The Use of Language Variations by Native Arabic Speakers in Learning Process at University in Indonesia: A Narrative Inquiry Study

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Abstract: The learning of Arabic language in Indonesia heavily relies on the role of native speakers, who incorporate linguistic variations into classroom interactions. This article aims to explore the experiences of native Arabic-speaking lecturers in selecting and using language variations during the teaching process at UIN Malang, Indonesia. It also compares these strategies with past teaching practices in their home countries and then examines their perspectives on the future direction of Arabic language education. In this study, the researcher used a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry method that emphasizing an individual's story or life experience as the primary data in the research. The research data collection technique uses a narrative frame and interviews. To analyse the data, the researcher used the following steps: 1) data collected through narrative frame and interviews, 2) selected and categorized the information to simplify its presentation, 3) the data was presented by organizing the classified information based on the lecturers' teaching experiences which following a temporal pattern, 4) drawing conclusions. The results showed that: 1) Fusha (Modern Standard Arabic) is prioritized in education for its clarity, consistency, and universal comprehension, despite the daily use of 'Amiyah (Colloquial Arabic). 2) Native Arabic-speaking lecturers adapt their teaching in Indonesia by simplifying Fusha but strictly avoid Indonesian, emphasizing full Arabic immersion for effective learning. 3) Arabic language education continues to emphasize Fusha to ensure linguistic integrity, effective communication, and standardized learning, especially in Indonesia.

Keywords: Arabic Language Education in Indonesia; Fusha and 'Amiyah; Language Variation in Teaching; Native Arabic-Speaking Lecturers;

INTRODUCTION

The learning of Arabic language in Indonesia is closely tied to the role of native speakers, who introduce linguistic variations into classroom interactions. These variations reflect different linguistic backgrounds, cultures, and communication strategies, all of which can influence students' comprehension and learning experiences. As time and knowledge progress, Arabic language education continues to evolve. Many universities, particularly Islamic institutions, have establihed programs specializing in linguistics, literature, translation, and Arab culture. At the primary and secondary education levels, madrasahs and public schools have incorporated Arabic as a local content subject, even introducing it at an early age through TPQ, RTQ, PAUD, and kindergarten programs (Evi Nurus Suroiyah & Dewi Anisatuz Zakiyah, 2021). In this context, this study aims to explore how native Arabic speakers utilize and select language variations in the teaching process in Indonesia. By examining their experiences, this research seeks to uncover the communication dynamics at play and assess their impact on the effectiveness of Arabic language learning within Indonesia's academic environment.

Several studies have highlighted the crucial role of native speakers in Arabic language learning in Indonesia. One such study examines the influence of the linguistic environment (*bi'ah lughawiyah*) and the contribution of native speakers in the acquisition of a second language, particularly Arabic. The findings reveal that both formal and informal linguistic environments significantly impact language skill development. Moreover, the presence of native speakers enhances students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing abilities through more accurate pronunciation and a

deeper understanding of the cultural aspects of the language (Lazuardi et al., 2024). Furthermore, another article examines the process of learning Arabic from a sociolinguistic perspective. The study highlights that understanding linguistic variations and their social contexts plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of Arabic language instruction. This becomes even more significant when native speakers are involved, as they introduce both linguistic diversity and cultural richness into the classroom environment (Fikni Mutiara Rachma, 2020).

The other study examines the importance of a holistic approach in Arabic language teaching that integrates *Fusha* and local dialects. The findings indicate that this integrated approach can enhance students' linguistic competence and help them adapt to various social and cultural contexts. The article also highlights that *Fusha* is essential for literacy and formal communication, while local dialects provide practical proficiency for everyday interactions (Aisyah & Rido'i, 2024). Previous research discusses the role of native speakers in language acquisition, linguistic environments, and the integration of *Fusha* and local dialects in Arabic language learning across various educational levels. Meanwhile, this narrative inquiry study specifically explores the experiences of native Arabic-speaking lecturers in selecting and using language variations during the teaching process at UIN Malang, Indonesia. It also compares these strategies with past teaching practices in their home countries and examines their perspectives on the future direction of Arabic language education. Using a qualitative approach, this study provides deeper insights into classroom communication dynamics.

