RESEARCH ARTICLE

ELEMENTS THAT ADVOCATE HUMOUR IN FUNNY CAPTIONS: SUNDAY ISLAND - SRI LANKAN WEEKLY ENGLISH NEWSPAPER.

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*
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Sunday Island, the weekly Sri Lankan English newspaper, conducts the contest, Funny Captions, in its segment titled, Competition. Readers are expected to forward humorous photo captions based on the given photo and cutline; and being a competition, the commended captions are published subsequently. The objective of this study was to identify the elements that impact humour in the photo captions. The corpus of this qualitative study was a manual selection of sixty captions from December 2017 to May 2018. Among these captions, the primary data were gathered with maximum variation in terms of linguistic features, varied sentence structures and other elements. The secondary data were gathered through a questionnaire distributed among a maximum heterogeneous purposive sample, representing both genders, 18 to above 55 years. Literature reviews were explored and the theory, Systemic Functional Linguistics, which is a base of Multimodal Discourse Analysis, was implemented to justify the elements that promote humour in the funny captions. Despite humour being subjective, this study identified numerous elements that are needed to promote humour, such as, contextual knowledge of the reader, length of the statement and the literary devices: alliteration, rhythm, analogy, pun, irony, repetition and code-switching. While the respondents identified the abovementioned vital factors in varied interpretations and percentages, captions without humour were also identified. Therefore it is suggested that a photo caption of a newspaper should possess varied linguistic and literary devices in comparatively short statements; for readers to enjoy its humour, together with his/her contextual knowledge.

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Introduction:-
Photo Caption:-
A photo caption of a newspaper is a headline over the given photograph and cutline, or the words describing the photograph. In general the reader looks at the photograph, mentally capturing the obvious visual information available. Since it is an initial glance, subtle aspects of the picture may not be registered in the reader's mind. Nevertheless, when the photograph sparks an interest, the reader would look at the cutline or the information that

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helps to explain the photograph. That is when the caption and cutline play a major role. The reader would eventually digest the information and refer back to the photograph to enhance the experience.

The required information vary from one photograph to another, but for most pictures, the reader expects to know: who is/are in the photograph, why is it published, what is going on, when and where was it, why is he/she/it looking in that manner, etc. Hence, cutlines should explain the picture to enable the reader to be satisfied with his/her understanding of the picture. Cutlines should not comment on what the picture has made obvious, instead it should supply vital information that the picture cannot.

Photographs in newspapers cannot stand alone without at least short descriptions of what they are or why they are there. These descriptions are known as captions. Typically they are brief texts placed with the photograph. In general, pictures cannot always answer all the questions, such as, who? what? where? etc., nor can they clearly state what is happening, especially if the scene is unclear or in a confused state, such as, a demonstration or riot. Therefore the job of the caption is to help the reader to understand what they can see in front of them.

A good understanding is needed on how readers read newspaper pages, in order to write a good caption. Readers first look at the headlines and the photographs, until they find something which looks interesting; if it is the picture that has caught his/her eye, they would read the caption. This means captions must include appropriate information to make sense all by itself.

It is imperative that the names of the venues, events and persons are spelt correctly. If the caption has not been written well, it should be rewritten using the information provided by the respective photographer. Next to the photograph, the caption gets the second best position; it should have sufficient space all to itself, so that it can easily be seen, although space is precious in a newspaper.

Funny Captions For A Competition:-
According to the Oxford Dictionary, the definition of competition is, "The activity or condition of striving to gain or win something by defeating or establishing superiority over others." The competition in the Sunday Island newspaper, displays a photograph based on a current event, mostly with Sri Lankan politicians, cricketers or eminent personalities, along with a cutline. The reader is expected to forward a suitable caption which is humorous, hence the term "Funny Caption". Being a competition, the commended captions are published in the subsequent week, with the winning caption which is rewarded. Hence the reader must ensure that his/her caption is humorous enough to be outstanding among the other captions.

Humour (British English) or humor (American English) is the tendency to provoke laughter and provide amusement. The word 'humorous' is a bit formal compared to 'funny'. The former is commonly used mostly for written matter, such as, a humorous book or a humorous article. Nevertheless, a funny book or a funny article may sound more natural in modern speech. The word 'funny' has many interpretations as follows:

Causes laughter or humour	:	The play was *funny*.
Emphasizes that something is serious	:	Stealing other people's work is not *funny*.
Difficult to explain or understand	:	I do get some *funny* looks.
Arouses suspicion	:	There was something *funny* going on.
Slightly undefinably unwell	:	Suddenly my stomach felt *funny*.

Considering the abovementioned numerous definitions, it is believed that the first definition fits the competition in the Sunday Island newspaper. In view of the above, the funny captions expected of competitors, should make readers laugh or cause laughter out of the ordinary.

Theoretical Base - Systemic Functional Linguistics:-
Interactions between people, objects and environments produce culture and society. Spoken and written languages are the modes involved in producing meaning and experience within these interactions. These modes could be given as gestures, gazes, compositions and layouts. Multimodal Discourse Analysis names a range of approaches to studying social interaction and meaning as multimodal, i.e., produced with and through multiple modes. However, it is not about identifying and studying modes as isolated, but rather about understanding the world as multimodal. This understanding is developed through theoretical and methodological developments. Three major theoretical bases are in use in multimodal discourse analysis, such as, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Mediated Discourse

Analysis and Conversation Analysis. For this study, the theoretical base, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), was adopted.

SFL, also known as Systemic Functional Grammar or Hallidayan Linguistics and Systemic Linguistics, was devised by the English-born linguist, Michael Halliday. It is an approach to linguistics that treats language as a social semiotic system, i.e., how meaning is embedded within images and artifacts. Unlike many approaches to linguistics which treat the structure of language as vital; SFL gives importance to the fact that any act of communication involved choices, and language is above all systems. "Systemic" focuses on Saussure's paradigmatic axis in understanding how language works. "Functional" signifies the proposition that language evolves depending on its function. In SFL structure and organization of language at all levels are superseded by functions or choices; and all languages involve three simultaneously generated functions, such as, knowledge of the outer world, social or interpersonal relations and the text.

Therefore this theory builds up a relationship between language and its functions in social settings. It explores how language is used in social contexts to achieve particular goals. As it is concerned with language use, SFL places higher importance on language function (what it is used for) than on language structure (how it is composed). Systemic Functional Linguistics being the theoretical base of this study was implemented to justify the numerous linguistic devices, social stance and other elements, including the need for contextual knowledge; and to analyze their function, which is to inculcate humour in the Funny Captions, and the reason for not finding humour in certain captions.

Aim And Objectives:-
The aim of this study was to establish the elements that are essential to contribute humour to funny captions. The primary objective was to analyze the corpus of sixty captions to identify the ones which have the most number of linguistic characteristics. The secondary objective was to categorize the selected captions into the varied linguistic devices, and further analyze the exceptions or deviations.

Research Question:-
What are the linguistic features and other elements that contribute towards creating humour in the Funny Captions of the Sri Lankan English weekly newspaper, Sunday Island?

Literature Review:-
What is humour?
According to Gibson (2016), humor is observed in all cultures and at all ages. In the recent past, psychologists had stressed the importance of humour for fundamental human behavior; whereas historically, humour was framed as an agent to demonstrate superiority, vulgarity or as a defense mechanism to hide one's true feelings. In this view, individuals used humour to display one's own self-worth and not treated as worthy of study. Gibson further states that now humour is treated as a character of strength that makes others feel good and helps to gain intimacy. In return, humour fabricates connections to the world and provides meaning to life. Appreciation of humour correlates with varied strengths, such as, wisdom and love of learning (Gibson, 2016). In view of the above, activities related to humour result in well-being and optimism.

Every person's sense of humour differs to a degree according to Akshat (2012). Some may prefer nerd jokes whilst others sarcasm or irony. Akshat says humour is an extremely complex matter to determine, yet it is about connecting with people. What is considered as funny depends on many factors, such as, taste, character, background, skemata, etc. However there is also a sense of universality to humour. Hence humour has both subjective and objective elements. When an individual goes to a movie theatre to see a comedy and finds people of different backgrounds share a similar humour, he/she may not find it funny or may find laughing harder than others. Akshat says that the element, subjectivity, dominates when regulating humour.

Understanding and fabricating humour require a series of mental operations. According to Gibson, to treat an oral or written statement as funny, one needs to be able to mentally represent the set-up of the joke, detect an incongruity or oddness in varied interpretations and to resolve the oddness by obstructing the literal, non-funny interpretations and appreciating the meaning of the humorous one. Therefore for a person not to find something humorous, it could be either due to the punch line creating a different mental representation that conflicts with the one set up by the

joke; or the possibility of the individual getting a different interpretation of the punch line. Therefore humour is relevant to the science of behavior.

Elements of humour in print media
This study examined cross-disciplinary literature on cartoons, comic strips and advertisements, in which elements of humour are analyzed.

Humour in comic strips:-
Some comics are wordless and devoid of speech balloons, whilst the others comprise of speech balloons with pictures. Comics are relatively more complex in the decoding process when compared with prose text (Lo, 2011). Multiple processes take place when trying to access the meaning conveyed in comics due to different modalities of meaning, such as, pictorials and verbal language. Hence an analysis of humour in comics is multi-semiotic in nature. The jagged shape of a speech balloon is a comic convention for loud sounds, similar to onomatopoeia. Therefore the shape of balloons informs the reader how to 'hear' the words, in return adding humour to a funny utterance. On the contrary, the use of dotted lines suggests whispering.

Lo also says that onomatopoeias, such as, "bang!" And "whoosh!" Are initially verbal and subsequently visual in comics. Their primary function is to convey sounds converting them into text; which adds an additional aural element to comics, interpreting it as multi-semiotic. In addition, certain onomatopoeias are stylized in various text shapes, sizes and colours (Lo, 2011). All comics involve one or more animate characters, such as, an animal, a plant or machine. The way they 'move' and interact within the comic space influences how comics are decoded. Visual posture of characters, without descriptive text, affects the way the reader identifies emotions and stance, in other words, visual precedes verbal in comics.
In view of the above, elements, such as, the shape of a balloon, punctuations within the balloon and visuals are a part of comic vocabulary and symbolic in a sense. Hence, from the reader's angle, numerous processes take place in decoding a balloon in the comic panel.

Humour in cartoon strips:-
Compared to a comic, a cartoon is a single panel image often used to convey an idea. At times the terms cartoon strip and comic strip are used interchangeably to describe a hybrid version of the two. Cartoons belong to the visual art genre. It is a type of illustration, often animated, in a non-realistic or semi-realistic style.

According to Kaula (2015), humour is a stylistic device found in cartoons to cause laughter and amusement. He says when the dialogues imply either stupidity or weakness of characters, the reader, mostly children, find them humorous. When the cartoon depicts confusion in the behaviour of characters, the reader finds excitement when they try to empathize with the characters, which makes it amusing. Certain characters of cartoons are funny due to their appearance; considering their clothing, weird colours of hair, hair styles, cracked faces and knock-kneed legs (Kuala, 2015). The high pitch ultra sounds shown in speech bubbles can be humorous to the reader; mostly when such sounds scare huge creatures that run away or fall down. The strange nature of characters makes it laughable to the reader, which is illustrated through sounds, attire and situation of the narrative. In other words, incongruity makes the reader amused.

Political cartoons prevail in almost all the newspapers, portraying a politician or a situation on a current issue, which grab the attention of the reader as a form of entertainment. Nevertheless it is not all political cartoons that are meant to create humour, as some make only a point, succinctly and memorably. The goal of political cartoons is to raise public consciousness using figurative language and images to address vital issues and in return criticize politicians and their practices (Usman and Nuhu, 2016). Political cartoons are understood mostly because they are expressed through visual illustrations. According to usman and nuhu, specifically in political cartoons, through satire, humour, raises the measure of entertainment, critical reasoning and evaluation; but with the intention to get the message across to the relevant politicians and political parties. In view of the above, there are numerous communicative functions that advocate humour in cartoons, such as dialogues that imply weakness and absurdity of characters, illustrations that show unreal nature in terms of attire and appearance, and high-pitched sounds in speech bubbles and literary devices, such as, irony, sarcasm and hyperbole.

Photo Captions:-
Photo captions should not explain what is in the photo; and should stand out from the text. The writer should describe vital details that are not obvious and identify the important individuals in the photo; by not leading the reader into a muddle.

Comcowich (2016) says writing as if the action is happening right now will prompt the reader and promote the message; hence the use of simple present, present continuous or present perfect tenses. Being concise, but informative is imperative for a photo caption. Too much information would distract the reader and not carry much weight to the caption. Photo captions get sixteen percent more readership that text according to Wylie (2016). She also says photo captions are workhorses of communication. The writer should make his/her message look easier to read, so that it would attract more readers. Wylie further says, the writer should capture the eyes of the reader, to drag them to the message and to ensure the caption is inviting to the reader. This aspect of photo captions is vital when participating in a competition.

Methodology:-
For this qualitative study, a corpus of sixty funny captions was collected from the Sri Lankan English weekly sunday island newspaper, which was carried out manually over the period december 2017 to may 2018. From this corpus, captions with the maximum variation in terms of linguistic features, varied sentence structures and other elements were chosen as the primary data.

The secondary data were gathered through a questionnaire which was distributed among a maximum heterogeneous purposive sample. The purpose of this kind of sample design was to provide as much insight as possible into this study. The respondents of the questionnaire represented both genders, ages ranging from eighteen to fifty five years and above, as categorized: 18 to 24 years- young adults (undergraduates: male and female); 25 to 35 year-young adults (professionals: male and female); 36 to 50 years- middle aged (employed/unemployed: male and female) and 51 years and above- senior citizens (housewives/retirees: male and female). A total of thirty respondents took part in this questionnaire based study and they were undergraduates, professionals, housewives and retirees, by occupation.

The questionnaire comprised of six photographs with the respective cutlines and three commended captions each, which adds up to eighteen photo captions. The photographs were numbered as picture 1, picture 2, etc. The closed ended question for each photo was to tick the funniest caption out of the three; and the open ended questions were to justify their answer in detail, in comparison to the other two captions. Initially, the data received were categorized in the form of a spreadsheet, listing the justifications on the preferences of the respondents, per photograph. The justifications were closely analyzed and categorized to determine the varied factors mentioned. Based on the theoretical base, systemic functional linguistics, which focuses on for what language is used for, rather than how it is composed; the data received from the respondents were analyzed to gather the varied elements utilized in the captions, for the purpose of making them humorous.

Data Analysis:-
The aim of this study was to determine the elements that contribute towards advocating humour in funny captions of the Sunday Island newspaper. Being a competition of the weekly English newspaper, sixty captions were manually gathered over a period of six months to identify the ones with the majority of linguistic characteristics, which was in fact the primary objective. The research question was based on arriving at the specific linguistic and other language features that contribute towards creating humour in the funny captions. Hence, the input received from the questionnaire given to thirty respondents was studied qualitatively to identify the reasons for either the captions to be humorous or not humorous; and to justify their preferences.

In order to arrive at this, a schedule was prepared entering each and every remark of the respondents for their preferences. Since the study was on identifying the factors that bring out humour in the captions, similar factors were grouped to determine the percentage of literary devices or other aspects, either language related or otherwise.

Some respondents had not specifically mentioned the literary devices by their terms, such as, alliteration, analogy, etc., nevertheless they had described them in terms of their function, supported with examples from the captions. They had also given factors for humour which are not directly related to the language used, such as, the wording being creative and realistic. Some respondents had given the reasons as to why certain captions are not humorous at

all, and given suggestions with which the captions could be humorous. These results were analyzed to identify the varied elements, whilst noting exceptions or deviations.

Input Data:-
As a result of the process of data analysis, numerous elements were identified in the responses of the respondents, due to which the funny captions are humorous; along with reasons for some captions not being humorous. This input is in the undermentioned grid:

Input	Percentage of responses
Contextual knowledge	28%
Literary devices	22%
Clever use of words	12%
Concise writing	7%
Some captions without humour	7%
None of the captions are humorous	4%
Code mixing	4%
Linguistic features	4%
Others (irrelevant information)	12%

Contextual Knowledge:-
Knowledge supports whatever an individual reads and subsequently reduces the time taken to process the text. Prior knowledge helps an individual to read the text more quickly and at the same time recall what has been read, making the reader more efficient. Twenty eight percent (28%) of the responses of the respondents were on the captions being humorous due to the knowledge of the specific characters depicted in the photos of the photo captions; to state a few, politicians and cricketers. The following examples substantiate this factor:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 - picture 1/caption 1 A fair face, to make voters' hearts race!	(i) The main objective of the first caption is to divert the attention of the public from the political turmoil and use beauty as an attraction which is a hilarious state of affairs. (ii) The cutline of this photo has no mention of rosy senanayake being a former miss sri lanka at the world beauty pageant. Hence the humorous factor lies only with the knowledge of her achievement in the distant past.
Example 2 - picture 2/caption 1 Minister john, "yes, sometimes I say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	He is famous to say nutty things anyway.
Example 3: picture 3/caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	(i) This is rather a funny statement when considering the character and the way he speaks. (ii) The politicians concerned in example 2 and 3 are a focal point in the media for being out-spoken and abrupt in their utterances; which seems to be well known to the general public that follows political news of the country.
Example 4: picture 4/caption 3 The pitiful three: an injury prone skipper; an inconsistent all-rounder and a washed-out politician!	Sri Lanka cricket is also the same now, too much politics and no skills, players with incompetency are inside while talented ones are out.
Example 5: picture 4/caption 1 Thilanga sumathipala, "try mastering all the silly things as politicians do: silly mid-off, silly mid-on, silly mid-wicket, silly point and every silly anything.	Caption 1 is very humorous, as it cleverly describes the actions of sri lankan politics and politicians using cricketing terms.

Clever Use Of Words:-
Clever use of words in the written form is due to mental sharpness and inventiveness mingled with intelligence. It is creativity, saying the perfect thing at the perfect time, in a way the reader is delighted and surprised as well. Such clever usage of words could be formed with twists and turns of phrases, which would in return create humour. