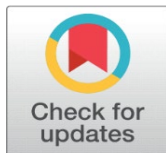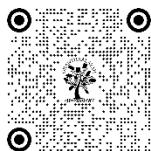# PROPAGANDA IN AIADMK'S 2021 CAMPAIGN SONG: A MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

Campaign songs have long been utilized to communicate political parties' ideas and promote unity, particularly in the political landscape of Tamil Nadu. However, recent election campaigns have leveraged advancements in technology and innovative multimedia marketing techniques, giving campaign songs a distinct significance for shaping public opinion and swaying voters. This study examines the campaign song "Thodarattum Vetrinadai Endrendrum Eratailai" (May the success continue forever for two leaves) released by the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) party during the 2021 Tamil Nadu state legislative election. Employing multimodal discourse analysis and Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar, the research analyzes the song's content to identify the presence of propaganda techniques. The study reveals that Bandwagon, Plain Folk, and Card Stacking are prominent propaganda tools employed in the song. Furthermore, the visual grammar analysis unveils the strategic use of visual elements in the video that synchronously aligns with the party's campaign objectives.

Keywords: Campaign Song, Multimodal Analysis, Discourse, Election, Propaganda Techniques

1. INTRODUCTION

The history of Tamil Politics reveals the use of media as a tool to propagate party ideology and symbols has been extensively documented Karan (2017), Neelambari (2022), Pandian (1989), Robert (1973). From the early days of electoral politics in the state, oration and visual media played a crucial role in attracting and engaging the predominantly illiterate population Pandian (1989). Over time, political parties in Tamil Nadu have adapted and utilized various forms of media, including public meetings, newspapers, magazines, theatre, cinema, television,

radio, album songs, and now digital media, to effectively conduct their political campaigns.

The extent of media usage and the strategies employed by parties can be linked to their objectives. As parties become prominent and become indispensable, they adopt permanent campaigning to maintain their power and authority. However, during elections, campaigns take on a different nature, with swift and impactful messages that encapsulate the party's ideology and aim to sway public opinion.

In this vein, this paper takes a keen focus on the campaign song released during 2021 Tamil Nadu State election. The objective of the research includes, identifying the type of propaganda techniques employed by the party in the song, interpreting the grammar of visual elements to understand the idea displayed through the visuals, and its relevance to the campaign objectives of the party.

2. AIADMK

The All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) is one of the prominent political parties in Tamil Nadu. This party emerged as a fraction from the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK). AIADMK was founded in 1972 by M.G. Ramachandran (hereafter M.G.R), a former actor and propaganda star of DMK, after his expulsion from the party. Initially, the party was named Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam. However, under pressure from the Indian National Congress to restrict regional parties, M.G.R renamed his party to the present All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK). The party follows the ideology of *Annaism*[1]*,* as defined by MGR.

3. CAMPAIGN SONGS

Songs with catchy beats and impactful lyrics have a profound subconscious influence on audiences. In Tamil Nadu's political discourse, songs from movies and independent albums have played a significant role. Popular musicians and party leaders have collaborated to compose propaganda songs for parties, which are played across the state to attract voters.

Initially, songs were written for movies where the protaganist characters represented the party's symbol. Examples include M.G. Ramachandran's 'Naan aanaiyittal' for DMK, his 'Neenga nalla for AIADMK, Shivaji Ganesan's Congress-endorsed 'Indhiya Naadu yenn veedu' in the film Bharatha Vilas, and 'Kanchiyilae oru Buddhan Piranthan' about C.N. Annadurai. Lyricists like Pattukottai Kalyana Sundaram, Kalaingar Karunanidhi, Kannadasan, and Pulamaipithen propagated party ideology and leader through their songs.

Subsequently, an evolution in political musical expression unfolded, characterized by independent songs accentuating party symbols, strength, and leaders. Singers like Nagore E.M Hanifa, Thangappa, SC Krishna, and CS Jayaraman voice were heard across the state. Tracks like 'Udanpirape,' 'Namadhu DMK,' 'Namadhu Udhayasuriyan,' 'Annavin Thalaimaiyile', 'Thennagathin Thiruvilakkam', 'Aringnar Anna Aatchi Kaanuveer', 'Anna Enbathu Oruvaraithaan', 'Ketpadhai Marandhuvidu', 'Azhaikkindrar Anna', 'Vazhga Dravida Naadu', 'Annai Mozhi', and 'Kallakudi konda Karunanidhi' were crafted, focusing on leaders and their efforts. These songs were considered more than just propaganda by the people.