METHODS

The researcher used a qualitative approach with a narrative inquiry method under interpretive theory. Interpretivism has the basic assumption that reality is subjective. That is, knowledge about something is based on the meaning given by a particular person according to the situation and conditions at that time (Wuisman, 2012). Then the narrative inquiry method emphasizing an individual's story or life experience as the primary data in the research (Gustaman et al., 2024). In this article involves

three native Arabic-speaking lecturers from Sudan and Libya who teach at a university in Indonesia, especially in State Islamic University Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Their experiences and narratives regarding the use of language variations in Arabic instruction in learning process serve as the primary data for this research. Meanwhile, secondary data is obtained from literature reviews, including books and relevant articles that support the discussion. Data collection methods include narrative frame and interviews. The narrative frame required lecturers to write about their teaching experiences by filling out a structured form provided by the researcher, and then the interviews were conducted as a follow-up to further explore the details of their written responses. To analyze the data, the researcher applied Miles and Huberman's theoretical approach (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014), which consists of several stages. The first stage involved collecting data through narrative frame and interviews. In the second stage, the researcher selected and categorized the information to simplify its presentation. In the third stage, the data was presented by organizing the classified information based on the lecturers' teaching experiences, following a temporal pattern that covered the past, present, and future reflections with a focus on how language variations—both Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) and colloquial Arabic ('Amiyah)—are used in classroom interactions and how students respond to these differences. The final stage involves drawing conclusions (Matthew B. Miles et al., 2014) to provide a more detailed depiction of the lecturers' experiences, highlighting the key aspects related to the use of language variations in the learning process.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The teaching of Arabic in Indonesia involves the role of native speakers who bring language variations into classroom interactions, reflecting different linguistic backgrounds, cultures, and communication strategies that influence students' comprehension and learning experiences. In Arabic instruction, various forms of the language—Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) and Colloquial Arabic ('Amiyah)—are used depending on the learning context, with factors such as students' proficiency levels, the formality of the learning environment, and

linguistic backgrounds influencing language choice. Effective communication between native Arabic-speaking lecturers and students is essential, requiring various teaching strategies and, in some cases, the slight use of another language, such as Indonesian, to facilitate students' understanding. This multilingual approach helps bridge linguistic and cultural differences but also presents pedagogical challenges related to standardization and clarity in instruction.

Findings

1. Variations of the Arabic Language in Learning

a. *Fusha* and '*Amiyah*

Classical Arabic (*Fusha*) is a well-preserved and eloquent form of the Arabic language, recognized as the most refined and universally understood among its speakers, whether they are native Arabs or non-Arabs. In contrast, Colloquial Arabic ('*Ammiyah*) has diverged from the standard structure and morphology of *Fusha*, making it significantly different from its original form (Aziz, 2019). '*Ammiyah* is inherently localized, comprehensible only to its native speakers, as it varies greatly from one region to another. The use of *Fusha* and '*Amiyah* Arabic in social contexts has a clear distinction. *Fusha* Arabic is generally used in formal settings, while '*Amiyah* is more commonly used in everyday interactions that are casual and informal (Ni'mah, 2024).

Arabic native speaker lecturers who teach in their home countries and in Indonesia have slight differences in using language variations in the learning process. The following is an explanation from each lecturer.

R1 stated that in Sudan, despite the presence of various dialects among the people, the main language used in education is Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha). From primary school to university, all learning is conducted in formal Arabic, although there is some use of Colloquial Arabic (Amiyah) or local dialects to facilitate understanding. Sudan itself is considered a country with a strong Arab identity, so linguistic diversity there is not very significant.

When teaching in Indonesia, R1 faced challenges in understanding language variations and phonetic differences between Arabic and local languages in Indonesia. He struggled to distinguish certain sounds that are uncommon in Arabic. Therefore, he adapted his teaching methods to make the material easier for students to understand. Nevertheless, in teaching, he primarily used Modern Standard Arabic and only occasionally incorporated a few Indonesian words in a very limited manner to clarify comprehension.

