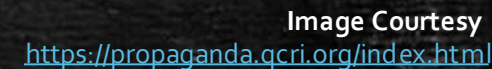


Ritesh Kumar
K.M. Institute of Hindi and Linguistics, Agra



Lets Start with the **Puzzle**

Disclaimer 1: I don't have the solution to this but I am sure some of you do.

Disclaimer 2: There may not be 'the' solution to this.



**DR. BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR
UNIVERSITY, AGRA**

COVID-19

*** Stay Home**

*** Wash hands often**

*** Keep a safe Distance**

*** Learn Online Through University
Portal**

Zoomdemic, April 18, 2020

The “hunger” virus kills about 8,000 children a day and the vaccine for it exists, it’s called “food”, but you won’t hear that in the media, do you know why?? Because “hunger” doesn’t kill the rich.



The **Puzzle**

- Choose the correct answer from the following -
 - The poster / meme on the **left side** is part of a **propaganda**
 - The poster / meme on the **right side** is part of a **propaganda**
 - **Both** the posters / memes are part of a **propaganda**
 - **Neither** of the posters / memes are part of a **propaganda**

Confession: MCQs ARE sort of underwhelming (but now that both the JNU entrance test and NET have become MCQs – I am just trying to fit in)

<https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIKWdsW0yxEjajBLZtrQAAAAAAAAAAAAAMAA0A8isFUMEVVV1NUUEpZU1ZOWkJMTzgyV0xVUzIxUi4u>

Link available in the Chat as well!

Let me give you a **HINT**

Request: Don't see it if you don't need it

BUY YOUR FIRST HOME TODAY!



Empower Your Life
Build Your Wealth
Own the Home of Your Dreams



Ideas to Celebrate Your Special Day

Had these been part of the puzzle, the correct answer to the MCQ puzzle would have been the **third option**

The **Puzzle** Extended

- How do you know if what you are looking at is
 - **Part** of a **propaganda**
 - **Has** parts of a **propaganda**
- Basically, explain your answer.

Another Hint: We are linguists!

Apology: To be fair, I did say I was 'trying' to fit in.

Self-reflection: Have I sufficiently problematised it?

What is Propaganda

- Propaganda refers to the use of language designed to evoke a **specific kind of response** from its readers or hearers (Postman 1976).
- It is generally aimed towards **fooling** people and **influencing** public opinion.

What is Propaganda

- Mass media itself (and its propaganda)
 - “is **not** trying to provide the public with **factual information**, but rather to gaslight and propagandize them into subservience and support for elite positions, most of which are **against our own interests**” (MacLeod 2019: 10)

What is Propaganda

- A Working Definition

Propaganda is the practice of **backgrounding**, marginalising and filtering the **uncomfortable**, disturbing facts by **foregrounding** the less uncomfortable or completely **false** 'facts' in order to mislead people into believing a specific narrative. It is manifested and implemented via various methods, including the use of specific kinds of language.

Friends of Propaganda

- **Hyperpartisanship** (extremely one-sided narratives).
- **Fake Narratives** on social media as well as mass media.
- These are important components of the propaganda 'ecosystem'.

Possible Contradiction: There is an inherent need to sound credible and convincing for a long period of time in order for propaganda to survive and succeed.

Modelling Propaganda

The Media Studies Perspective / Setting up the Context

The Propaganda Model

- Herman and Chomsky (1988) proposed **five filters** that all events pass through before reaching the TV screen
 - later modified and adapted by Zollmann (2019) for internet / social media as well.
- Differentiate the “basis and operations of what amount to propaganda campaigns”
- These filters determine **newsworthy events** and lock the parameters of discourse.

The Propaganda Model

a. Size / Ownership

- The (popular / successful) media was and continues to be dominated by big corporations and wealthy people.
- In some places, Government owns the media.

b. Advertising / Funding

- The large part of revenue is still generated from advertisements by rich and powerful or borne by the govt

The Propaganda Model

c. Sourcing

- Reliance on information provided by government, big business and other official “experts” funded by the powerful
- It is more so on social media than on legacy media (Curran 2013) because of some obvious reasons

Caveat: This is how we determine the presence / absence of 'fake news' (which is an important component of propaganda): self-defeating? Or need to remain credible?

