Implicitness in Subtitling versus Dubbing[1]

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Abstract

The purpose of the Present study was to determine the difference between translations of English feature films and their Persian dubbed and subtitled versions in terms of implicitness. To this aim, i.e., to find the degree of implicitness the researcher conducted the research in the light of Larson's (1984) concept of implicit information/meaning. The material gathered for this purpose consisted of five movies in two versions, one dubbed and the other subtitled version. The research investigated hundred minutes of the movies (twenty minutes from each movie) containing a total of 1600 frames of which 163 frames contained implicit meaning/information in either of the two versions. In order to have a contrastive analysis of the two versions, the two translations were listed in tables to be compared and contrasted so as to track down instances of implicit meaning. Afterwards, the researcher got a percentage at the frequency of referential, situational and organizational implicit meanings in the two versions. According to the statistical analysis 80.37 percent of the implicit meanings in the five films belonged to the subtitled versions and 19.63 percent of the implicit meanings belonged to the dubbed versions. Thus, the findings testified that subtitled versions are more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions. Meanwhile, implicit situational meaning had the highest frequency and implicit organizational meaning the least.

Keywords: Audiovisual Translation, Dubbing, Implicitness, Implicit Organizational Meaning, Implicit Referential Meaning, Implicit Situational Meaning, Subtitling

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1. Introduction and Background

In our modern life i.e., in this age of globalization and digitalization and the dominance of media, the introduction of new technologies and subsequent boon in satellite, television and Internet has made the world a much smaller place, allowing different people and so different cultures and languages to interact more frequently. As a result, film industries have been flourished. Thus, audiovisual translation has an increasingly important role to play in communication across cultures and languages and so the role of audiovisual translator is intensified. Audiovisual translation is a field in translation studies that has not been paid enough attention to by the researchers.

As two independent modes of multimedia translation, dubbing and subtitling have their own distinctive features. The characteristics that the researcher thought may affect their respective translations. As Heritage *et al.* (1988, cited in Kelly-Holmes, 1999) state: "It has become increasingly unrealistic to analyze the structure and content of [media] messages independent of the international medium within which they are generated. For, although the medium may not be the message, the interactional structures through which broadcast [talk] is conveyed must necessarily contribute to its content and appearance".

Likewise, Diaz Cintas (2004) states that in numerical terms, the translation carried out in the audiovisual realm is the most important translational activity of our time. Firstly, because of the high number of people it reaches, mainly through television. Secondly, because of the large quantity of translated products which cross over to other cultures: documentaries, films, news, debates, concerts, television series, etc. Thirdly, because of the immediacy of its reception: television, cinema, DVD. A large amount of multimedia products come from European or English-speaking countries, so they require translation. In fact, they are not translated

through the same channels. In other words, translations are conducted through different modes, the most important of which are dubbing and subtitling.

At this step, the concepts of the two types of AVT should be introduced. According to Borell (2000, cited in Hajebi and Samir, 2022) dubbing means the replacement of a soundtrack for a new one, with a different language than the original, while subtitling means that a text is shown together with visual material, such as a film and contains of a written version of the lines found in the soundtrack. The purpose of both dubbing and subtitling is usually to make audio-visual material available for a broader group of people.

The lexical items and grammatical forms chosen in the translations in dubbing would be inevitably different from those in the translation in subtitling. Therefore, the researchers thought that the dubbed version of films must be more explicit than the corresponding subtitled version of the same films, i.e., more information is left implied in subtitled versions due to technical constraints of time and space which exist in subtitling, so this encouraged the researchers to find the degree of implicitness in two different versions of different films.

Regarding such constraints Bogucki (2004) explains: "It seems that the type of AVT where translational constraints are at their most vivid is subtitling. In dubbing, (and, to some extent, also in voice- over) restrictions on the form of the target text stem mostly from the fact that equivalents have to match the visual components, that is the image, so what the audience hear is more or less consistent with what they see. Subtitling, as a cross-medium activity (spoken or written) is much more complex, therefore translational loss is practically an occupational hazard."

On the other hand, Vorgelegt von et al. (2005) believes: "Subtitles are mostly condensed translations of original dialogue or onscreen text which appear as lines of text usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. The subtitles appear and disappear in time with the corresponding portion of original dialogue or

onscreen text. Subtitles can be reduced, containing only key phrases of the original dialogue or text."

