

MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL CARTOONS IN NIGERIA FROM 2019 – 2021

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ABSTRACT

Multimodal discourse analysis is a more concise, elaborate and complete form of discourse analysis that takes into consideration the spoken, written texts, images and nonverbal communication. Due to its involvement in the utilisation of multiplicity of modes to describe language use, it becomes difficult to decode the message the speaker tries to pass, especially in cartoon study. This study presented a multimodal analysis of political cartoons in Nigeria in 201-2021. The purpose is to identify the various modes, classified, analyzed and related the various modes found in the selected political cartoons. Vanguard, Business Day, and Punch, are the sources of data for this study. All the political cartoons found in the sources above served as the population. Purposive sampling is used to draw six political cartoons for analysis. The researcher used duo theories: Referential Theory of meaning by Ogden, Richard, and Systemic Functional Linguistics by Halliday. Descriptive Linguistics by Robin is adopted as method of data analysis. Through this research, the researcher found that the political cartoons under investigation are a realistic portrayal of the Nigerian society as they carry truth in all the modes employed. The researcher also found that political cartoons are quite entertaining, informative and the only way Nigerians could describe the government without been hunted for hate speech or defamation. The researcher concluded with an emphasis on the need to fashion pay more attention to political cartoon study in Nigeria. It was recommended that further studies should be conducted using Semiotics and Speech Act Theory.

INTRODUCTION

For decades, political cartoons have proven to be effective and powerful communication tools that engage audiences of all backgrounds and ages. They provide concise, humorous and heart-tugging; quick-witted snapshots of all kinds of issues, ranging from politics and law to education and general humanitarian efforts. James (2018), defines cartoon as any form of two dimensional illustrated visual art. Modern use of the word 'cartoon' refers to a typically non, or semi realistic drawing made for humour purposes. The cartoon industry is very well known for their strips inside newspapers and magazines. These days, they have moved online as well to register their support or displeasure on political happenings. A cartoon carries with it the caricature as an almost indispensable element. Just as the caricature is for an audience that is familiar with the original, the cartoon is based on wide acquaintance with the subject. Cartoons come in various forms: the comic strip, animated cartoons for the electronic media (such as Tom and jerry; Superman; Pocahontas, etc.) and editorial cartoons in newspapers and magazines. It is important at this point to emphasize that this paper focuses on multimodal analysis of political cartoons in Nigeria.

Attempting to Analyze Political Cartoons is challenging as many modes that deserve difficult descriptive answers come along side. To this end, Marryland State Bar Association (2019), comes up with certain facts-finding questions, many of which have being left on answered by most multimodal-cartoon researchers in their works. To affirm the mental taxing efforts in interpreting political cartoons and the need for exhaustive multimodal application, Muhammed (2019), decries that he reads cartoons every day, especially Punch cartoons. He further said that it takes great minds and great efforts to understand cartoons. Cartoons are so important: they do something to one's system due to varying but captivating layers of meanings that abound in them.

Halloran (2019), asserts that multimodal typically refers to the multiple modes (e.g. spoken, written, printed and digital media and embodied action) through which social semiosis takes place. Drawing from the work of Luca (2020), the term multimodality is used for the first time at the Sydney school of semiotics by M.A.K. Halliday and refers to the modes of analysis used that could be applied to objects and words inferred from semiotics.

The researcher was motivated to conduct this study after reading a reportage by *Punch*, on 15th March, 2018 that president Muhammadu Buhari only rushes to every cartoon of himself to laugh out in disbelief because, it is clear that he lacks full knowledge of the cartoons portraying him! Such cartoons call for frowning, dissatisfaction and purgation, and not laughter. This work focuses strictly on multimodal analysis of political cartoons in Nigeria, describing the modes, stating their meanings and functions. To draw a link between the cartoonists intended message and that understood or gotten by the viewers is tasking and of concern to the researcher. Few researchers that have tampered into multimodality mostly come up with superficial and sketchy representations of a whole.