The Propaganda Model

d. **Flak** as a disciplining mechanism

- **Negative** response, **smear** campaigns, **lawsuits** against media and public intellectuals
- Close down debates and prevent access of relevant information about crucial policies, decisions, etc
- Article 370 and Ayodhya judgment being recent case-in-point.

The Propaganda Model

e. Ideology

- Socio-democratic policies like universal healthcare or free education classified as 'communist'
- Support for religious fundamentalism classified as 'secularism'.
- Certain kinds of debates are filtered out and never take place

Testing Propaganda

The Linguists' Perspective / How well can you cover your paths?

Testing Propaganda

- The most reliable way to understand propaganda is to figure out the **underlying objectives** of the propagandist.
- It may not be always possible since the paths may be covered.
- **Language** may be the next best way as well as the most accessible way of testing for propaganda.

Testing Propaganda

- **Hypothesis:** Propagandist language makes extensive use of the discourse structures **enregistered** for evoking strong sentiments: this kind of language is continuously 'updating', evolving, inaccessible to the 'outsiders' (i.e. those who are *not* the targets of propaganda) but, at the same time, replete with **text-default** readings for the targets. This makes the language of propaganda effective in 'local' contexts but inaccessible outside of the target contexts.

Example: Look at the evolution of the word '**jəmatɨ**' in the current context, what kind of enregisterment it is undergoing and the possibility of its usage in the language of future propaganda.

A Short Detour

Bit of Pragmatics

Enregisterment

- A **sociohistorical process** in which “one register formation comes to be distinguished from other modes of activity, including other registers, and endowed with **specific performable values**”. (Agha 2007: 4)
- Leads to the formation and evolution of different forms **indexical** of different kinds of **practices** (like politeness, aggression, etc.) as well as **social personae** (like sports commentator, member of upper class, etc.).
- The **existence** as well as the **evolution** of these set of forms are sustained through a system through which the value of these forms **circulates unevenly** throughout society via different means.

Text-defaults

- **Set of effects** which are “regularly conveyed by the expression in the absence of interference from co-textual effects” (Agha 2007, 46).
- Might be altered by way of **reinforcement** (by way of co-occurrence with other expressions producing congruent effects) or **mitigation/cancellation** (if it occurs with expression-producing non-congruent effects).
- May be decoded by listeners via **generalised conversational implicatures** – defeasible under specific co(n)textual conditions.

Propaganda **Devices**

G. Da San Martino, S. Yu, A. Barrón-Cedeño, R. Petrov, P. Nakov, "[Fine-Grained Analysis of Propaganda in News Articles](#)", in Proceedings of the 2019 Conference on Empirical Methods in Natural Language Processing and 9th International Joint Conference on Natural Language Processing (EMNLP-IJCNLP 2019), Hong Kong, China, November 3–7, 2019.

Linguistic Norms of Propaganda

Propaganda **Devices**

Loaded Language [Using specific words and phrases with strong emotional implications (either positive or negative) to influence an audience.]

यदि राज्य सरकार मना करे, तो केंद्र सरकार चाहकर भी अपने स्कीम लागू नहीं कर पाती है, जिसका एक **ज्वलंत उदाहरण** दिल्ली में भी देखने को मिल रहा है, जहां मुख्यमंत्री **अरविंद केजरीवाल के अड़ियल स्वभाव के कारण** पूरे शहर और दिल्ली एनसीआर क्षेत्र के साथ साथ यूपी, हरियाणा एवं पंजाब के कई क्षेत्रों को वायु प्रदूषण संबंधी समस्याओं का सामना करना पड़ रहा है।

If the state government disagrees then the central government cannot implement their scheme even if they want to. A **vivid example** of this is currently visible in Delhi, where, **because of the stubborn nature of Arvind Kejriwal**, not only Delhi-NCR but several areas of UP, Haryana and Punjab are facing the problems related to air pollution.

Propaganda **Devices**

Red Herring [Introducing irrelevant material to the issue being discussed]

You may claim that the death penalty is an ineffective deterrent against crime -- **but what about the victims of crime? How do you think surviving family members feel when they see the man who murdered their son kept in prison at their expense?** Is it right that they should pay for their son's murderer to be fed and housed? [*In a debate against capital punishment*]

Propaganda **Devices**

Whataboutism [discredit an opponent's position by charging them with hypocrisy without directly disproving their argument]

कांग्रेस प्रवक्ता ने कहा कि अनच्छेद 370 पर उनकी पार्टी का रुख कतई नहीं बदला है, लेकिन हम भाजपा सरकार द्वारा उसे खत्म करने के तरीके पर प्रश्नचिन्ह लगा रहे हैं क्योंकि हमें उनके तरीके पर आपत्ति है।.....**आखिर जब कांग्रेस यह दावा कर रही है कि उसने अनच्छेद 370 को कमजोर किया, तो उसे यह जवाब देना चाहिए कि 5 अगस्त के पहले तक जम्मू और कश्मीर के लोगों से लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों को छीनने के लिए कौन जिम्मेदार है जो भारत के अन्य नागरिकों के लिए उपलब्ध थे?**

[The Congress spokesperson said that the position of their party has not at all changed on Article 370 but they are questioning the way it was scrapped because they have objections to their methods..... **after all when Congress is claiming that they have weakened Article 370 then they should explain who was responsible for snatching away those democratic rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir that was there for the other citizens of India?**]

Propaganda **Devices**

Causal Oversimplification [Assuming a single cause or reason when there are actually multiple causes for an issue.]

President Trump has been in office for a month and gas prices have been skyrocketing. **The rise in gas prices is because of President Trump.**

Propaganda **Devices**

Name calling or labeling [Labeling the object of the propaganda campaign as either something the target audience fears, hates, finds undesirable or loves, praises]

लिबरल ब्रिगेड की आँखों के तारे और ममता के चहेते माने जाने वाले पूर्व क्विज़मास्टर डेरेक ओ ब्रायन पिछले कुछ महीनों से पब्लिक एक्शन से दूर चल रहे थे।

[The ex-quizmaster, Derek O'Brien, considered to be the favourite of the **Liberal Brigade** and Mamta, was away from the public action for the last few months]

Propaganda **Devices**

Appeal to authority [Stating that a claim is true simply because a valid authority or expert on the issue said it was true, without any other supporting evidence offered]

Mark Aronoff, a foremost expert in Linguistics, says that cranberry morphemes exists. Therefore, it must exist.

Propaganda **Devices**

Flag-waving [Playing on strong national feeling (or to any group; e.g., race, gender, political preference) to justify or promote an action or idea]

दरअसल, भारत ने वर्ष 2009 में ASEAN के साथ यह समझौता किया था लेकिन आज मोदी सरकार को इस समझौते पर पुनर्विचार करना पड़ रहा है, क्योंकि इस समझौते का सबसे अधिक फायदा भारत की बजाय अन्य ASEAN देश उठाते रहे। हालांकि, पीएम मोदी के नेतृत्व में अब **भारत ऐसी किसी भी गलती को दोहराने के पक्ष में नहीं है**। पीएम मोदी इस डील को लेकर **इंडिया फ़र्स्ट की नीति** पर काम कर रहे हैं [without concrete discussions of the disadvantages]

Actually, India had signed this agreement with ASEAN in 2009 but today Modi government is forced to reconsider it because the other countries except India have been benefitting most from this. However, under the leadership of PM Modi, **India is not in favour of repeating any such mistake**. PM Modi is working on the **policy of India First** in this agreement.

Propaganda Devices

Appeal to fear/prejudice [Seeking to build support for an idea by instilling anxiety and/or panic in the population towards an alternative.]

वे कम फीस देते हैं और इसका उन्हें कोई मोह नहीं होता। इसी वजह से वे अपने मुख्य ध्येय से भटककर भारत विरोधी अभियानों में लग जाते हैं। अगर उनसे सरकार ज्यादा फीस वसूलती तो यही छात्र उसका मूल्य समझते और अपना कीमती समय अपने पढ़ाई पर अपने मा-बाप के सपनों पर खर्च करते न की 10 सालों तक रूककर भारत विरोधी अभियान चलाते।

They pay nominal fees and they are are not concerned about it. **Because of this they get derailed from their motives and get engaged in anti-India activities.** If the Government would have taken higher fees then these students would have understood its value and would have spent their valuable time on their studies and the dreams of their parents instead of running anti-India campaign for 10 years.

Propaganda **Devices**

Slogans [A brief and striking phrase that may include labeling and stereotyping.]

#ShutDownJNU

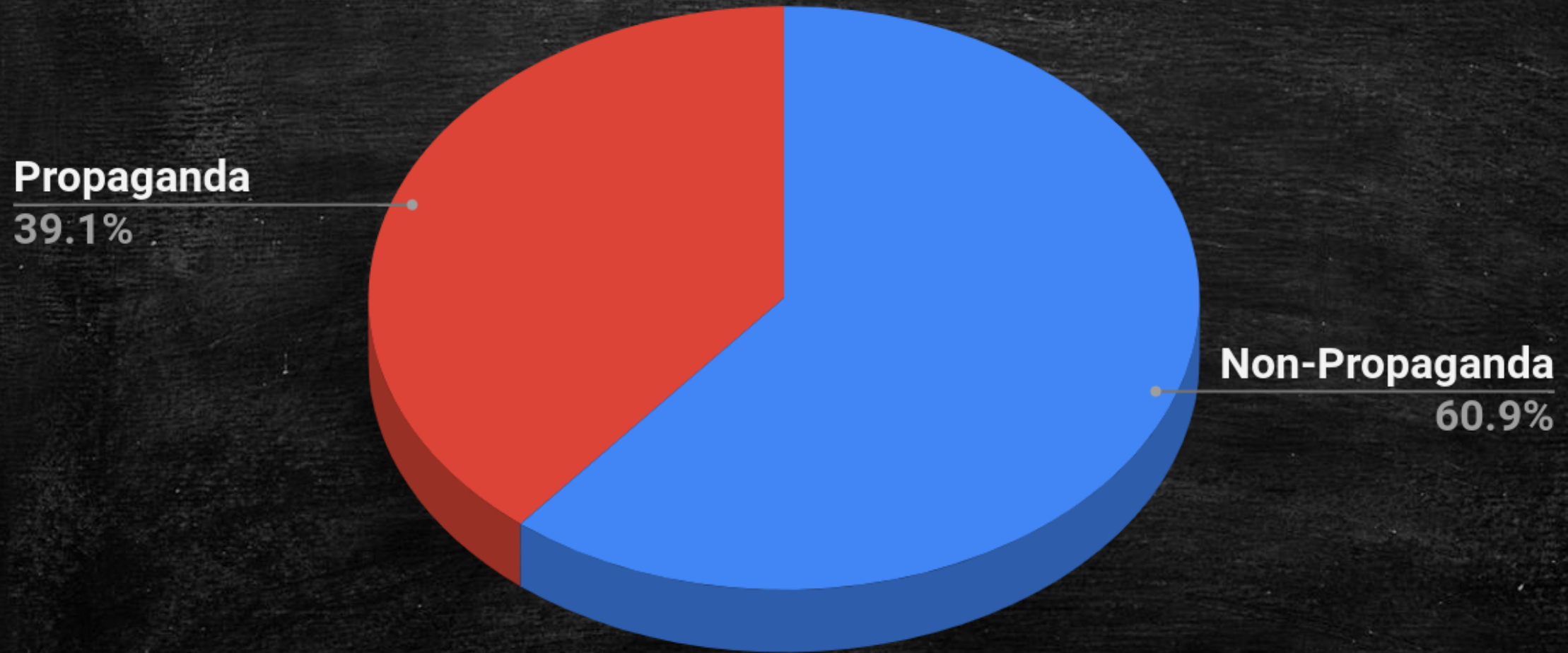
Propaganda **Devices**

- **Obfuscation, Intentional vagueness, Confusion** [Using words which are deliberately not clear]
- **Black-and-white Fallacy, Dictatorship** [Presenting two alternative options as the only possibilities, when in fact more possibilities exist.]
- **Exaggeration or Minimisation** [representing something in an excessive manner]
- **Doubt** [Questioning the credibility of someone or something]
- **Straw Man** [When an opponent's proposition is substituted with a similar one which is then refuted in place of the original proposition]

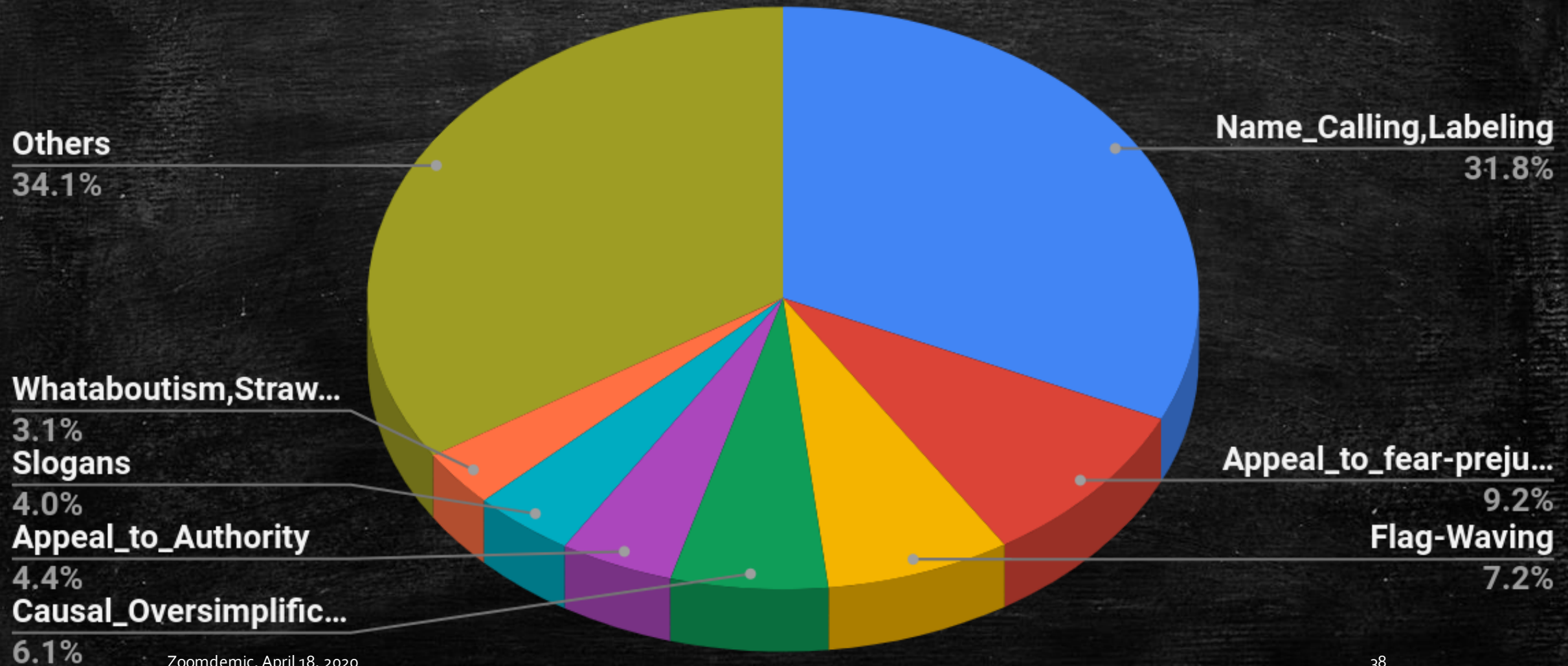
Propaganda **Devices**

- **Thought-terminating cliché** [Words or phrases that discourage critical thought and meaningful discussion about a given topic.]
- **Bandwagon** [Attempting to persuade the target audience to join in and take the course of action because "everyone else is taking the same action".]
- **Reductio ad hitlerum** [Persuading an audience to disapprove an action or idea by suggesting that the idea is popular with groups hated in contempt by the target audience.]
- **Repetition** [Repeating the same message over and over again so that the audience will eventually accept it.]

Proportion of Propaganda (English Dataset)



Propaganda Devices in the English Dataset: Summary



Back to the Puzzle

The issue of Insufficient Data

Solving the Puzzle

- Armed with all our models and devices, are we now in a position to solve the puzzle that we started with?
- Yes
 - We can look at the language and test whether it is propaganda or not

[https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIKWdsW0yxEjaJBLZtrQAAAAAAAAAAAAAMAA0A8isFUNVVHRU42Mj1aSEFXVURT
MkU4WU5JWjJONy4u](https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=DQSIKWdsW0yxEjaJBLZtrQAAAAAAAAAAAAAMAA0A8isFUNVVHRU42Mj1aSEFXVURT
MkU4WU5JWjJONy4u)

Again link is there in the chat as well!

Solving the Puzzle

- Armed with all our models and devices, are we now in a position to solve the puzzle that we started with?
- Yes
 - We can look at the language and test whether it is propaganda or not
- No
 - We don't have the complete discourse.
 - We need more data to solve the puzzle – it cannot be done in 'isolation'
 - **Confession:** It was unfair to start with that puzzle!

Lets bring in **more data**

Its also filtered!

Origins of HungerVirus



The earliest mention of the hunger virus (possibly, the source of our right-hand side meme in the puzzle).

Its an appeal for a fundraiser by an individual.

2019 GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX BY SEVERITY



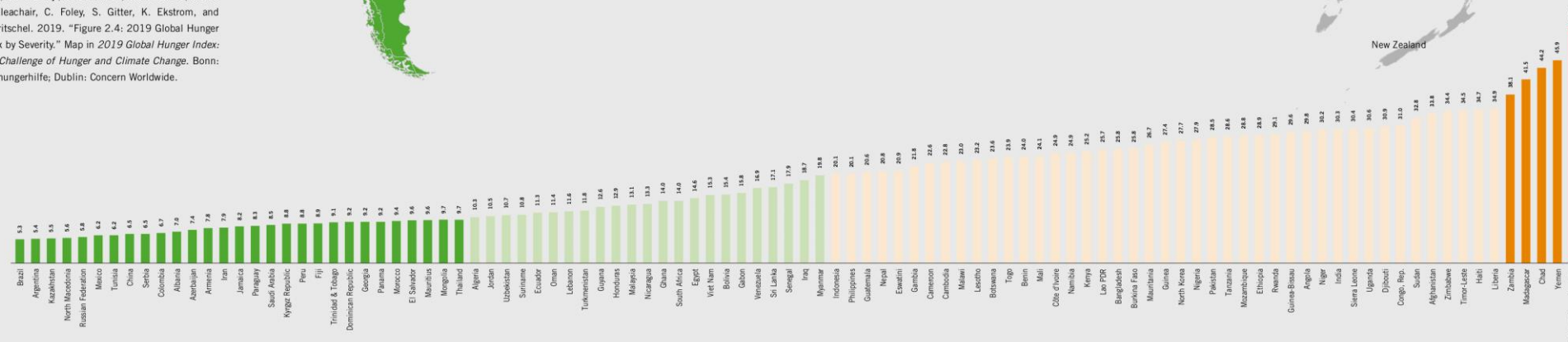
*See Box 2.1 in the GHI 2019 full report for details.
**See Chapter 1 in the GHI 2019 full report for details.
www.globalhungerindex.org

Source: Authors.

Note: For the 2019 GHI, data on the proportion of undernourished are for 2016-2018; data on child stunting and wasting are for the latest year in the period 2014-2018 for which data are available; and data on child mortality are for 2017. GHI scores were not calculated for countries for which data were not available and for certain high-income countries, countries with small populations, and non-independent territories; see Chapter 1 for details.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by Welthungerhilfe (WHH) or Concern Worldwide.

Recommended citation: K. von Grebmer, J. Bernstein, R. Mukerji, F. Patterson, M. Wiemers, R. Ni Chéilleachair, C. Foley, S. Gitter, K. Ekstrom, and H. Fritschel. 2019. "Figure 2.4: 2019 Global Hunger Index by Severity." Map in *2019 Global Hunger Index: The Challenge of Hunger and Climate Change*. Bonn: Welthungerhilfe; Dublin: Concern Worldwide.



Zoomdemic, April 18, 2020



- The Hunger Index Report gives quite an alarming picture about hunger across the globe but there are some related facts
 - Death by hunger is decreasing every year
 - It may not be possible to draw that kind of generalisation since the data varies every year
- Does it contain some of the propaganda devices?
 - Red Herring
 - Loaded Language
 - Causal Oversimplification
 - Whataboutism (?)

Alternate Realities of COVID - 19



Lets investigate the other poster

Fact 1: Everyone may not have a home to stay in.

Alternate Realities of COVID - 19



Online learning has its own set of issues and may not work in every context.

But there are hardly any alternatives (which may be filtered out).

When education goes all digital, students without smartphones fall behind

April 9, 2020, 3:12 PM IST

Renuka Bisht in [TwinkleTwinkle](#) | [Delhi, India](#) | [TOI](#)

Learning Rebooted: Online Education During Covid-19 Lockdown Puts Spotlight on India's Digital Divide

While institutes and enterprising teachers are trying to promote e-learning among their students, those belonging to underprivileged sections or living in far-flung areas are finding it difficult to keep up.

Eram Agha | [News18.com](#)

[EramAgha](#)

Updated: April 3, 2020, 6:16 PM IST



Representative image.

Fact 2: The issues with online education has been **flagged** in the media **intermittently**; so not really filtered out.

How about propaganda **devices**?

- **None** recognisable in the poster.

As schools switch to online classes, students from weaker sections get cut off from learning

Amid the lockdown, Vaishali, whose parents are construction workers, has been living out of a half-built construction site in Tilak Nagar.

Zoomidemic, April 18, 2020

Back to the **Puzzle** Extended

Do we have an explanation?

Is it Part of a Propaganda?

- The **COVID – 19** poster – **NO**
 - We don't have any conclusive evidence for that
- The **Hunger** poster – **YES**
 - Use of multiple propaganda devices
 - Might require reframing parts our 'working' definition [look closer: it seems to present a kind of 'misleading' picture for making us believe in a particular narrative but what it tries to background may not be absolutely obvious]

Redefining Propaganda

- Propaganda is the practice of either
 - **backgrounding**, marginalising and filtering the **uncomfortable**, disturbing facts by **foregrounding** the less uncomfortable or completely **false** 'facts', or
 - **foregrounding uncomfortable** (false or true) facts by resorting to **unnecessary comparison** with other uncomfortable, disturbing factsin order to mislead people into believing a specific narrative.
- It is manifested and implemented via various methods, including the use of specific kinds of language.
- These specific kinds of language include those enregistered for evoking specific, generally, highly emotional reaction from the targets by generating generalised conversational implicatures.

Reformulating Propaganda Model

- We started with the propaganda model that said that **big businesses / government** indulge in propaganda. If so, **how** is the **hunger poster propaganda**?
- Is it possible that **propaganda devices** may be employed in places where it is **not propaganda** – I would argue against this position (especially when there are multiple propaganda devices at work).
- I would argue for a **graded propaganda model** where the most prototypical and sustained instances of propaganda are handled and run by the big, powerful organisations and less powerful the body, the less sustained propaganda campaign becomes.

Expanded Puzzle

Propaganda vs Conspiracy Theory

The Distractors

- Is COVID – 19 an **elaborate propaganda** stunt meant to further some far-fetched goals (viz Chinese domination of world economy and polity)?
 - **No** concrete evidence for this till now.
 - COVID – 19 is a 'real' threat to a large population.

Hypothesis: These stories may be created / used by the propaganda machinery to further their goals and discredit the genuine exposé of their propaganda.

The **Non-Distractors**

- Is COVID – 19 being used as an opportunity / excuse / shield to further the already existing goals / motives of the governments as well as big businesses?
- More precisely, is COVID – 19 being converted into a tool / support for propaganda over a period of time?

Answer: Need to look into what and how of news reportings – what gets filtered out and what doesn't

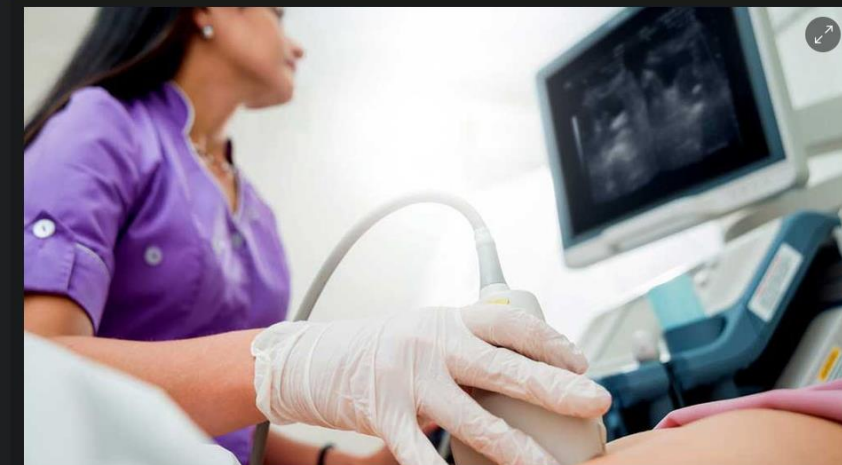
Sex test ban suspended

Concern over misuse of novel coronavirus-linked step

By G.S. Mudur in New Delhi

Published 8.04.20, 3:08 AM • Updated 8.04.20, 3:08 AM

2 mins read • A- A+



The ministry in an April 4 notification suspended certain rules under the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques (Prohibition of Sex Selection) Rules, 1996, until June 30 this year, citing the "emergency situation" due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the nationwide lockdown. (Shutterstock)

Govt plans changes in law to allow 12-hour shifts in factories

The change by Union government will allow companies to extend the daily shift, from the current accepted norm of 8 hours, six days a week (or 48 hours) to up to 12 hours, six days a week (72 hours).

INDIA Updated: Apr 11, 2020 00:05 IST

Saubhadra Chatterji
Hindustan Times, New Delhi



Longer shifts, a change being considered by the Union government, will help in this context -- as long as the workers are paid proportionately more, something that is part of the plan. (Bloomberg)

Zoomdemic, April 18, 2020



Covid-19: Supreme Court Seeks Report From Government On Steps To Prevent Migration Of Workers



Edward Snowden
@Snowden

I used to work for the government. Now I work for the public. President at @FreedomofPress.

freedom.press Joined December 2014

1 Following 4.2M Followers

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

Edward Snowden Retweeted



Trevor Timm
@trevortimm · Apr 10

Doctors and nurses who bravely alerted the public about the startling lack of protective gear in hospitals are being suspended or fired for speaking the press. It's unconscionable. [freedom.press/news/brave-who](https://www.freedom.press/news/brave-who)...

Some hospital administrators, however, have been openly hostile in their response to that reporting. In fact, at many hospitals around the country, [doctors and nurses have been told that they could be fired for speaking with the media](#) about the lack of PPE available to them. [As the New York Times reported](#), in "the epicenter of the crisis in the United States, every major private hospital system has sent memos in recent weeks ordering workers not to speak with the media, as [have some public hospitals](#)." Several nurses and doctors in the U.S. [have already been suspended or fired](#) for posting on Facebook about PPE shortages, protesting the shortages, or talking to the media about them.

58 867 1.3K

Edward Snowden
@Snowden · Apr 11



Edward Snowden
@Snowden · Apr 11

Governments around the world are exploiting the pandemic to monitor us like never before. I discuss it with @GGreenwald here on SYSTEM UPDATE:



System Update With Glenn Greenwald - Edward Sn...
In the second episode of The Intercept's new weekly show, host Glenn Greenwald explores the under-...
[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com)

293 4.4K 9.6K

Edward Snowden Retweeted



Glenn Greenwald
@ggreenwald · Apr 9

SYSTEM UPDATE makes its first CNN appearance as @JakeTapper covers the discussion I had with @Snowden about whether we are vesting excessive power in governments and corporations in response to the coronavirus pandemic. You can watch the full show here: [youtube.com/watch?v=Nd7exb...](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nd7exb...)



31 353 990

Show this thread



Edward Snowden
@Snowden · Apr 11

As authoritarianism spreads, as emergency laws proliferate, as we sacrifice our rights, we also sacrifice our capability to arrest the slide into a less liberal and less free world. Here's how it happens:

Its a recursive exercise, looking into the language and the context of each of these.

Summing Up

Finally!

What all we can say?

- Identification of propaganda is a **complex** and **challenging** task and requires a multi-pronged approach to do that.
- Certain kinds of **linguistic features** could prove to be some of the strongest indicators of propaganda -
 - There is a possibility to posit propaganda as a product of the process of enregisterment and these linguistic features as generating generalised implicatures [needs further investigation]

Just one **last** slide

The Real Motive

The **Exposé**

- This presentation was partially an **experiment** to test if it is possible to **train** people to recognise propaganda within a **short period** of time.
 - If not, how to make that possible (with as little jargon as possible!)
- If some of you are interested in working on this with me then I would be happy to offer **(unpaid?) internships** for a couple of months (during this **summer**). Possible areas of exploration would include
 - Propaganda in **regional / local** media (incl social media)
 - **Community training** for propaganda identification
 - **Interrelationship** among propaganda, hyperpartisanship, fake news, misinformation, verbal aggression, hate speech, etc.
 - **Automatic identification** of propaganda

Thank You for staying till now!



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