative sentences with a negative meaning by using an indefinite pronoun with *no*. However, there is a change in meaning with this transformation: the sentence that includes an indefinite pronoun with *no* is stronger, and can imply emotional content such as definitiveness, hopelessness, anger, etc.,

for example, I have *nobody* to talk..... This means that there is the idea of hopeless.

Indefinite pronouns are associated with indefinite determiners of a similar or identical form (such as *every, any, all, some*). A pronoun can be thought of as replacing a noun phrase, while a determiner introduces a noun phrase and precedes any adjectives that modify the noun. Thus, *all* is an indefinite determiner in "*all good boys deserve favor*" but a pronoun in "*all are happy*".

Moreover, if *few* and *little* are rather negative, they mean *not much/many*. In other contexts, *a few* and *a little* are more positive. In this case, they can mean "*some*".

Indefinite quantifiers are those referring to one or more unspecified objects, beings, or places. They are called "*indefinite*" simply because they do not indicate the exact object, being, or place to which they refer. There are many kinds of indefinite quantifiers in English such as *some, any, many, none much, little, few, all, both, each, every, all, another, other, several enough, someone, any, anybody, none, no one*. They may be regarded as noun substitutes or determiners.

There are other types of indefinite pronouns such as *either* (of) and *neither* (of). *Either* is used before a singular noun to mean *one or the other of two*. On this point, there is the form like *either*+singular noun.

1. Come on Tuesday or Thursday either day is ok.  
V TUESDAY PR THURSDAY IND.P DAY

Negative sentences can only be formed with the quantifier that include *any*. "*No*" is another case of indefinite determiner. It may be used with singular or plural nouns, meaning "not any", with singular nouns, meaning "*not a*", "*nothing of a*" and with a numeral.

2. *No two men would agree on this.*  
IND.P CN MEN AUX V

Therefore, note that the quantifier "*much of the*" must include the definite article "*the*" when it modifies a specific noun, much of the money are spent. With a general plural noun, however, when you are not referring to a specific entity, the "of the" is dropped. In affirmative sentences, it is used in time references: *they've known each other for many years*.

In another way, we do not usually use *all* alone to mean "everybody". On this point, *all* will be gone with the preposition *of*. *All* also means everything, but usually only in the structure *all*+relative clause (all that), *all that I have is yours or everything is yours*. This structure often has rather negative meaning such as "*nothing more or the only thing*". *All* can be also used to create an expression like "*that is all*", which means "*it's finished*".

3. *All the people stood up.*  
IND.P ART PEOPLE V (Everybody stood up.)

Indefinite modifiers are either singular or plural that determines the form of the verb used in the sentence. Maybe the indefinite determiner is singular, but a plural form of the verb is mistakenly used. In order to avoid errors with indefinite quantifiers, we must know the meaning and decide if the indefinite is singular or plural. After the huge and semantical study of indefinite quantifiers, the morphological use of these determiners will be presented.

## 2. Form and Usage of English Indefinite Quantifiers

### 2.1. Form of English Indefinite Quantifiers

Morphology is the study of internal structures of words and how they can be modified. Then, it will be very interesting to know how Wolof indefinite pronouns are modified in a sentence.

As seen above, indefinite quantifiers, like collective nouns, can be in singular or plural, depending on how they are used in a sentence. Singular indefinite pronouns take a singular verb; plural indefinite pronouns take a plural verb.

In English, there are compound indefinite pronouns, which come from *body, one, and thing*. They are often in singular and have concord with a singular verb. Indefinite quantifiers that end in *-one* are always singular. These words include *anyone, everyone, someone, and one*. In English, there are some indefinite pronouns that end in *-one* and always singular. These words include *anyone, everyone, someone, and one*.

*One* is an indefinite determiner that can be used with many other words in order to form another one. Generally, it may be used to talk about people in general. We do not say *one* when we are talking about one person or a group that could not include the speaker. It may be also a substitute word and is often used instead of repeating a noun. Sometimes, it is used with some articles such as *an* and *a*. In this context, it is gone with an adjective.

4. *I would like big one with cream on.*  
IPSG AUX V ART BIG IND.P PRE CREAM

Some English indefinite quantifiers are formed from the root *-body*. These words include *anybody, somebody, nobody*. These kinds of indefinite quantifiers end in *-body* and are always singular. Besides, some indefinite pronouns such as *any, anything, anybody and anyone* may be exclusively used in positive contexts. Other indefinite quantifiers may be built from the root *-every*. There are the use of *everybody, everything, everyone*. They can also require a singular verb.