As Muhammed (2019), puts it, cartoon serves as a capsule version of editorial opinion meant for the reading public to swallow and probably get some societal ills cured. In other words, the drawing or graphic illustration and the commentaries in cartoons are not only intended to create fun but they also seek to ginger their sense of reasoning into clamouring for positive change in the society. Thus, a multimodal investigation into this vital department of social reality to facilitate understanding and right decision making becomes eminent and significant. Considering the shortcomings above, there comes the need for research on the topic, multimodal analysis of political cartoons in Nigeria from 2019-2021

Statement of the Problem

Language of cartoon is quite different considerably from normal language use which calls for investigation. Transforming this cartoon language that consists of many modes utilization, into the usual language of viewers is challenging as many layers of meanings are inherent in just one cartoon flake. Presently, most works are single-mode inclined and, at most double modes. Little is done on the most articulate and detailed department of discourse analysis –multimodality to answer the questions raised in the introduction, and the few works done so far are superficial and narrative than descriptive.

The general purpose of this study is to conduct a multimodal discourse analysis of post-election political cartoons in Nigeria from 2019-2021. This research has specific objectives to: identify the various modes employed in the selected cartoons to pass a full message, showcase the meanings behind every mode as they appear on the political cartoons; and explain the functions each mode performs in the political cartoons.

This research is vital and useful to the government and politicians; to prospective cartoonists, to cartoon readers, language students; researchers, and would serve as a resource piece for further study.

This study is guided by three research question: What are the various modes found in the selected political cartoons? What the meanings behind the various modes are as found in the cartoons? What are the functions performed by the modes in each political cartoon?

This research is constrained to multimodal discourse analysis of post-election political cartoons in Nigeria, 2019-2021. It collects, analyses, and presents data that are politically motivated by oppositions from political counterparts or concerned individuals within the stipulated period, after election, precisely after 2019 general election to 2021. Five political cartoons are reviewed for presentation. Emphasis is on identifying the modes, stating their meanings and their functions.

Brief Review of Related Scholarship

Multimodal Analysis

To Snyder (2020), multi-modal analysis is a necessity to discourse oriented study of visual information involving images, sounds, colors, artifacts, symbols shapes, music and backgrounds. This contribution is a good navigation for this work as it points to areas set to be covered. It also defines multimodality in the most explicit sense. Luca (2020), traces multimodality to Halliday who sees multimodality as an approach to discourse analysis that takes objects, texts and images as

meaning carrying elements. To him, multimodal discourse analysis sees language as one among classes of resource like gesture, images, color, music, graphics and sign. This observation captures the concept of multimodality in relation to discourse analysis. It also touches on the content area of study for this work.

Political Cartoons

Abdullah et al (2021), see political cartoon as a vehicle of setting social agenda. they assert that cartoons have gained considerable research interest across disciplines lately. They illustrate how political cartoons, paintings of images and objects for lampooning and lambasting, are employed as a vehicle of setting social agenda in Nigeria to shape and reorient public opinion through repeated depiction and mirroring of political and social reality. Ekpenyong and Bisong (2019), assert that language of inscribed cartoons includes dialogues, monologues songs, and labels used along with the pictures with emphasis on meaning strata like register, denotation, creativity, and connotations. They describe political cartoons in Nigeria to be brief, creative, and artistically presented to attract attention and pass salient socio-political messages to the society.

Abdullah at el (2021) conducted a study, political cartoons as a vehicle of setting social agenda: the newspaper example. Data was collected from two Nigerian newspapers: daily trust and vanguard within the period 2007-2017. One hundred cartoons were purposefully selected, fifty each from the two newspapers. Content analysis was used and qualitative research design was used as methods of data analysis. Analysis was based on connotative and denotative meanings of the cartoons. Result showed that Nigerian political cartoons are socially sensitive and politically motivated to build a social agenda. This study is related to the present study in research design, methodology and geographical area of study and sampling technique. However, they differ considerably in theory and scope. Ekpenyong, Bisong (2012) conducted a study on the language of political cartoons in Nigeria. Data was collected from some Nigerian news outlets at the eve of the 2013 general elections. They sample seven political cartoons using purposive sampling from a population of all the cartoons in the selected outlets within the time frame. Content analysis was used to analyse the data generated. Result revealed that both standard and nonstandard English, coinages and neologism were employed in the cartoons. Their study relates to the present study on methodology and geographical area of study. They however differ on scope, time frame and purpose,

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research design is used for this study. All the political cartoons found in *Punch*, *Vanguard*, and *Business Day* within 2020-2021 serve as population. Purposive sampling is used to sample six political cartoons for analysis. Data was generated through critical observation, assessment and selection of the political cartoons, snapping them with camera for analysis. The researcher uses descriptive linguistics by Robins (2004), an approach in linguistic analysis which states that modern linguistic study ought to be descriptive in salient features and explanation as against the prescriptive method of linguistic analysis of classical grammar.