Then R2 stated that in Sudan, linguistic diversity is part of the cultural identity of society, with more than 300 dialects reflecting regional diversity. Nevertheless, education continues to use Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) at all levels, in accordance with government policy. In the teaching and learning process, local dialects or Colloquial Arabic (Amiyah) are sometimes used to clarify certain concepts. Meanwhile, in daily life, Sudanese people use Amiyah for general communication, such as in markets or business transactions. However, there are also specific dialects that are only understood by certain groups, similar to the situation in Indonesia, where certain communities speak their own language in addition to Indonesian, which can only be understood by them.

Upon starting his teaching experience in Indonesia, R2 faced challenges in language use because he did not have a strong command of Indonesian. As a result, he fully relied on Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) in his teaching. His understanding of Indonesian was very limited, so he only occasionally used certain words or phrases, such as numbers, to clarify the material. However, overall, he continued to use Fusha Arabic in communication with students and others in the academic environment.

After that, R3 explained that in Libya, Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) is widely used in education, administration, media, and various other sectors, reflecting its important role in daily life and institutional systems. However, in certain situations, local dialects or Colloquial Arabic (Amiyah) may be used to clarify meanings and facilitate students' understanding. Nevertheless, its use remains limited and is only applied when necessary to explain difficult concepts.

In Indonesia, R3 emphasizes the use of Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) in teaching so that students become accustomed to hearing and understanding the language naturally. If there are terms that are difficult to understand, he seeks help from students who are more proficient in Arabic to explain them in Indonesian, without using dialects or other

languages to avoid confusion in learning. His consistency in using Modern Standard Arabic is also evident in his teaching activities on social media, such as when explaining Quranic interpretation through Facebook.

From all the data explanation, it is known that Arabic is the official language in the respondents' home countries and is used as the primary language in all educational institutions. Despite various differences in dialects or Colloquial Arabic (Amiyah), Modern Standard Arabic (Fusha) remains the standard for formal communication. In certain situations, local dialects may be used to facilitate understanding in the learning process. Additionally, the use of Arabic is not limited to education but also extends to other sectors in Sudan and Libya. Meanwhile, local dialects are more commonly used in personal interactions and are considered informal, although they are still understood by the respective communities.

In Indonesia, the respondents face different situations in teaching and interacting with students, both inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, they cannot use their native dialects, as Indonesian students would not understand them. From their arrival in Indonesia until now, the learning process has been conducted entirely in Modern Standard Arabic. Only in certain cases is a small amount of Indonesian used, such as numbers or single words, to clarify meanings but not as the primary language. Their main goal is to train and accustom Indonesian students to using Arabic. If the respondents were to use another language, their presence in Indonesia would lose its purpose, and it could also create challenges in teaching the Arabic language.

b. Factors Influencing the Selection of Fusha by Native Speakers

In using Arabic when teaching, native speaker lecturers prioritise the use of Fusha, which is the official language studied in Arab and non-Arab countries. This is certainly due to several factors such as education, obligation, the goals to be achieved in learning, and preserving the Fusha Arabic language itself. As said by R2 that in his opinion, in Arabic it is best to maintain the Fusha language. If someone teaches Amiyah (dialect), then he will only teach his own dialect. As a result, the student who is taught will not understand the Egyptian dialect, the Saudi dialect, or any other dialect.

The main problem with the Amiyah language is that each country has its own dialect, which may be difficult for others to understand. Even he himself sometimes has to translate carefully because Amiyah does not have uniform rules. If one teaches the student in his dialect, then the student will only be able to speak in a particular dialect, such as the Sudanese dialect, and that is a problem in itself. Therefore, in his opinion, it is best to focus on teaching Fusha to students, as Fusha is a language that can be understood by everyone, while Amiyah is only limited to certain countries (based on interview with R2).

Then R3 added that in his opinion, there is no need to overemphasise the use of dialects in Arabic language learning. When a student of Indonesian origin speaks in Fusha Arabic, Arabs will be able to understand him well. In addition, all official matters in Arab countries use Fusha Arabic, whether in the fields of administration, education, management, news, broadcasting, or media.

Therefore, overloading students with dialects can be an obstacle, especially since Arabic itself already has a lot of vocabulary and terms to learn. If students also have to learn various dialects, it can actually be an obstacle for them (based on an interview with R3). This is why the use of fusha Arabic is favoured over other languages.