Moreover, Lomheim (1999, cited in Orero 2004) expresses that unlike dubbing, subtitling tends to condense the original dialogue by 20-40% due to technical and perceptional constraints in order to provide enough reading time for the audience.

Finally, Cintas (2004) points out that the reduction is fundamental to subtitling but not so much to dubbing.

Taking into account implicitness as a key concept in this study, Barnwell (1980) believes that every message contains both 1) some information which is explicit which is openly stated in words (or by other overt linguistic signals), and 2) some information which is Implicit that is clearly understood, even though it is not stated in words. She further states that Information which is implicit may be understood because of any of these different factors: 1. the situation in which the utterance is spoken; 2. the linguistic context; and 3. information which is already known to both the speaker and the hearer because of shared previous experience or shared cultural background.

The present study is based on Mildred L. Larson's (1984) concept of implicitness. According to Vinay and Darbelnet (1958, cited in Baker, 2001) implicitation is 'the process of allowing the target language situation or context to define certain details which were explicit in the source language'. Meanwhile Dimitrova (2005) notes that "causal relations are often left implicit in texts, since they are particularly easy to infer, if the text is well formed and the reader has the necessary background knowledge."

However, according to Larson (1984) "implicit information is that for which there is no form but the information is part of the total communication intended or assumed by the writer". In fact, contrary to explicitation, which has been claimed by

some scholars to be one of the translation universals in many corpus-based studies, implicitation has received much less attention except for a few studies. Meanwhile, Larson (1984) states that 'there may be implicit information which is referential, organizational and/or situational. That is, all three kinds of meaning may be either explicit or implicit'. Based on Larson (1984) "in any text, the reference to certain things, events, attributes, and relations will be left implicit. The meaning is there but not expressed explicitly. For example, if someone asks, "How many people come?" the person asked may answer, "Ten". In this context it is clear that "ten" means "Ten people came." The reference to people and came is left implicit in the answer". This is what Larson means by referential meaning.

Regarding implicit information and organizational meaning, Larson (1984) expresses that "a text is a unit. It is organized in some logical way. It is characterized by cohesion, continuity, grouping, and patterns of prominence. There is a flow of old and new information, redundancy which helps signal the unity and various ways to indicate the topic or theme of text, but languages differ in how these matters are indicated. In many languages, leaving some information implicit is one feature used to signal organizational meaning. Part of the information which occurs in the semantic structure is left implicit in the grammar in order to indicate old information, in order to add cohesion, and, in some cases, even to mark theme or focus. Less explicit forms are often used to signal organizational meaning."

Considering implicit situational meaning Larson states that "information which is left implicit when talking to one person might be made explicit when talking to another. (...) often in normal conversation, there is much which is going on in the situation which makes it possible to understand exactly what is meant without using many words. For example, a mother, seeing her child about to put his hand in the fire, cries out, "No!" The child understands the message. "Don't put your hand in

the fire!" All of this information is carried by one word, "No", because of the situation. In a different situation "No!" might mean something very different."

This research is an attempt to answer the following question:

- Are Persian subtitled Versions of selected English feature films more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions?

The hypothesis underlying this study is: Subtitled versions of selected feature films are more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions.

2. Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Despite the care that has been taken to carry out the research as acceptable as possible, the work still has some delimitations. This research is based on about 100 minutes of five different movies (20 minutes from each film). Each of the selected films has two versions, one dubbed and the other subtitled in order to be compared. It was ideal that two versions of the same film namely, dubbed and subtitled version, to be translated by the same company or institution but the researcher did not find any two versions of the same film translated by the same source. So, he had to provide two versions from different sources. In addition, many of the subtitled versions were not available in the market, because most of them are translated by unauthorized and private institutes or organizations. On the other hand, there were some unauthorized subtitled films without dubbed version which were translated by those who have received no systematic training in subtitling, therefore, their subtitled films were of really low quality. There were also many cases where either of the versions was left untranslated in some of the frames. Besides, in some cases, the S.T available in the website had some deficiencies; consequently, the researcher himself was to listen to the film and write the script (or transcribe).

3. Methodology

On the basis of the proposed hypothesis, a comparative study was carried out; in other words, the researcher used contrastive analysis as descriptive procedure. In fact, the analysis was conducted to answer the research question and to verify the hypothesis conceived on its basis. The type of research is corpus-based; therefore, it is quantitative. The research is conducted within the framework of the descriptive approach of the comparative model of translation.

Corpus

For the purpose of this study, five movies were selected as the corpus that comprise about 100 minutes of five different movies (20 minutes containing dialogues were randomly selected from each film). The movies were produced during 1992 to 2008 in the U.S.A. The data were gathered from analyzing the dubbed and subtitled versions of these films.

The specifications of these films to be analyzed in this research are shown in the following table:

Table 1. Specifications of movies selected for the data of this study

No.	Title	Director	Year	Country	Genre	Place of Dubbing	Place of Subtitling
1	THE OTHERS	Alejandro AMENABAR	2001	U.S.A.	Horror, Mystery	Century 21 (Visual media company)	Underground Company
2	BRAVE HEART	Mel GIBSON	1995	U.S.A.	War, Romance, Action/ Adventure	Javaneh Pooya	Underground Company
3	NARNIA PRINCE CASPIAN	Andrew ADAMSON	2008	U.S.A.	Fantasy, Action/ Adventure	Unauthorized Institute	Underground Company

4	THERMINA TOR II	James CAMERO N	199 2	U.S.A .	Action, Science -fiction	Century 21 (Visual media company)	Undergro und Company
5	THE DEPARTED	Martin SCORSES E	200 6	U.S.A .	Drama, Thriller, Crime/ Action	Javaneh Pooya	Undergro und Company

The first step in procedure was to watch the five movies. Then some parts of the films containing dialogues were selected randomly. The unit of analysis in film is usually frame rather than sentence. Frame is usually the amount of text shown on the screen at one time, in other words, the appearance and disappearance of one single subtitle on the screen. Therefore, the researcher chose the same unit of analysis. In the next step, the script of each frame with its corresponding Persian subtitle was written down. Then the script of oral language was carefully listened and then written down. All the information was gathered in a table titled source, subtitled and dubbed respectively, then the analysis stage began. In this stage all frames were analyzed manually i.e., the source or movie script and its corresponding dubbed and subtitled translations were studied one by one up to the end of each film to find the degree of implicitness in the two versions. The researcher analyzed each frame considering implicit referential meaning and implicit situational meaning, as well as implicit organizational meaning. The writer analyzed first implicit situational meaning, then implicit referential meaning and finally, implicit organizational meaning in the two versions of five films. Finally, the researcher got a percentage at the frequency of each type of implicit information in the movies.

Results

The present study tried to find whether or not there is any difference between the translations of feature films in dubbed and subtitled versions in terms of

implicitness. The researchers found 163 cases in the five movies where the frames in either of the two versions contained implicit information/ meaning. The following are some of the examples where the subtitled versions of the selected movies for implicit situational and referential meanings were more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions:

Table 2. Cases of implicit situational meaning in the subtitled versions:

Source	Subtitled	Dubbed
Simpson. What a character he was.	سیسمون عجب آدمی بود.	سیسمون عجب **شخصیّت جالبی** بود.
It was on account of the tuberculosis.	به خاطر بیماری سل.	علتش **شیوع** بیماری سل بود.
But, sir, our nobles will be reluctant to uproot.	اما قربان این کار غیر ممکنه.	ولی قربان نُجبای ما **تمایلی به جابجایی ندارند**.
Who is this person who speaks to me as though I needed his advice?	ببینم این کیه که داره نظر میده؟	**این شخص کیه که با من صحبت می‌کنه، جوری که انگار من نظرشو خواستم؟**
No doubt you were otherwise occupied.	مطمئناً مشغول امر دیگری بودی.	بدون شک درگیر کارهای مهم‌تری بودین. **اینطور نیست؟**
Imagine, losing your nephew,	تصورکن... برادرزاده‌هات را از دست بدهی،	تصور کنید، برادرزادهٔ شما **یعنی پرنسکا سپید هم** ناپدید میشه.
Stop! Stop!	وایسا!	اوه **بندازش** صبرکن، صبرکن.
Is there anything particular you seek, my lord?	دنبال چیزخاصّی هستین، سرورم؟	**کتاب** خاصّی هست که دارین دنبالش می‌گردین، سرور من.
… how many men were killed.	چند نفر در حملهٔ نارنیایی‌ها کشته شدند؟	چند نفر **سرباز** در حملهٔ خونین و غافل‌گیرانه نارنیا به قتل رسیدن؟
He won't even answer me anymore. Honey, move.	اون حتی جوابم رو هم نمی‌ده عزیزم، بیا این‌طرف.	حالا دیگه بهم جوابم نمی‌ده. **از جلوی تلویزیون رد شو.**
As the governor of the commonwealth of Massachusette…	بعنوان فرماندار ماساچوست …	به عنوان **رئیس مرکز آموزش پلیس** ماساچوست...

Do you have anyone in with Costello presently?	الان بین افراد کاستلو فعال دارین؟	اصلاً یه چیزو برامون روشن کنید، فقط میخواهیم بدونیم الان کسی در تشکیلات کاستلو فعال هست یا نه؟
Come to my store next Friday, give you the money…	جمعه هفته بعد بیاین، بهتون پول میدم.	لطفا برو و جمعه دیگه بیا مغازم اون‌موقع پولو بهت میدم.

Table 3. Cases of implicit referential meaning in the subtitled versions:

Source	Subtitled	Dubbed
Did you hear it as well? Hear what?	تو هم شنیدی؟ چی رو شنیدم؟	تو هم سروصدارو شنیدی؟ کدوم سروصدا؟
What do these numbers stand for?	اینها واسه چی وایسادن؟	این‌اعدادچیونشونمی‌ده؟
Get rid of it. I don't want it in the house.	ببرش. تو این خونه از این چیزا نمی‌خوام.	آلبومو نابودش کنین. نمی‌خوام تو خونه باشه.
… and he says that I speak for all of the Burces.	… و گفتند که من بجای اونا شرکت کنم.	… و گفت من از طرف تمام بروسها حرف بزنم.
It was said to be magic.	گفته میشه که جادوئیه.	گفته شده یک تک‌شاخ سحرآمیزه.
So? What are they like?	خوب؟ چه شکلی بودند؟	خب، اونا چه‌جور آدمایی‌أن؟
They took over their piece of the city.	اونها یه بخش از شهرو به کنترل خودشون درآوردن.	گنی‌هایواقعی‌کنترلاونقسمتازشهروبدس تگرفته‌بودن.
Win, don't make me have to come down here again for this.	فلین، دیگه مجبورم نکن بخاطر این بیام اینجا.	ون، مجبورم نکن بخاطر این چنددلار هردفعه تا اینجا بیام.
One kid with your old man, one kid with your mother.	یکی پیش پدرت و اون یکی پیش مادرت.	یکی از خواهر برادرات پیش پدرت بود، یکی پیش مادرت.
… to convince anyone that this is no setup.	تا ساختگی به نظر نیاد.	تا باور کنن که زندان رفتنت ساختگی نبوده.

Table 4. Cases of implicit organizational meaning in the subtitled versions:

Source	Subtitled	Dubbed
Are you going to leave us, too?	تو هم ما رو ترک می‌کنی؟	شما هم می‌خواهین مارو ترک کنین؟