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[1] Annaism is an ideology derived from the views of C.N. Annadurai, a former chief minister of Tamil Nadu and founder of DMK. As a follower of Annadurai, M.G. Ramachandran propagated his principles as AIADMK's guiding ideology.

This musical evolution coincided with the involvement of political marketing consultants and the digitalization of political campaigns, prompting the creation of bespoke songs tailored for specific elections and candidates, strategically targeting the millennial demographic. Despite their influence, the 2021 election saw a proliferation of campaign songs released by numerous parties as campaigns shifted to digital platforms.

In constituencies where religious and caste affiliations played a pivotal role, candidate promotional songs seamlessly intertwined with dominant religious or caste-based film music, strategically designed to resonate with the sentiments of diverse voter demographics. Presently, campaign songs are ceremoniously unveiled during public party conferences and subsequently disseminated through YouTube and other digital platforms, thereby achieving unprecedented reach.

Jacques Ellul's assertion that modern propaganda seeks not only to modify ideas but also to instigate action and nurture active and mythical beliefs resonates in the realm of campaign songs Ellul (1973). These melodic compositions, with their potent fusion of music and lyrics, possess the capacity to etch indelible imprints in the memories of individuals, subtly shaping their perceptions and influencing their electoral choices.

The songs of 2021 election are testament to the potency of this medium. Examples include "Stalin than Vararu" by the DMK, "Thodarattum Vetrinadai Endrendrum Eratailai" by the AIADMK, "Nalai Namathe" by MAIAM, "Avadiyin Mannan Ivanao" for ADMK contestant K. Pandiarajan, and "Smartana Kovai Getthu" for ADMK contestant S.P Velumani.

Luis Velasco Pufleau's contention that the nexus between music and propaganda hinges on the intentional control of the symbolic and emotional dimensions of musical works aligns with the strategic utilization of campaign songs in Tamil Nadu's political landscape Pufleau (2014). The impact of these songs, coupled with visual elements, on voters and their consequent influence on electoral decisions represent domains ripe for further scholarly exploration.

Despite funding-related discrepancies leading to the exclusion of these songs from television channels, their subsequent release under the unified banner of "Thodarattum Vetrinadai Endrendrum Eratailai" reinforces the enduring resonance of the slogan "Vetri nadai podum thamizhagam" as a potent propaganda tool from that era.

4. METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the 'manifesto song' from the series of 13 songs released by the AIADMK party for their 2021 Tamil Nadu state election campaign, bearing the tagline 'Vetri Nadai podum thamizhagam'. Specifically, the song titled 'Thodarattum Vetrinadai Endrendrum Eratailai'[2], spanning 3 minutes and 30 seconds, unveiled on the official AIADMK party YouTube channel, is examined.

The Institute for Propaganda Analysis's seven propaganda techniques serve as the framework to understand the propagandistic elements employed in the song. Additionally, Kress and Van Leeuwen's visual grammar framework is utilized to examine the visual codes present, aiding in deciphering the semiotics behind the party's propaganda through this song.

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[2] https://www.youtube.com/@thodarattumvetrinadaiendre9101

The analysis encompasses all 136 frames of the song, with each frame scrutinized according to the six levels proposed in 'Analysis of dynamic discourse' framework.

It is crucial to note that the focus of this analysis is solely on the specified song and its employed propaganda techniques, employing the mentioned frameworks for a thorough and comprehensive exploration.

5. PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUE CATEGORIES

Established in 1937, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) initiated efforts to counteract the impact of propaganda through educational means. The institute delineated seven propaganda techniques, termed "Tricks of the Trade," which include Name-calling, Glittering Generality, Transfer, Testimonial, Plain Folks, Card Stacking, and Bandwagon Baran & Davis (2015), Dimitrov et al. (2021), Lee (1986).

Table 1

Table 1 Propaganda Techniques Explanation	
Propaganda Device	**Explanation**
Name-Calling	Attaching a bad/negative label to opposition
Glittering Generalities	Using catchy phrases and adding emotional appeal to the content without real meaning
Transfer	An effort to create a mental connection between two items by drawing a similar perception
Testimonial	Getting famous people to endorse the candidate/party
Plain Folk	Creating an ordinary person doing ordinary things to garner support.
Card Stacking	Technique of selecting and employing the sound part of the case to their side not focusing on the negatives.

