

Tamil Nadu Farmers Protest at Jantar Mantar: News Frame Analysis

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Abstract

In the communication era India continues to be an agrarian society. 60% of the population does agriculture and allied works. In a land of such agriculture importance, news media hesitate to provide reports about agriculture and the agrarian crisis. India is one of the countries which have alarmingly increase number of farmer suicide. According to 'National Crime record bureau' nearly 31 lakhs farmers commit suicide over the past 20 years. 'Census of India' statistics states that farmer's population declines rapidly at the rate of 70 lakhs per year. Climate change, change in the government policy and many other factors play an important role in pushing the farmers to a pathetic plight. In this scenario the role of media is very important in educating the farmers about the latest development in the agriculture parlance and also informing the common public about the plight of the agrarians. Hence it is necessary to study the role of news papers in informing the public about the news related to agriculture which is the live wire of the Indian society. This research paper tries to analyze the framing technique adopted by the newspaper The Hindu (Tamil and English) in reporting the news about Tamilnadu farmers's protest at Jantar Mantar, Delhi. The study applies Entman's "Frame analysis" method to analyse the news about the "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar". The news papers taken for analysis are "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English, because both the newspapers are from the same house of publication but applies different news framing in reporting the news about "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar".

Keywords: Agrarian society, Climate change, Government policy, Frame analysis

Introduction

In an era of Information and Communication, India continues to be an agrarian society. Over 58% of the Indian population depends on agriculture as their main source of revenue. During the financial year 2016-17, the Gross Value Added (GVA) from agriculture is estimated to be 20%. Agriculture sector gets sandwiched between the policies of the government and the native. If the monsoon fails the farmers have to face the repercussions. This leads to the conversion of farm lands into construction sites and the migration of agriculture workers to cities and towns. A paradigm shift in the agriculture policy is the need of the hour taking in to consideration the climate change and the change in the agriculture demography.

TamilNadu farmers staged their protest in "Jantar mantar" to mark their displeasure about the government's policy towards water management and also for other issues pertaining to agriculture crunches. Though the protest attracted the media but it did not become a political movement like "anti-corruption movement" in which Anna Hazare and Aravind Kejareval staged their protest in the same "Jantar Mantar"

The daunting question now is how some protest leads to mass mobilizations and others get faded. Indian anti-corruption movement started with a stage protest like this and turned to be anti-corruption movement, but when the farmers staged their protest in the same Jantar Mantar it did not receive the attention of the general public. When

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the nation can unite for anti-corruption why not they unite for farmers, who are the backbone of the nation. What stops the common man to come out of his/her house and take part in the protest and take the protest in to the next stage as "Mass Movement" in favour of the farmers. There may be many socio-economic political reasons which may stop them, but this research paper tries to analyse the role of newspaper in framing a news. The news framing might play an important role in transforming a protest in to mass movement.

Newspaper "frame" a news through its selection and salience process. They construct the social reality through "news framing". Selection of high sounding words and image can give radiance of meaning to the news story, hence news framing plays an important role in creating public opinion. Therefore, in this study framing of news about 'farmer protest at Jantar Mantar' in the websites of 'The Hindu' Tamil and English are taken for analyses.

Objectives of the research

- To analyse the framing of news about the "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar" in The Hindu Tamil and The Hindu English news websites.
- To compare the difference between the frames used for reporting the "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar" in the Hindu Tamil and The Hindu English news websites.

Research Questions

- How the news websites "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English frame the news when reporting Tamil Nadu farmer protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi?
- What is the difference between the frames used in "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English news report on Tamil Nadu farmer protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi?

Literature Review

Mathew Aertayil, (2006) article "Agrarian Crisis in India is a Creation of the Policy of Globalisation" in 'mainstream weekly', pointed out some of the major reasons for the agrarian crisis in India. They are, Liberal Import of Agricultural Products, Cutback in Agricultural Subsidies, Lack of Easy and Low-cost Loan to Agriculture, Decline in Government Investment in the Agricultural Sector, Restructuring of the Public Distribution System (PDS), Special Economic Zones. As a conclusion in his article he added that the agricultural sector in India facing a crisis today. The main reason for this crisis is the globalisation process, which started in the 1990s. The solution of this problem is a drastic change in the present economic policies related to agriculture.