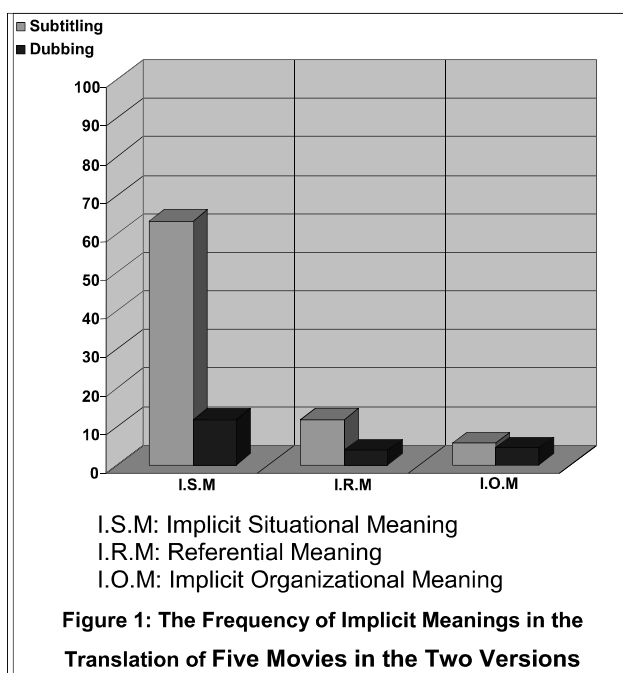| Of course not!	البته که نه!	این چه حرفیه!
Why should I leave you?	چرا باید ترکتون کنم؟	چرا باید ترکتون کنم؟
The others said they wouldn't…	بقیه هم همین‌رو می‌گفتن…	اونا هم می‌گفتن **نمی‌رن**…
… but they did, and then it happened.	… ولی همین کاررو کردن، و اون اتفاق افتاد.	… ولی **رفتن**. بعدش هم اون اتفاق افتاد.
One day you will be a king.	یه روز تو پادشاه میشی.	روزی تو پادشاه خواهی شد.
At least try to act like one.	حداقل یاد بگیر.	دست کم مثل یک شاهزاده عمل کن.

To count the total number of each kind of implicit meaning in the five movies, the researcher summarized them along with their frequencies in the following table 1.

Table 5: Statistical Analysis of Implicitness in the Translation of Five Movies:

No.	Kind of implicit meaning	Frequencies	Percentage
1	Implicit situational meaning in subtitlings	103	63.19%
	Implicit situational meaning in dubbings	19	11.66%
2	Implicit referential meaning in subtitlings	19	11.66%
	Implicit referential meaning in dubbings	6	3.68%
3	Implicit organizational meaning in subtitlings	9	5.52%
	Implicit organizational meaning in dubbings	7	4.29%
	Total	163	100%

The total number of analyzed frames in the research is 1600 frames. 163 frames of this number contained examples of implicit meaning in either of the two versions. Considering implicit situational meaning, the researcher found 122 examples (74.85%) in the five movies of which 103 cases (63.19%) were found in the subtitled versions and 19 cases (11.66%) were found in the dubbed versions. Regarding implicit referential meaning, the researcher observed 25 cases (15.34%) in the five movies of which 19 cases (11.66%) were observed in the subtitlings and 6 cases (3.68%) were observed in the dubbings. Considering implicit organizational

meaning, 16 examples (9.81%) were found in the five films of which 9 examples (5.52%) were found in the subtitles and 7 examples (4.29%) were found in the dubbings. The total frequency of each kind of implicit meaning in the corpus is illustrated in Figure 1.

I.S.M: Implicit Situational Meaning
I.R.M: Referential Meaning
I.O.M: Implicit Organizational Meaning

Figure 1: The Frequency of Implicit Meanings in the Translation of Five Movies in the Two Versions

As it can be seen, implicit situational meaning is the most frequent kind of implicit meaning in the five movies; in other words, it has occurred most frequently in the translation of five movies in the two versions. However, implicit organizational meaning is the least frequent kind of implicit meaning in the five films. Anyway, if we ignore the dubbed and subtitled versions and just take the distribution of different kinds of implicit meaning into consideration, we can explain them in the following graph. The total distribution of each kind of implicit meaning in the corpus is illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Distribution of Implicit Meanings in the Translation of Five Movies
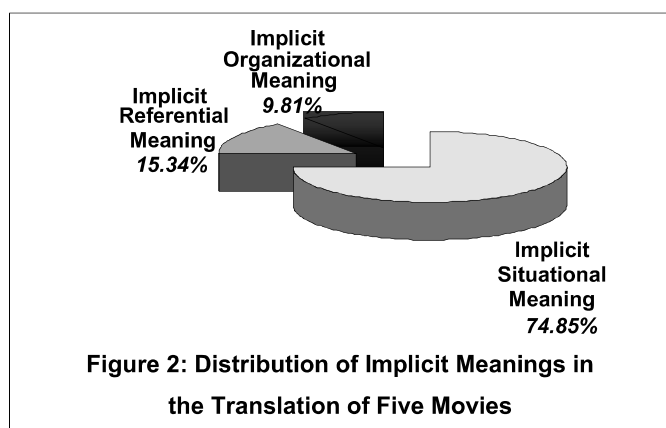
4. Discussions and Conclusions