Theoretical Frame Work

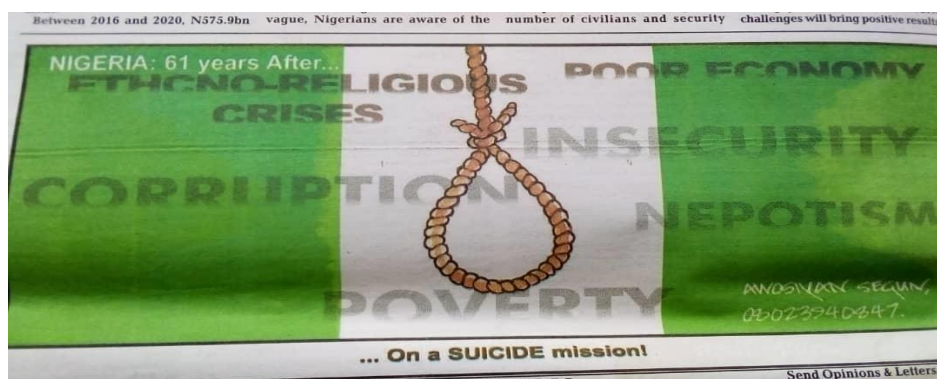
This study is anchored on Systemic Function Linguistics (SFL) and Referential theory of Meaning. (SFL) is propounded by Halliday (2002). The theory sets out to elegantly represent the social function nature of language or the various functions language performs in our society. Halliday (2002) asserts that the particular form taken by the grammatical system of a language is closely related to the social and personal needs that language is expected to perform. To demarcate the areas covered by this theory, Mbah (2017), identified three major functions: the interpersonal function, the interactivity function and the textual functions. All these functions are established in the work t hand as multimodality involves the three functions. Referential Theory of Meaning is

propounded by Ogden, Richard (1923). To Enogu (2020), referential theory of meaning is the most widely accepted among other theories of meaning. He calls it theory of abstraction, significance and denotative meanings. To explain further, Enogu asserts that the theory recognises three components of meanings: the sound forms or the linguistic sign; the concept underlying the form in which language differs in the organization of the concept; and the actual referent: the part of extra linguistic world which the linguistic sign refers. This work relies on the two last components to interpret the meanings behind the various modes.

Data Presentation and Analysis

1 By Segun. Vanguard, Wednesday, 2021, pp. 18

i. Words or Text Mode:



S/N	What are the various modes found in the selected political cartoons?	What are the meanings behind the various modes as found in the cartoons?	What are the functions the modes perform to pass a concise and complete message?
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Words or Text Mode

	NIGERIA: 61 years after	Nigeria is an independent geographical and political entity that is 61 years old after independence.	A pointer to the subject of discussion and the reasons.
2.	ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISES	Disagreement or discord that has both ethnic and religious undertones.	A pointer to the subsistence of such crises in Nigeria.
3.	POOR ECONOMY	Unfruitful and unproductive or unsuccessful economic wellbeing of the country in terms of standard of living.	A pointer to the fact that Nigeria's economy is poor.
4.	INSECURITY	A state of not being secured is endangered.	Points to insecurity in Nigeria.
5.	CORRUPTION	Moral decay, glossing over; giving favor for favor illegally. Bolder than all the word discourse.	Points to hipper-corruption in Nigeria.
6.	NEPOTISM	Social and political partiality and favour for one's tribe or religion.	Points to illegal and unconstitutional preferential treatment in Nigeria.
7.	POVERTY	Living in penury; not having enough for survival: Impoverished. Second boldest text or word mode.	Points to abject poverty ravaging Nigerians.
1.	Colour Mode Green-white-green	Name of colours that looks like grasses, snow respectively. They together here refer to Nigeria assailed by different national challenges .	The cplours Indicate or represent metaphoric Nigeria in its richness assailed by all the troubles written

3. Black

Apart from the first text mode, the rest are all written in black. Black is a colour comparable to charcoal or darkness.

on the flag. It's the major colour on Nigerian flag.