Julie Jacobson, (2012) study "In Pursuit of a Healthy Public Sphere: A News Frame Analysis of the Farmer Suicide Phenomenon in Daily English-language Indian Newspapers" analysed the framing of agrarian crisis in English-language Indian dailies. The findings of the study stated that the framed types of news frameworks present a troubling image of the farmer that has serious flaws in terms of its potential impact on development and democracy.

Balasubramaniam Jeyapal, (2017) article "தமிழ் சாதியும் ஆங்கில நீதியும்" analyse the news reporting perception of a Dalit news story in two newspapers from a same institution. For the study he chosen the Hindu Tamil and the Hindu English newspaper came on 30.10.2017. He analysed reporting of an attack on dalit in both the newspapers. He found out that Tamil newspaper reported the news story as a caste conflict and on the other hand English newspaper reported as attack on dalit. He concluded as not only language, but also their living space plays an important role in perception of news story.

Methodology

The study applied Entman's "Frame analysis" to analyse the news about the "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar". Entman (1993) offered a more detailed explanation of how media provide audiences with schemas for interpreting events. For him, essential factors are selection and salience: "To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p.52). The framing and presentation of events and news in mass media can thus systematically affect how recipients of the news come to understand these events (Price, Tewksbury, & Powers, 1995, p.4).

The news websites taken for analysis were "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English, because both the news websites were from the same house of publication but applied different news framing in reporting the news about "farmers protest at Jantar Mantar".

The theory incorporated in this study is Berger and Luckmann's 'social construction of reality'. The theory stated that emphasis on language as they are the most important system through which reality is constructed. In this paper this theory will help us to analyse the importance of language and photographs in the construction of news.

Methods of Data collection and analysis

The sample selected for the study were the news stories from the English and Tamil news websites "The Hindu" for

a period from 14th March to 24th April 2017. There were 15 news stories in English “The Hindu” website and 61 news stories in the Tamil news website. These stories were taken for analysis. The units of analysis were news headline, sub headline, lead news, concluding sentences, news sources, photographs and number of columns.

The following frames were identified from the news published in both English and Tamil “The Hindu” news websites

- **Frame of Binary reportage**

When the news portrays the dialogue between the government and farmers they applied this binary frame reportage, portraying one party as hero and the other as the villain, the government as hero and the farmers as villain.

- **Frame of Protest**

This frame described the protest in detail albeit the details described only “What was happening” and not the reason behind.

- **Frame of Farmers Suffering**

This frame described the sufferings of the farmers in protest and not about the pathetic plight of the farmers across India hence this frame projects the sufferings of the farmers who took part in the protest and not about the farmers who suffers across the country.

- **Frame of politics**

The participation of politicians in the protest was being described using this frame. Using this frame, they enlisted the names of the politicians who took part in the protest and not about their political ideology.

- **Frame of Outsider supports**

This frame presented the readers the participation of general public in the protest. This is an important frame because more they talk about the participation of general public more chances of becoming the protest in to a movement.

Reasoning device	Types of Frame
“Prime Minister has given debt relief to the richest people in the country, why he is not ready to give debt relief to farmers” – “The Hindu” English, (April 01, 2017)	Frame of Binary reportage
“As part of their protest, the farmers have shaved their heads and half their moustache, held mice and snakes in their mouth, conducted mock funerals, flogged themselves and even carried skulls of other farmers who committed suicide due to debt pressure.” – “The Hindu” English, (April 24, 2017)	Frame of protest
“We have shed our blood to highlight the miserable condition of the farmers and the inhuman conditions that we are forced to live in. Today, we have given our blood also to the protest. There is nothing more that the government can take away from us. We have nothing else left”. – “The Hindu” English, (April 08, 2017)	Frame of Farmer suffering
“TNCC president Su.Thirunavukkarasar on Wednesday said that party leader Rahul Gandhi would be meeting the agitating farmers from the State in New Delhi”. – “The Hindu” English, (March 30, 2017)	Frame of politics
“Students of the Government Law College on Thursday staged a protest on NSC Bose Road in solidarity with farmers in New Delhi. Around 50 of them reached the road and picketed the college”. – “The Hindu” English, (March 31, 2017)	Frame of Outsider supports

The chosen frames represent the framing chosen by the author to transport a message in a certain way.