In the literature review by Dimitrov et al. (2021) on detecting propaganda techniques in memes, it is mentioned that several authors have proposed different inventories of propaganda techniques. Miller proposed seven, Weston proposed 24, while Da San Martino suggested 18 in 2019. Shah proposed only one technique back in 2005, and in 2014, Abd Kadir and Sauffiyan suggested seven techniques. Thus, as time goes on, more devices are identified and studied but these seven remain the basics of propaganda techniques.

6. VISUAL GRAMMAR FRAMEWORK
6.1. MULTIMODALITY

Multimodality is a concept rooted in the idea that each form of communication involves various semiotic elements that contribute to the construction, representation, and interpretation of meaning. It emphasizes the examination of how these modes both share commonalities and exhibit distinctions in shaping the overall meaning of discourse.

E.g.: Speech = Words + Intonation + facial expression

6.2. VISUAL GRAMMAR

When delving into the concept of multimodality within Systemic Functional Language, Halliday delineated the meta functions of language, namely Ideation, Interpersonal, and Textual, with a significant emphasis on textual aspects Bakuuro (2017). Conversely, in the realm of visual language, Kress & Leeuwen (2006) outlined the meta functions for visuals as (i) Representation, (ii) Interaction, and (iii) Composition.

According to Kress and Leeuwen,

1) Representation

The text and visuals should employ semiotic modes to effectively depict and convey the various facets of the world as humans perceive and experience it. The diagram illustrates the methods through which the representation function can be examined within any visual elements.

Figure 1
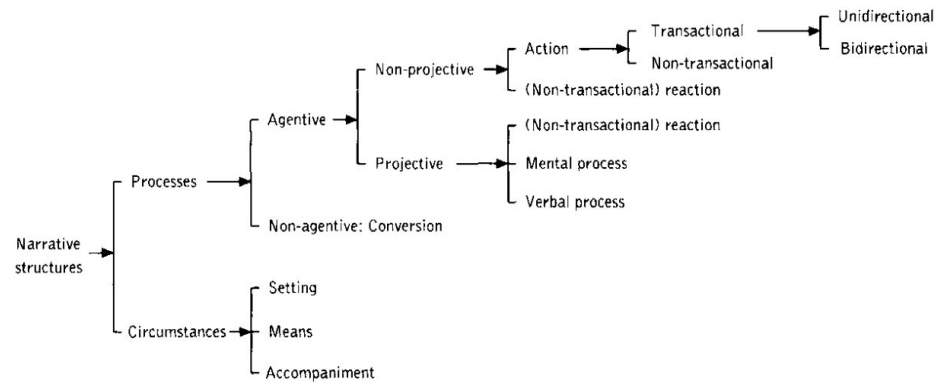
Figure 1 Narrative Structure Framework. Kress & Leeuwen (2006)

2) Interactive Functions

The Interactive function present in the video is analyzed by studying the contact, social distance, and attitude.

- *Contact:*

The figure explains the ways contact can be analysed in any visuals.

Figure 2

Figure 2 Contact

- **Social Distance:** The intimate/ personal, social, and personal space in the image is the social distance and this can be analyzed through the shots used in the frame.
- **Attitude:** It can be subjective or objective. Analyzing the Involvement, Detachment, Viewer power, Equality, and Represented participant power are the ways to understand the subjective attitude which can be studied through the presence of angles.

3) Composition

In general, the compositional meaning is achieved through the interrelated systems of information value, salience, and framing. But for the dynamic visuals such as songs, Yao & Zhuo (2018) states that it is not possible to apply.

7. ANALYSIS OF PROPAGANDA TECHNIQUES IN AIADMK'S 2021 CAMPAIGN SONG

The critical examination of the frames in the campaign song of the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) for the 2021 state elections identified several propaganda techniques. Notably, the absence of the name-calling technique suggests a deliberate shift towards a positive campaign approach.

One of the prominent techniques employed is the use of glittering generalities. The tagline "Thodarattum Vetrinadai, Yendrendrum Irataiillai" (Continue marching forward with Two leaves forever) serves as a catchy phrase, evoking a sense of triumph and progress without providing specific details. This vague yet appealing slogan aims to attract listeners and garner support.

The plain folks technique is utilized to foster a sense of relatability and generosity. All the characters depicted in the visuals are portrayed as ordinary individuals, allowing the audience to perceive the party as being in touch with the common people. Card stacking technique is evident in the selective portrayal of the party's achievements and policies. The song solely highlights the best initiatives and accomplishments during the AIADMK's tenure, conveniently omitting any potential shortcomings or controversial issues. This one-sided representation aims to shape a positive perception of the party's governance.

The visuals are carefully curated to emphasize the purported happiness and contentment of people across the state and from various social classes under the AIADMK government. This narrative is designed to create a bandwagon effect, encouraging viewers to align themselves with the perceived popular support for the party. Thus, the AIADMK campaign song employs a combination of propaganda techniques, including glittering generalities, plain folks appeal, card stacking, and the bandwagon effect. These techniques are strategically employed to propagate a positive image of the party, emphasize its perceived achievements, and foster a sense of unity and progress among the electorate.

Visual Grammar Analysis:

Representational meaning:

- *Narrative*

'Different kinds of the narrative process can be distinguished based on the kinds of vector and the number and kind of participants involved' Kress & Leeuwen (2006). The narrative process in this video includes action and reaction processes in both transactional and non-transactional ways.

Table 2

Table 2 Frames from the Song (Frames 1-12) – Narrative analysis			
Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3	Frame 4
Frame 5	Frame 6	Frame 7	Frame 8
Frame 9	Frame 10	Frame 11	Frame 12

Source YouTube

In frames 1-12, both transactional and non-transactional action processes are present, focusing on introducing the manifesto. The actions primarily involve conversations between two individuals. For example, in frame 2, the man sitting is the actor, while the man drinking tea is the goal. The vector in this case is the conversation. Similarly, in frame 4, the woman in the orange saree acts as the actor, pouring flour (circumstance of means) serves as the vector, and the woman in the green saree is the goal.

Halliday's concept of circumstances, as explained by Kress, emphasizes the presence of secondary participants related to the main participants in narrative images. These secondary participants are not connected through vectors but play other roles. In frame 4, the women sitting near the actor and the goal can be identified as circumstances.

Table 3

Table 3 Frames from the Song (Frames 13-16) – Narrative Analysis			
Frame 13	Frame 14	Frame 15	Frame 16

Source YouTube

Moving on to frames 13-16, both transactional and non-transactional reaction processes are observed. In frame 13, the eye line starts with the people standing in line, who act as reactors, while the phenomenon is the conversation between the two women at the front. Frame 14 also exhibits a transactional reaction process, where the pregnant woman acts as the reactor, and the mother cooling the milk is the phenomenon. Frames 15 and 16, on the other hand, demonstrate non-

transactional reaction processes, with the reactor's eye line directed towards something outside the frame.

Frames 6 and 11 display the conversion process, as described by Kress and Van Leeuwen. This process represents human interaction as a natural progression. In frame 6, the man cleaning the tractor acts as a goal for one person and an actor for another.

There is no indication of speech, mental processes, or geometrical processes in the video.

- ### *Conceptual*

Classification processes: Encourage participants to relate to each other through a form of association, resembling a taxonomy, where one set of participants assumes the role of Subordinates in relation to at least one other participant acting as the Superordinate Kress & Leeuwen (2006).

Table 4

Table 4 Frames from the Song (Frames 17-20)- Conceptual Analysis			
Frame 17	Frame 18	Frame 19	Frame 20

Source YouTube

The video utilizes classificational processes to depict the hierarchy within the party and its workers. In frame 17, the candidate is positioned at the center, while others are arranged in order of importance, indicating a covert taxonomy. Similarly, in frame 18, the man in the center represents the owner, surrounded by his workers, further emphasizing the hierarchical structure.

Analytical processes are present in multiple frames, particularly when mentioning the manifestoes. The super-mentioned manifesto acts as the carrier, while the details of associated events serve as the parts. For example, in frame 19, the caption "Amma seervarisai" acts as the carrier, and the visual of a wedding ceremony with an exchange of a plate filled with items represents the parts. The agricultural support mentioned in the lyrics is also explained through various agricultural activities and people, highlighting unstructured analytical processes throughout the video.

Symbolic processes play a significant role in the video, with visual representations framed with symbolic significance.

Table 5

Table 5 Frames from the Song (Frame 21-24)- Conceptual Analysis			
Frame 21	Frame 22	Frame 23	Frame 24

Source YouTube

Frame 21 portrays anger through the participant's actions, while the consistent use of the victory symbol, the AIADMK party symbol, symbolizes support. Frames 22 and 23 depict the intended changes, incorporating symbolic elements.