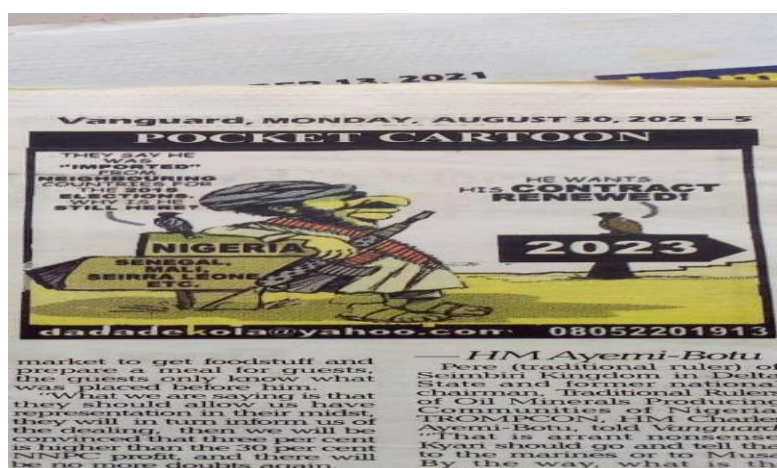
It portrays darkness, evil, and danger in this context as indicated in the meanings of the words.

1. Image Mode

A neck-sized garroting rope

Refers to death by suicide, strangling, or hanging. In red and black discoloration to show danger

This points to the fact that Nigeria is on its way to suicide. As remedy appears to be far. This has a great bearing on the caption that reads Nigeria: '61 years after... on a suicide mission.'



Vanguard: Monday Aug; 2021

1. Words or text mode

They say he, was 'IMPORTED' from NEIGHBORING countries for 2015 ELECTION, why is he STILL HERE?

Asserts and proves the fact that foreign aid and mercenaries came in to subvert the people's choice during the 2015 general election who are still present and unwilling to go. This text appears first, at the left top hand, having some words capitalised for emphasis.

Affirms the allegation that the Buhari-led administration factually employed foreign mercenaries to help him win the election. It also informs Nigerians that they are still around.

2. He wants his CONTRACT RENEWED!

An answer to the first question, has 2023 pegged beneath it to show the intended contract renewal. Contract and renewed are capitalised for emphasis.

Unveils underground conspiracy to still use the imported aids in future elections. The reason for their retention.

3. NIGERIA

Appears on a smaller placard above that of the invaders which appears bigger, upon which the invitee leans. Nigeria is a country positioned with a bolder capital letters to show the theme of the cartoon. It is an area of interest and concern.

The placard is attached to that of other countries and above to prove Buhari's assertion that Nigeria is under siege from foreigners. It is an indicator that foreigners constitute insecurity greatly in Nigeria as the invited aid leans heavily on it. It shows target area by the foreigners.

4. SENEGAL, Mail, SERIAL LEON, etc

Written on a far bigger placard upon which Nigeria stands to show the level of insecurity and invasion. They refer to

Points to the various countries, that together are bigger than Nigeria, from where mercenaries were imported to

countries that were believed to be hired to subvert the people's will in 2015 who are still awaiting 2023.

aid influence the 2015 election should the inviters lose the election.

5. 2023

Refers to the anticipated election coming up in 2023 which the foreign mercenary is patiently waiting and facing to be re-contracted.

It serves as the major theme here, the point of attraction for the foreign mercenary, wishing his contract of hostility is renewed.

1. Colour Mode

Black

All the text modes are written in black except 2023 which is white. In this context, black refers to evil, wickedness, and general insecurity in Nigeria.

Shows the danger and damages. The foreign mercenaries represent Nigeria.

2. Green

The two placards and the ground upon which they are pegged are in green to show cooperativeness, the fruitfulness of both Nigeria and the foreign invaders: showing amity.