Data analysis

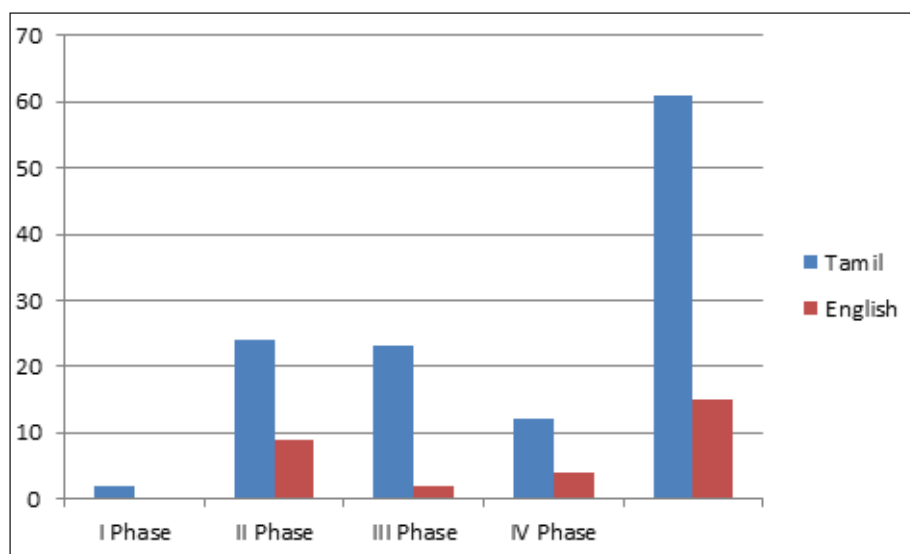


Table 1.Period

Table 1, described the amount of coverage of news story in “The Hindu” Tamil and “The Hindu” English news websites. The total protest period has been divided into four time period of 10 days each, viz.:

Phase I – March 14- March 23;

Phase II –March 24 – April 3;

Phase III – April 4 – April 13;

Phase IV - April 14 – April 24.

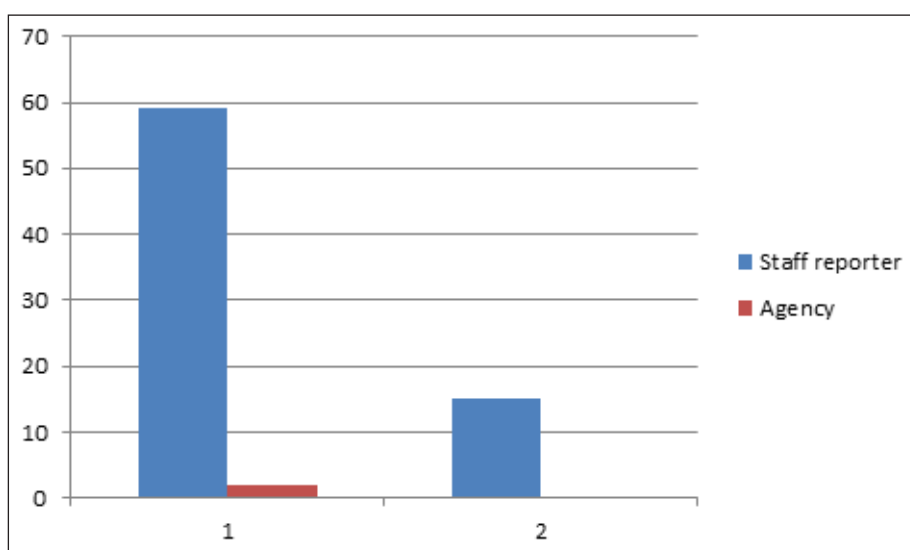


Table 2.News source

Table 2, described the sources where “The Hindu” Tamil and “The Hindu” English news websites got their news story. The news source defined the importance and proximity of the news happened. “The Hindu” English news website got all their news stories from its staff reporter. Out of 61 news stories “The Hindu” Tamil news website got only two news stories from PTI and remaining news stories from its staff reporter.

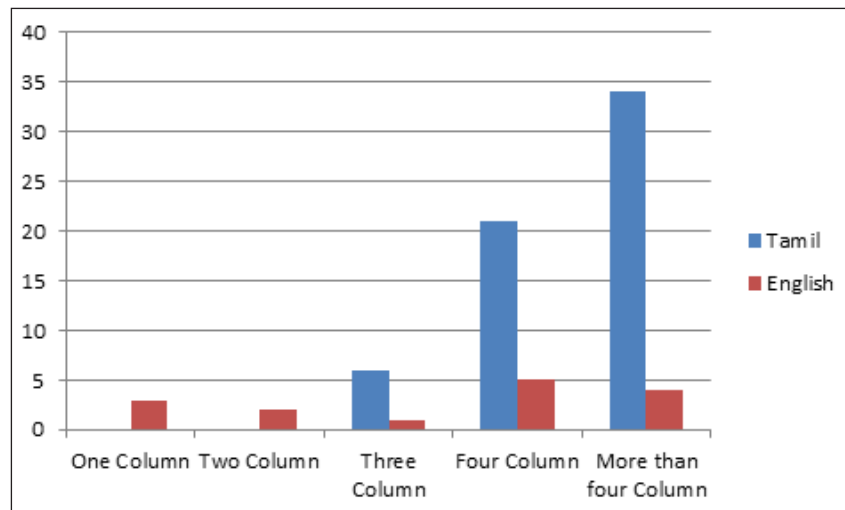


Table 3.Number of Columns

Table 3, described the space provided for news story in “The Hindu” Tamil and “The Hindu” English news websites. “The Hindu” English covered some news stories in one and two column, but “The Hindu” Tamil covered the news stories mostly in more than four columns or in four columns.

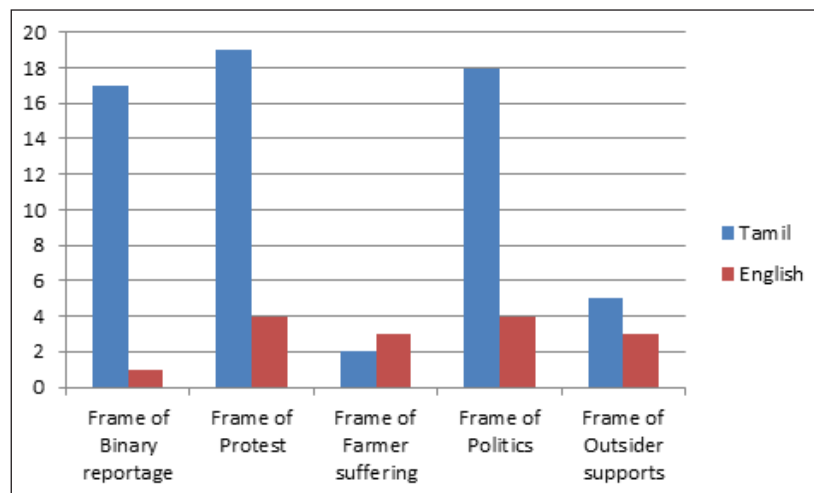


Table 4.Occurrence of frame in the Headline

Table 4, described the occurred frames in headline of the news stories. Headline is the summary of the whole news. It helps the reader to identify the nature of the news so that they able to understand what the whole news is about.

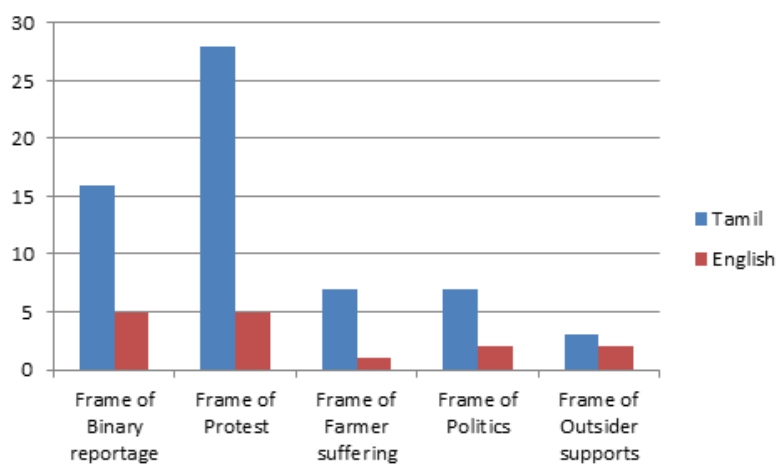


Table 5.Occurrence of frame in Lead

Table 5, described the occurred frames in lead of the news stories. The lead, or opening paragraph, gives the readers at most information in a clear, concise and interesting manner. It also establishes the voice and direction of an article.

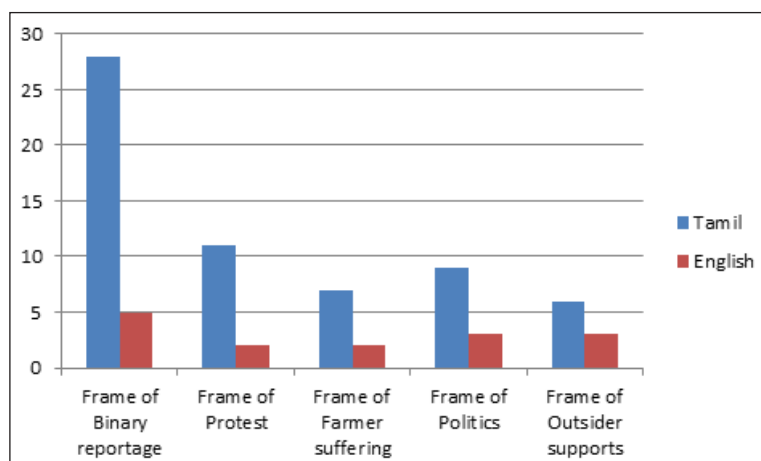


Table 6. Occurrence of frame in Concluding paragraph

Table 6, described the occurred frames in concluding paragraph of the news stories. The concluding paragraph gives information about how the issue will be carried out or what was the solution so far. It also establishes the voice and direction of an article.

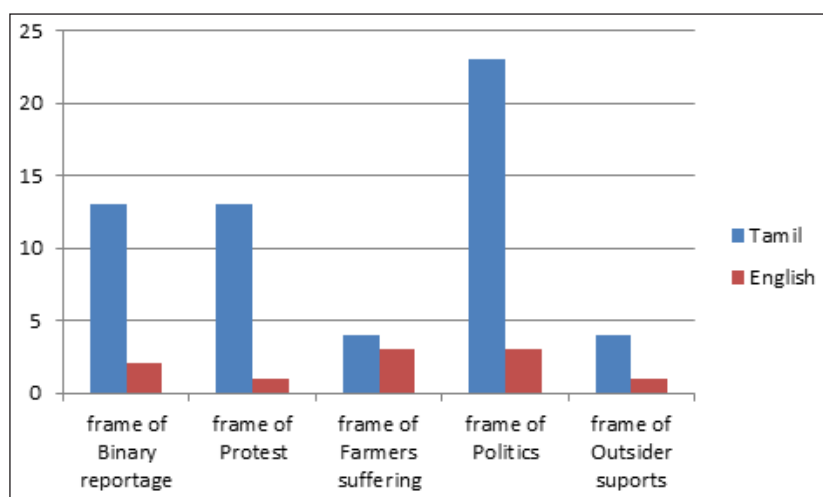


Table 7. Occurrence of frame in Photograph

Table 5, described the occurred frames in photograph of the news stories. Photography gives pictorial overview to news content. Photographs tell better and lasting stories. A photograph can substitute many words.