2. Native Arabic Speaker Interaction with Students in the Learning Process
a. Communication patterns and lesson strategies

Communication patterns in the learning process carried out by native speaker lecturers in their countries and Indonesia certainly have differences, which are adjusted to the cultural and linguistic context. R1 said that in Arab countries, the official language plays an important role in facilitating the education process. In Sudan, since Arabic is the official language, students rarely have difficulties in understanding the lessons. Difficulties only arise when the language material becomes more complex, which can confuse even native speakers. In these situations, teachers explain learning concepts using standard Arabic or local dialects to make it easier to understand.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, R1 applies a different approach as the majority of students are not native Arabic speakers. For this reason,

he tries to simplify the language by speaking slowly and choosing vocabulary that is easy to understand. He also emphasises the importance of conversation and discussion as the main method of teaching, an approach he uses in his daily life (based on narrative frames and interviews).

Then R2 has a different approach to communicating with his Arabic-speaking students. In his country, he always tries to simplify the language when he encounters difficulties and uses colloquialisms or visual aids to explain meanings if students do not understand standard Arabic. This helps them to relate concepts to the surrounding environment.

In Indonesia, R2 teaches at master's and doctoral levels, where the majority of students have a good grasp of standard Arabic. Therefore, he does not face much difficulty in delivering the material, except in some terms that may be new to the students. In such situations, he tries to simplify the terms to make them easier to understand. However, the use of amiyah language is not possible because Indonesian students will not understand it. If there are difficulties in understanding the material, he makes sure to re-explain it in a simpler way so that students can understand it well (based on narrative frames and interviews).

R3 applied a more diverse approach in delivering the material in Indonesia. He does not stick to one method, but tries various ways so that all students can understand the lesson well. If there are difficulties, he involves other students to help explain words or concepts that are difficult to understand, especially when vocabulary limitations are an obstacle for some students. This approach shows her flexibility in accommodating students' different language abilities, emphasising cooperation as the key to understanding.

According to him, there is a clear difference between teaching students who are native Arabic speakers and those who are not native speakers. Talking to students whose native speaker is certainly easier, while challenges arise when dealing with students from different language backgrounds. This is not only the case in Indonesia, Sudan, or Libya, but all over the world. Some students may understand certain terms, while others do not, making it difficult to choose the right vocabulary. In situations like this, he always ensures students' understanding by asking them

directly to what extent they understand the material presented. Therefore, he feels a great responsibility to convey information in a clear and easy way, so that all students can understand it well (based on narrative frames and interviews).

b. The role of Indonesian Language in learning

Of the three Arabic native speaker lecturers currently teaching in Indonesia, none of them want to use Indonesian in their learning process. They say that the purpose of their presence in Indonesia is to facilitate the learning of foreign languages such as Arabic, where Indonesians can speak directly with native speakers. If they learn Indonesian and use it both in learning and in daily life, then the existence of native speakers will be lost, and there will be interference in learning this Arabic language. As mentioned in an article that the factors of interference are the environment, the habit of speaking Indonesian, and the lack of correct application of vocabulary (Hindun & Humaidi, 2024). The core of all this is habituation and training to always speak Arabic, both in class and outside the classroom.

3. Perspectives on the Future of Arabic Language Education.

The world of education is undoubtedly dynamic, constantly evolving over time. This includes Arabic language education, which has seen advancements in curriculum, teaching methods, and techniques. R1 states that in the past, there was minimal attention given to educational resources, but now there is greater focus on teaching methods and learning facilities. Regarding the use of the Arabic language, the primary priority remains on Arabic Fusha. However, in certain situations, understanding Arabic 'Amiyah also becomes a necessity. This is especially felt by Indonesian students who travel to Arab countries, where the local communities more frequently use 'Amiyah rather than Fusha.

According to R2, there has been significant progress in Arabic language learning compared to when he first arrived in Indonesia. He hopes that this progress will continue and further improve. In his view, Indonesia is one of the countries that will continue to preserve Arabic Fusha, despite not being an Arab country. R2 also observes that Arab countries are gradually abandoning Arabic Fusha. People

there predominantly use 'Amiyah in their daily lives. However, in Indonesia, the language used remains Arabic Fusha, without any influence from 'Amiyah.

In R2's perspective, the best approach in learning Arabic is to maintain the use of Fusha. If someone teaches 'Amiyah, they will only be teaching their own dialect (based on their region), meaning students will only understand a specific dialect. R2 believes that the main issue with 'Amiyah is that each country has its own dialect, making mutual understanding between speakers more difficult. Even native Arabic speakers may need to translate certain words from other dialects, as 'Amiyah lacks standardized rules. Therefore, R2 emphasizes that students should focus on learning Arabic Fusha, as it is a language that can be understood by everyone, whereas 'Amiyah is local and limited to specific countries.

Meanwhile, according to R3, the main focus in learning Arabic should remain on Fusha, rather than on dialects or 'Amiyah. This is because Fusha is used in all official aspects of Arab countries, such as administration, education, media, news, and government. R3 emphasizes that if Indonesian students speak Arabic Fusha, they will be understood by the Arab community. However, if they are directed to learn dialects, it would only become an additional burden, as dialects are merely local and not used in academic or professional contexts.

Furthermore, R3 also states that when someone lives in an Arab country, they will naturally pick up some dialect vocabulary from their surroundings. However, Arabic language learning should still focus on Fusha, as it is the language used in education and official duties, both in Arab countries and in Indonesia. R3 believes that teaching dialects would only divert students' attention from mastering the actual Arabic language and risks weakening their understanding of Fusha.

Discussion

From the explanation above, it can be seen that in the teaching process, all native Arabic-speaking lecturers always use Fusha Arabic, both in their home countries and in Indonesia. This is done to maintain the use of Fusha and to train Indonesian students to become more accustomed to it. R2 stated that Arab countries tend to use 'Amiyah (dialect)

more frequently than Fusha in daily life. Therefore, according to the three lecturers (R1, R2, and R3), Indonesian students do not need to learn 'Amiyah, as mastering Fusha is sufficient for communicating with all Arabic speakers. However, this opinion differs from another study that examined the learning of Egyptian 'Amiyah Arabic at an institute in Lombok. The study suggested that learning 'Amiyah is also important, considering that many Indonesians—whether pilgrims, workers, or others—face difficulties or even deception due to their lack of understanding of this dialect (Nasarudin & Syafii, 2021). Nevertheless, this does not entirely solve the problem, as previously mentioned, since each Arab country has different dialects, even though Arabic remains their official language.

Furthermore, the distinction between Fusha and 'Amiyah highlights an important linguistic dichotomy within the Arabic language. While Fusha serves as the formal medium for education, media, literature, and official communication (Shareef Klaib Alshraideh & Alhourani, 2022), 'Amiyah dominates informal interactions and varies significantly across different regions. Some argue that learning 'Amiyah is beneficial for practical fluency and daily interactions. However, despite its role in colloquial communication, Fusha remains the most fundamental and essential form of Arabic to master. As a standardized language used across Arab and non-Arab countries, Fusha provides learners with broader linguistic competency and ensures their skills remain relevant in formal, academic, and international contexts. The focus on Fusha in Arabic education is therefore justified, as excessive emphasis on 'Amiyah could lead to confusion due to the vast dialectal variations that exist among Arab countries.

Building on this discussion, another important aspect to consider is the language style used by native-speaking instructors. In their home countries, instructors tend to use a more flexible style, simplifying their language to facilitate student comprehension. However, when teaching in Indonesia, language differences pose a challenge, as students are unfamiliar with Arabic dialects or 'Amiyah. Therefore, instructors need to adjust their communication strategies by using simpler Arabic Fusha. One effective method in this regard is language immersion, where students

are exposed to Arabic in a natural learning environment, allowing them to gradually develop fluency and confidence in communication (Sovinaz & Setiyawan, 2023).

In light of these pedagogical challenges, it is essential to acknowledge that Arabic language education has undergone significant advancements, reflecting broader trends in educational evolution. These developments encompass curriculum refinement, teaching methods, and the integration of modern technologies, all aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of instruction, particularly for non-native speakers. To achieve this, various innovative approaches and tools have been adopted, making the field increasingly dynamic and continuously evolving to create a more engaging and effective learning experience.