As it was observed in the five movies the subtitled versions were more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions. In all of the five movies situational meanings in the subtitled versions were more implicit than their corresponding dubbed versions. Considering referential meaning, the subtitlings were more implicit than dubbings in the movies. Regarding organizational meaning from among five films, in two of them the subtitles were more implicit than dubbings. In one of the movies, the number of examples found in each version was equal to the other one in this respect; in other words, implicit organizational meaning in subtitling had the same frequency as in dubbing. But in two out of the five films, the dubbings were more implicit than their corresponding subtitles. This may be because the dubbed versions in the related frames involved and required lip synchrony that was already considered as a constraint in dubbing, but if we take into account the total number of implicit organizational meanings in the corpus, the subtitles were more implicit than dubbings so the answer to the research question of this study is affirmative. In general, the analysis of the corpus regarding the degree of implicitness in the dubbed and subtitled versions of five movies supports the following conclusions; in other words, the following general conclusions can be drawn in light of the results:

In all of the five films the total number of implicit meanings in the subtitled versions were more than the total number of implicit meanings in the dubbed versions, in other words, the total percentage of implicit meanings in the subtitles was strikingly more than that of the dubbings. Therefore, to come to a conclusion, with the results of analysis of the data gathered in this research, the writer believes that his hypothesis, to some extent, was correct.

Actually, the dubbed versions were more implicit than their corresponding subtitled versions normally and usually in such cases and situations that the dubbings of the related frames involved and required lip-synchronization; in other words, in a close-up shot where the lips of the characters are visible, synchronization acts as a kind of constraint that must have been overcome in dubbing. However, the number of such frames and cases were not counted because it was beyond the purpose of this study.

Based upon the thorough analysis of the corpus, it is found out that the most frequent kind of implicit meaning is implicit situational meaning; in other words, it has occurred most frequently in the translation of five films in the two versions. However, implicit organizational meaning is the least frequent kind of implicit meaning in the five films. This may be because there are more frames in the films that are independent of other frames and their meanings don't rely upon the information or meaning of e.g., previous or subsequent frames; in other words, there are more frames that are self-contained and don't involve for instance, ellipsis, substitution and different types of reference such as anaphoric (backward reference), cataphoric (forward reference), demonstrative reference (this, that, these, and those) and the like as cohesive links (Ziya Hoseyni, 1999). That's why implicit situational meaning is more frequent than two other kinds of implicit meaning, say implicit referential meaning and implicit organizational meaning.

5. Suggestions for Further Research

Having conducted and completed any research, the researcher may feel that it is just a stepping to explore the unknowns. No researcher can claim the results of his/her study are thoroughly comprehensive. The attempt to answer the question raised in this study provoked some more questions to be investigated. Some of them are suggested here hoping that others will find them interesting enough to peruse. This closing section will address a number of such suggestions based on the findings of the present study. Yet, this emerging discipline still requires more research and there is a lot of room for research in this area. More than anything, the following recommendations can be presented for further studies:

A- First and foremost, this study can be replicated to find whether the same results will be obtained or not.

B- A research on the effect of mode (dubbing and subtitling) on translations of films in terms of lexicon, syntax or style from L1 to L2 can be conducted.

C- The dubbed and subtitled versions of films can be compared in terms of different types of shifts in translation.

D- The translation quality of dubbed and subtitled versions of different films can be evaluated.

E- A research can be conducted on comparing/contrasting the most common strategies used in subtitling and dubbing of different movies.

F- A research can be done about the history of dubbing/subtitling in Iran.

G- Comparative studies may be made from a diachronic perspective to see how dubbing was done in the past, and how it is done nowadays.

H- A contrastive analysis may be done of the dubbing of a film or programme for different media, such as television, cinema, video or DVD.

I- A comparison between the subtitling of films and the subtitling of other audiovisual genres such as documentaries or TV series can be drawn.

J- A comparison between the dubbing of films and the dubbing of other audiovisual genres such as documentaries or TV series can be made.

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