Interactional Processes

Using the shots and angles related to social distance and attitude the frames are analyzed.

- *Contact*

Table 6

Table 6 Frames from the Song (Frames 25-28)- Interactional Processes

| Frame 25 | Frame 26 | Frame 27 | Frame 28 |

Source YouTube

Frames 25-28 exhibit a demand gaze, as they are directed towards the audience, urging them to vote for AIADMK. These frames demand action from the viewers.

Table 7

Table 7 Frames from the Song (Frames 29-31)

| Frame 29 | Frame 30 | Frame 31 |

Source YouTube

On the other hand, frames outside this range hold an 'offer' gaze, as they are not directed at the audience but provide specific information. For example, the first two frames convey happiness, while the last frame expresses the benefits for students. These frames offer information rather than making direct demands.

- *Social Distance*

In terms of social distance, the video creates intimate and personal impressions using close-up shots. These shots capture the happiness of the people and emphasize the demand to vote. This technique aims to establish a sense of proximity and the idea that the party is "one among you." Additionally, long shots are used sparingly to establish the setting, while medium shots dominate the conversation scenes, creating a sense of social distance.

- *Attitude*

Throughout the video, the use of eye-level angles effectively communicates the feelings and emotions of the participants directly to the audience. This technique establishes a sense of connection and relatability, aligning with the bandwagon and

plain folk approaches of propaganda employed in the video. Moreover, the consistent use of eye-level angles contributes to an attitude of equality, emphasizing that the party and its message are inclusive and relatable to everyone.

In addition, there is a specific instance where a low-angle shot is used to capture a one-shot of women laborers demanding the vote. This shot conveys the power and strength of women, highlighting their importance and role in the political process.

8. COMPOSITIONAL PROCESSES

The compositional function of each frame may not be discernible in a dynamic visual analysis frame by frame. However, it is evident that the video utilizes maximum salience and establishes maximum connections through its framing techniques. The montages featuring both individual and group shots of people holding the victory symbol are skillfully composed to create a strong bandwagon effect. These visual compositions effectively convey the idea of collective support and unity, encouraging viewers to join the movement and be part of the winning team.

9. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the examination of AIADMK's official election campaign video for the 2021 State election has shed light on the interplay between propaganda techniques and visual elements. The identification of propaganda techniques reveals the use of a positive campaign approach in the campaign song, with a glittering generality tagline, relatable characters, and selective presentation of achievements and policies, all contributing to a bandwagon effect.

The analysis of visual grammar unveiled a nuanced combination of narrative and conceptual representation processes. From transactional and non-transactional action processes to classificational, analytical, and symbolic framing, the video strategically utilized various visual elements to convey the party's messages. Notably, the emphasis on creating a sense of 'demand' rather than 'offer' and maintaining a bond with the audience through a bandwagon approach showcased the nuanced tactics employed in fostering a connection with the electorate.

The careful orchestration of visual elements, such as eye-level shots to convey emotions and maintain a sense of equality, and the deliberate use of low-angle and high-angle shots to project power and envision the future, demonstrated a thoughtful composition aimed at maximizing salience and connectivity. The consistent thread of intimacy and social proximity throughout the video underscored the 'one among you' ideology, contributing to the overall effectiveness of the campaign.

Thus, this analysis has unveiled the intricate strategies employed in AIADMK's campaign video, providing a comprehensive understanding of the synergy between propaganda techniques and visual elements. As political communication continues to evolve, a nuanced appreciation of these elements becomes crucial for both scholars and practitioners. This study not only contributes to the academic discourse on political communication but also serves as a valuable resource for those seeking to navigate the complex landscape of contemporary election campaigns.

10. SCOPE

This paper has provided a partial analysis of multimodal discourse in the AIADMK election campaign video. However, there is still ample room for further research in exploring additional propaganda techniques that may be present in the video, especially considering the emergence of new techniques in recent times. Furthermore, conducting a multimodal discourse analysis specifically focusing on the lyrics would offer a new approach for interactive and comparative analysis of the same video.

This would provide a deeper understanding of how the audio and visual elements work together to convey messages and influence the viewers. By examining the lyrics in conjunction with the visual and auditory aspects of the video, researchers can uncover new insights and enhance the overall analysis of propaganda techniques employed in the song.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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