As part of these advancements, one of the key aspects of progress is the refinement of the curriculum to address challenges faced by learners, such as vocabulary acquisition and speaking skills. The direct method and audio-oral techniques have proven effective in teaching Arabic vocabulary by emphasizing interactive and communicative approaches (Umar et al., 2022). Additionally, fun learning strategies, such as incorporating songs into textbooks, have shown significant improvements in student engagement and learning outcomes, especially among younger learners. With these innovations, Arabic language education continues to advance, providing a more optimal and enjoyable learning experience for all (Bustam et al., 2021).

In this context, Indonesia's commitment to Fusha is a deliberate strategy to preserve the integrity of Arabic language education while equipping learners with a universally recognized linguistic foundation. This dedication is reflected in various educational initiatives and curriculum developments that emphasize the significance of Fusha in both religious and communicative contexts. The evolution of Arabic language education in Indonesia is evident in its curriculum, which strikes a balance between traditional religious instruction and modern linguistic competencies. Notably, the curriculum has transitioned from the 1964 framework to the 2022 independent curriculum, incorporating a stronger focus on communicative and cultural competence alongside religious studies (Rufaiqoh et al., 2024). This progression ensures that students not

only gain proficiency in Arabic for religious purposes but also develop the practical skills necessary for effective communication in diverse contexts.

CONCLUSION

The discussion highlights the significant role of Fusha (Modern Standard Arabic) as the primary language in education, administration, and formal communication in Arabic-speaking countries, despite the widespread use of 'Amiyah (Colloquial Arabic) in daily interactions. Native Arabic-speaking lecturers emphasize the importance of Fusha in teaching, both in their home countries and in Indonesia, as it provides a standardized and universally understood linguistic foundation. While some dialects may be used occasionally to facilitate understanding, the dominance of Fusha ensures clarity and consistency in learning. The key issue with 'Amiyah lies in its regional variations, which can create communication barriers among Arabic learners. Therefore, prioritizing Fusha in education is seen as essential for maintaining linguistic unity, ensuring broader comprehension, and preserving the integrity of the Arabic language. Lecturers agree that introducing multiple dialects in learning could overwhelm students, making it more challenging to achieve fluency. As a result, the structured use of Fusha remains the preferred and most effective approach in Arabic language instruction, especially for non-native speakers.

The interaction between native Arabic-speaking lecturers and students in the learning process reveals key differences in communication strategies based on linguistic and cultural contexts. In their home countries, lecturers primarily use Fusha, with occasional simplifications or dialectal explanations to aid comprehension. However, in Indonesia, they adapt their teaching methods by speaking more slowly, selecting simpler vocabulary, and incorporating discussion-based learning to accommodate non-native speakers. While challenges arise due to students' varying proficiency levels, lecturers employ diverse approaches, such as peer assistance and interactive teaching, to enhance understanding. Despite these adaptations, all three lecturers firmly reject the use of Indonesian in the learning process, emphasizing that immersion in Arabic is crucial for language acquisition. They

believe that using Indonesian would diminish the role of native speakers and hinder students' ability to internalize Arabic naturally. Thus, fostering an Arabic-speaking environment, both inside and outside the classroom, remains a fundamental principle in their teaching methodology, ensuring students develop proficiency through continuous practice and exposure.

The future of Arabic language education continues to evolve, emphasizing improvements in curriculum, teaching methods, and learning resources. Despite the increasing use of 'Amiyah in Arab countries, Arabic Fusha remains the primary focus in formal education, especially in Indonesia, where its preservation is strongly upheld. R2 and R3 assert that learning dialects is unnecessary, as 'Amiyah varies by region and lacks standardized rules, making mutual comprehension difficult even among native speakers. Instead, they emphasize that mastering Fusha is sufficient for effective communication and essential for academic, administrative, and professional contexts. While exposure to 'Amiyah may naturally occur when living in Arab countries, structured Arabic education should prioritize Fusha to maintain linguistic clarity and ensure broader communication. Thus, the commitment to Fusha in Indonesia reflects a conscious effort to sustain the integrity of Arabic language education and equip learners with a universally understood linguistic foundation.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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