On the other hand, they take plural verbs or plural personal pronouns. For indefinite pronouns that are used in singular or plural, it depends on what the indefinite pronoun refers to, for example, *all of the*

*people clapped their hands.* *All* refers to people, which is plural, and then the verb *clapped* is plural, too.

To sum up, the determiners ending with *-body* or *-one* such as *anybody*, *somebody*, *no one*, or *anyone* are singular like pronouns *each* and *every*. Words like *all* or *some* may be in singular. That means that a possessive pronoun referring to these singular words must also be in singular.

Indeed, some quantifiers account as indefinite pronouns and they refer to people, places, objects, or things without pointing to a specific one. Indefinite pronouns, like collective nouns, can be singular or plural, depending on how they are produced in a sentence.

The disagreement of the singular collective pronouns with pronouns in the predicate is one of the most common errors in formal, written English because informal, spoken English does not always adhere to the rule. In informal speech, someone would likely say, "*Everybody kept the information on the surprise to themselves,*" and *no one* would find a reason to correct the speaker, because the context is clear.

Otherwise, singular indefinite pronouns take a singular verb; plural indefinite pronouns take a plural verb. Some of them might be called 'distributive' rather than 'indefinite' (each, every, etc.). For the lack of a good general term, we prefer to use the traditional term 'indefinite pronouns'. Nevertheless, the quantifier "*some*" can occur with affirmative sentences, with uncountable or plural countable nouns, to express an indefinite quantity or number, for example, *can I have some tea, please?* They can be also used with singular countable nouns meaning a particular but an unidentified person or thing, for instance, *could you give him some eggs.*

"*Some*" is the determiner in these above sentences and it will be constructed as the head of or as a dependent in these nouns phrases *some tea and some eggs.* In this context, these determiners dominate these nouns "*eggs and tea*". Besides, *some* has the following multiple uses:

- With singular countable nouns which express temporal notions, for example, *some minutes.*
- With uncountable nouns and plural nouns to suggest contrast.
- With a numeral meaning "approximately".

Furthermore, "*each of*" is another compounded word which may be gone with a pronoun or a determiner, for example, *each of us.* We can have *each of +determiner+plural noun as well.*

5. *I write to each of my children once a week.*  
IPSG V P IND.P POSS CHILDREN

As illustrated in this case above, the indefinite pronoun *each of* is placed after the verb. Then, seeing the

place of "*each of*" in this sentence, one can conclude that it functions as a determiner. After *each of* a verb may be usually in singular, but it can be plural in an informal style, *each of them has his own way of doing thing.* Here *each of* them is the subject of the verb. In addition, the place of "*each of*" has a paramount importance in a sentence, because it has many functions in an utterance. It comes after an indirect object but not usually a direct object.

6. *I bought the girls each of an ice-cream.*  
IPSG V ArtGIRL IND. P Art ICE-CREAM

As other determiners, *each* may be used without a noun, but *each one* is more common, for example, *I have five brothers, and each one is quite different from the others.* *Each* may be gone with an auxiliary or a simple verb, then, it will be in mid-position, like some adverbs. It precedes the auxiliary verbs and follows the ordinary ones.

7. *They have each their own room* 3pp AUX IND.P POSS ROOM

8. *They each think the same* 3pp IND.P V ART ADV

*Each* has several meanings and is used in different contexts. We often use *each* to talk about two or more people. *Each* is used when we are thinking of people or things separately, one at a time. Besides, the quantifier *each* can be made up of the determiners *one* and *other*. That is, forms like *one another* and *each other*. *One another* and *each other* mean the same.

9. *We want each child to develop in his own way.*  
1PP TAM IND.P CHIL V

10. *Mary and I write to each other/ one another every day.*

Mary PR IPSG IND.P IND.P DAY

The structure and the formation of indefinite quantifiers differ from one language to another. That is why this present study shows that learners faced several types of difficulties on forming English quantifiers.

### 3. Usage of Indefinite Quantifiers

There are some quantifiers working with count nouns such as *many*, *a few*, *few*, *several*, *a couple of*, *none of the*, for example, *many trees.* They are placed before the nouns they modify. In this example above, we have a determiner phrase of which the head of a DP is "*many*". As other indefinite pronouns (*several*, *both*, *a couple of*, *others few*) "*many*" is a determiner and occurs with plural nouns. There are others cases of indefinite pronouns, which will work with non-count nouns (*not much a little*, *little*, *a bit of*, *a good deal of*, *a great deal of*, *no*).

These determiners can combine with nouns to form noun phrases, for example, *a bit of dancing.* In this sentence, the determiner *a bit of* is head over the noun *dancing*. Sometimes, indefinite pronouns may be used with both count and non-count nouns. Here are these forms of indefinite quantifiers: *of all of the*, *some*, *most of*, *enough*, *a lot of*, *lots of*, *plenty of*, *a lack of*.

The indefinite “*some*” precedes the noun it modifies. It is also used in interrogative and negative sentences, if an affirmative answer is expected, or in invitations, requests. For example, *there isn’t any sign of life*. In this example above, “*any*” follows the verb and the negation but it precedes the noun “*sign*”. A sentence in which the determiner follows the noun is syntactically odd., although it is well formed grammatically. “*Any*” can also occur in conditional sentences or sentences that imply doubt, affirmative sentences, meaning, *it doesn’t matter who, which or what*” and negative sentences, meaning “*normal, ordinary*”.

“*No*” may also be included in expressions like *in no time, no wonder, no end* (of), by no means. Notice these idioms are employed without verbs and may not follow the nouns they modify. Moreover, “*non*” is a definite pronoun, which goes with the preposition “*of*”. *It can be used for persons and things, meaning “not one” or “not any”*. When *none of* is followed by a plural noun, the verb will be in plural. The indefinite pronoun “*much*” may be used with non-count nouns. Unless it is combined with *of*, “*much*” is reserved for questions and negative statements, for example, *not many people know about it*.

11. *Much money is spent on health care.*  
IND.P MONEY AUX PPP HEALTH CARE

Sometimes, some quantifiers are preceded by *as, so, too, rather*. The use of “*many*” is preferred in negative and interrogative sentences. An indefinite article is often used in conjunction with the indefinite quantifier “*many*”, thus a plural quantifier combines with a singular noun, the latter takes a singular verb. In informal English, in affirmative sentences, *many* and *much* are replaced by *plenty of, a lot of/lots of, a good/great deal of, a large quantity/number of*. *There is plenty of time to do it*. However, in formal academic writing, it is usually better to use *many* and *much* rather than phrases such as *a lot of, lots of and plenty of*. There are also the couple of indefinite quantifiers *few/little* that are regarded as determiners.

12. *Many an apple has fallen by October.*  
IND.P ART APPLE AUX PP Pr. OCTOBER

They can be often used with articles such as the indefinite article “*a*”, *I have a little spare time*. Furthermore, *few* and *little* may be intensified by adverbs like *very, extremely*, for instance, *extremely few TV sets have been sold this month. They have very little money*. Notice that they are placed before the nouns they modify, as illustrated above. *Few* may also be used with plural nouns, and *little* with singular uncountable nouns, *I have little interest in politics*. In this example, *little* comes after the verb and before the uncountable noun. In addition to that, *few* and *little* are rather formal, they can be used without *a*

13. *All the money is gone.*  
IND.P Art MONEY AUX PP

14. *All your friend are nice people.*  
IND.P POSS FRIEND TAM ADJ PEOPLE

In these examples, *all* is used with the preposition *of*, contrary to the first example; the verb of the second sentence is in plural form. Before singular nouns, *all* is frequently replaced by *whole*, which is less formal, for example, *the whole world condemned that aggression*. Here, *whole* combines with the definite article “*the*”. We can also put *all of* before nouns and pronouns. When *all* is used before a noun, it can go with a determiner. Then, the usages of *all or all of* are both possible. *All of my friends like riding*. Before a noun with no determiner, we do not use *of*, for instance, *all children can be naughty sometimes*. Then, the indefinite *all* is the head of the sentence. Before an object personal pronoun, *all of* may be used but it is impossible to combine a subject personal pronoun with *all of*. We may also put *all* after object pronouns without the preposition *of*, for example,

15. *I have invited them all.*  
Ipsg AUX PP 3PP IND.P

In this sentence, the indefinite *all* follows the object personal pronoun. This case is different from the first one where the personal pronoun comes after the indefinite pronoun. In English, the use of the indefinite pronoun *all* is very frequent. *All* can go with a verb, in mid-position, like some adverbs. We can either have auxiliary verb + *all* or *all* + other verb.

16. *We can all swim.*

Ipp AUX indp v

17. *My family all like traveling*

18. POSS FAMILY IND P V

*Both (of)* is another quantifier that applies to only two persons/things. It is used with plural nouns) *Both* is either used with the preposition *of* or without it. Then, they are at the beginning of the sentences. In informal English, the definite article is dropped after *both*; *two, for example, both actors and the two actors, can also replace both*. *Both* can take a position after the noun it determines. We can put *both +adjective+and+adjective, both+and+noun, both+clause+and+clause*.

“*Every*” is a indefinite used with singular countable nouns, when the total number exceeds two. It may be placed at the end or the beginning of a sentence. Then, we will have: *every* + singular noun. It is also possible to use *every one of* before a pronoun or determiner. In this sense, the pronoun or the noun is in plural. *Every one of the plates is broken*. This sentence is composed of “*every one of* + determiner+ plural noun”. “*Every*” is used in a group of word and precede the noun it modifies.

19. *He has every reason to do it.*

3PSG TAM IND.P REASON

Sometimes, “*every one*” is used without a noun, as in “*every one is broken*”. One of the most English grammar studies shows that determiners are always used with nouns but in this example “*every one*” is the subject of the verb. The sentence is built without any noun. “*Every one*” also function as an object of the verb, in this context; the sentence is made up of a subject+ a verb+ an indefinite pronoun. Therefore, “*every*” may be preceded by *not*, *nearly*, *almost*, for instance, *almost every musician can play this*. Here, “*every*” is regarded as a determiner. Also, “*every*” can be used in phrases like *every other day*, *every five minutes*, *etc.*, for example, *I go to Dakar every six weeks*. In short, “*every*” is used with a plural noun in these expressions above.

Otherwise, *each* is a quantifier, which can be used alone or with an article. In this respect, it is used with singular or plural nouns. When “*each*” is employed with a singular noun, it can mean either “*different*” or “*additional*”. “*Another*” also means “an additional one” or “a different one”. There is also a possessive *each other's and one another's*, for example, we often borrow *each other's clothes*. It is essential to precise that *each other/one another* are not used as subjects.

Sometimes, *either* can be “*both*” before *side* and *before end*. The noun is singular too. However, we can use *either of* before a pronoun or a determiner. Thus, the pronoun or noun is plural, for example, *either of us/you/them*. In this example, *either* is gone with the preposition of and is placed after the verb. Nevertheless, we may use *it* without a noun. In this way, it will be at the end of a sentence. When *either* is used with “*or*”, we will have this form *either....or*. In this perspective, it is used to talk about a choice between two possibilities and sometimes more than two.

Therefore, *several (of)* is used with plural countable nouns, meaning “*three or more*, but not many”. *There are several new people in this office*. *Enough (of)* may be used with singular uncountable nouns or plural countable nouns and its meaning is “as much/many as necessary”. *Enough* is often placed after adjectives and adverbs; there is the form like *this: adjectives/adverb +enough*. On the other hand, *enough* can be placed before nouns it determines; in this case, *one* can get *enough + noun*. Besides, *enough* can go with *of* before pronouns and determiners; *we did not buy enough of them*. Then, the sentence is composed of *enough of + pronoun*. There is another form such as *enough of +determiner+ (adjective) +noun*. We may also form *enough* with an infinitive structure, indeed *enough* comes before the infinitive. *Enough* can directly precede or indirectly the noun it modifies. We can

conclude that *enough* functions as an essential item in a sentence.

20. *There is enough coffee foreverybody.*

ADV V IND.P COFFEE P IND.P

21. *Have you got enough milk?*

AUX 2PSG PP IND.P MILK

In a word, English quantifiers are often used in combination with other items of the sentences. Then, grammatical errors made by users may be found on the place of English quantifiers in a text.

## CONCLUSION

An indefinite quantifier is a word that does not have a specific familiar referent. It can represent either count nouns or no count nouns. From the morpho-syntactic point of view, they have often related to forms across these categories: universal such as *every* and *one*, assertive existential such as *some*, elective existential such as *any*, and negative such as *no*. Many of these words can function as other parts of speech depending on the context. For example, the word “*many*” functions as an indefinite pronoun, while in many people disagree with his views it functions as a quantifier (a type of determiner) that qualifies the noun people. Many English indefinite quantifiers are formed from the following roots: *every*, *any*, *some* etc.... the forms *any* and *every* are used for true questions, while those with *some* generally imply a question to which we already know the answer. This scientific description of English can help English learners to discover, identify and use quantifiers in sentences correctly. The findings of this study contribute to the practice of grammar teaching in English classes.

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