Major Findings

- “The Hindu” Tamil news website covered comparatively more news stories than “The Hindu” English news website.
- The coverage of news stories in “The Hindu” English news website, viz.:

I Phase – no coverage; II Phase – intensive coverage;

III Phase – minimum coverage; IV Phase - comparatively more than third phase.

- ‘The Hindu’ Tamil news website covered little in the initial and breaking phases of the protest and was intensively covered in the middle 20 days (second and third phase) of the protest.
- Out of 61 news stories “The Hindu” Tamil news website got only two news stories from PTI and remaining news stories from its staff reporter.
- In the ‘Headline’ of the news stories both “The Hindu” Tamil and “The Hindu” English prefer their Headline as a report of protest and political influence.
- “The Hindu” English covered some news stories in one and two column, but “The Hindu” Tamil covered the news

- stories in more than four columns or in four columns.
- In the 'lead' of news stories "The Hindu" Tamil gave preferences to political influences of the protest and "The Hindu" English newspaper preferred farmer protest and politicians.
 - In the 'concluding paragraph' of the news stories both "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English prefer their concluding paragraph as government vs farmer approach.
 - In the 'photograph' of news stories "The Hindu" Tamil gave preferences to political influences of the protest and "The Hindu" English newspaper preferred farmers suffering and politicians.

Implementation of the Theory

According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), "The Social Construction of Reality". In their view, the reality that exists for members of a society consists of phenomena they construct by their social actions. This body of knowledge, thus continuously created, becomes socially accepted as a shared reality that the actors experience as both subjectively meaningful and objectively factual.

In the light of this theory, the study analyses frames of news report and how they manufactured reality among the readers. Even though both the news websites were from the same organization, the perspective of news report had a difference depending on the range and the readers they focus.

Interpretation and Discussion

1. How the news websites "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English frame the news when reporting Tamil Nadu farmer protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi?

"The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English news websites are from the same publishing house albeit their news framing differs based on the target readers. Their news stories lack an in-depth report of farmers suffering, farmers demand and the reason behind their protest. The news report of "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English is monotonous. Repeatedly the news story emphasizes on the forms of protest taken by the farmer to meet their demands.

"The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English news websites project the Jantar Mantar protest as a political play. Whenever a politician visits the protest, the main focus was given to the politician and the dialogues and questions which they arisen during the visit. Thus, the report of both the news websites tried to sensationalise the news and tried to arouse the curiosity of the readers.

2. What is the difference between the frames used in "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English news report on Tamil Nadu farmer protest at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi?

"The Hindu" English website has less number of news stories when compared to The Hindu, Tamil. The minimal coverage of the farmers protests by a national daily implied the least importance provided for the Tamil Nadu farmers by the "The Hindu" English News website.

But regarding Tamil website the perspective was different. "The Hindu" Tamil gave more coverage to the Jantar Mantar protest. The way they constructed the news, was by adding emotional appeal to the news. "The Hindu" Tamil website did most of its coverage on binary frame reportage and the influence of politics on the protest. The change of focus, from farmers protest to the politicians' influence, depicts a Cat-Mouse play in the news article.

The change of a protest/ an issue, to a movement was based on the support it received from the common public. Both the news websites from the same publishing did not speak much about the public perception which is very important

Conclusion

In this study, the difference between the frames used in "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English news report were analysed and also how the news websites "The Hindu" Tamil and "The Hindu" English frame the news was analysed through content analysis method.

By concluding this study, it was found out that the staged protest of farmers did not receive the attention of the general public. This is because the framing of news by the media towards this protest played a role in constructing perception of the protest in the common public. Media helped to transform Indian anti- corruption protest to an anti-corruption movement, but it failed to do the same thing in this farmers' protest at Jantar Mandar. Both the protest were similar in the initial stage of protest.

The types of news frame they used gradually dimmed the importance of the issue and generated lesser participation among the general public.

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