Points to Nigeria as a fertile and rich nation which is turning the foreigners rich too as seen in the image of the mercenary and the later placard turning green.

3. White

The atmosphere is white; 2023 is also white on the black placard.

Shows hope, purity, innocence, and uncertainty due to black placard.

1. Image Mode

The three placards

The first two by the left refer to Nigeria and other countries in agreement to influence the 2015, and 2023 elections. The other on the right is in black which refers to evil and danger.

Point to the area of interest and concern for both the foreign mercenary and the Nigerian politicians that invited them.

2. The two birds

One perches on Nigeria, which is black already due to the havoc done by the hired mercenary; while the other one that perches on the Black placard appears green and bigger which may become more dangerous after the 2023 general election. The birds represent bad omen in the context

Points to the damage already caused and the uncertain future represented by the green bird.

3. The image of the foreign mercenary

A representation for hired foreigners causing insecurity in Nigeria. The AK47 hung on his shoulder refers to the direct cause of the insecurity.

Represents the whole foreign mercenaries in Nigeria. Their action, vision, and violence are represented as seen in the Ak 47 and the crossing bullets.

Summary: The whole cartoon points to the insecurity in Nigeria since 2015 till date. It also speaks volumes about 2023 as the cartoon is generally pessimistic and envisages danger.

Punch,



May 15th 2020, pp 16

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| <p>1. Text Mode
AND WHEN HE SAW
THE BROOM, HE
PASSED OVER US</p> | <p>This is the only text on the cartoon, it is capitalised to show emphasis. It refers to the fact that the APC lead administration is partial and selective in its anti-corruption campaign. Merely sighting the broom, hanging on the door of a corruption suspect, Buhari, with a gun passes over into the house of a non-member to kill and drag him away.</p> | <p>Communicates what the cartoon generally represents. It explains the cartoon and the other non-verbal acts involving the president, APC members, and other party members, particularly PDP. It calls the president a partial leader that is selective and lopsided in his anti-corruption fight.</p> |
| <p>3. White</p> | <p>The atmosphere is white; 2023 is also white on black placard.</p> | <p>Shows hope, purity, innocence, and uncertainty due to black placard.</p> |
| <p>1. Colour Mode
Green</p> | <p>This is the colour of the house that Buhari passes over because the broom is hanging. It means liveliness and fruitfulness.</p> | <p>It paints a picture of harmony and love between the president and his party members. It points to liveliness.</p> |
| <p>2. Brown</p> | <p>This is the colour of the doors the president passed over which appears firm, untouched, and rich. The broom is also brown.</p> | <p>Normally, doors and brooms are brown in nature. It communicates richness and firmness.</p> |
| <p>1. Image Mode
The broom</p> | <p>It refers to membership. It is an allusion to the Bible as God passed over the Israelites when he saw the blood of the lamb smeared on the door post.</p> | <p>Points to the theme, reason why the armed Buhari passed over. It represents the APC membership card in this context.</p> |
| <p>2. The two men gazing in surprise through the door's opening.</p> | <p>Members of APC, refer to corrupt but faithful APC party members.</p> | <p>A prove that the government of Buhari is unjust, unfair, and favours APC members.</p> |
| <p>3. The man dragged on the floor with mouth ceiled</p> | <p>Refers to opposition members invariably PDP.</p> | <p>Points to the real victims of Buhari's anti-corruption crusade.</p> |
| <p>4. The image of Buhari on blue with a loaded gun that he just fired at the victim.</p> | <p>Refers to the APC-led government. The green white green badge pasted on Buhari's shoulder shows that he claims to work for Nigeria.</p> | <p>Shows how merciless the government is dealing with opposition in the country. The gun points to danger while the manner</p> |

the victim is bound and dragged
shows carelessness.

Summary: The whole cartoon describes injustice, partiality, and insincerity in the fight against corruption. The whole modes work together to paint this picture of selective victimization by Buhari-led administration.



Business **Day. 3rd January, 2021**

1. **Text Mode**
The president is quietly dealing with the Fulani Herdsmen
It is the only text mode on the cartoon. It is an irony that mocks and lampoons the president over his acclaimed effort to solve the Fulani Herdsmen carnage.
It refers to and reproves the government. It also points to the kind of effort the president is making.
1. **Colour Mode**
The white background and orange floor
These two colours show beauty thus contradict any effort to show that the president is dealing with the herders.
Contradicts the president's sincerity.
2. The yellow foam edge rapped with pink colour
These two colours also point to beauty and comfort, symbolising the herders are deeply happy and in comfort enclave.
Point to insincerity and deceptive effort of the president to deal with herders.
1. **Image Mode**
Buhari on red gloves, long cap, white shirt, green short and canvas punching at the foam.
Literally denotes boxing; refers to an insincere fight against the herder as the Fulani man appears calm and unperturbed inside the foam enclave.
It practically shows the kind of fight Buhari is fighting against the herders as the blow cannot go beyond the surface of the foam.
2. The Fulani herder, gazing at the president with pleasure and happiness.
Refers to or represents the Fulani herdsmen. The gun shows how violent they are and the dark smoke emanating from the gun's barrel shows carnage. The stick held proves he is a Fulani man.
Defines modern Fulani herdsmen in Nigeria of present, going about with their stick, cap, and sophisticated modern guns to kill farmers that dare oppose them. It also shows secured herders.
3. The foam
Stands for mattress for resting. The it rapped the herder twice that even a log of wood cannot penetrate! It refers to absolute protection.
Points to the fact that the herders are fully protected and that the government is insincere.

Summary: The various modes of words, colour, and image come together to mock and lambast the government's insincerity and soft sport for the killer Fulani herders. It establishes the fact that the government indirectly supports the herders in their carnage.



Punch. May 7th, 2021. Pp 12

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|----|---|---|---|
| 1. | Colour Mode
Green, White, Green | Stands for Nigeria in this context. It is sprayed over the fire to show endangerment. | It communicates the state of the country due to the unchecked activities of herders. |
| 2. | blue atmosphere and orange floor background | Represent colours. Shows liveliness and delight in the activity going on: setting Nigeria on fire. | Showa that the president is happy as Nigeria is burning. |
| 1. | Image Mode
The flag of Nigeria | Stands for Nigeria here. | Communicates danger and destruction as it is burning. |
| 2. | Fire woods ignited and burning. | Refers to destruction, annihilation, and burning. | Point to the fact that Nigeria is already on fire. |
| 3. | The president kneeling down blowing the fire, a herder bringing more firewoods smiling. The Antony general, Malami in great delight, smiling. | Refers to strong conspiracy and agreement between the president, marauding herders, and Malami, the chief justice who is also a Fulani man. | It is an indirect accusation that the Fulani's are out to destroy Nigeria. It also affirms the allegation of collusion by Theophylus Danjuma, to cause insecurity, between the security agents and bandits. |

Summary: The modes in the cartoon work together to tender a serious allegation against the government, Chief justice of Nigeria, and the Fulani herders to destroy Nigeria or make it inhabitable.

Discussion of Findings

Result shows that the cartoons carry many meaningful modes, and are derogatory in nature aim to discredit a particular leader (Buhari), so that the people could vote him out in the next election. It gives negative appellation, lampoons and lambasts the government to discredit and thwart his efforts. This means that cartoon criticism is politically motivated in most cases. The researcher finds out that political cartoons are truth inclined and serves as the most credible source to generate realistic political information in Nigeria. Cartoon appears to be the most viable and reliable media in Nigeria because it is not censored by the government. It was discovered that meaning in cartoon appears to be universal as everything points to discrediting government. The researcher also realized that the modes employed in the cartoons function together to educate and inform the viewers clearly about their government and political events.

CONCLUSION

The study of political cartoons has so far shown that great messages abound in political cartoon flakes with great political implications in meaning and functions as portrayed through this work. Ekpenyong, Bisong (2012) reiterating the fact that every cartoon has a drive, object, subject and focus which make it a vital and reliable tool in political communication, the purpose of this study

is fully established. It is thus of paramount effect to emphasis more on cartoon studies in Nigerian institutions because it is the only realistic news dissemination platform that the government seems to favour no matter how slanderous it appears.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The researcher recommends for a biographic study of political cartoonists in Nigeria.
2. Semiotics should be applied to political cartoon study.
3. Speech act theory should be applied to political cartoon study in Nigeria.

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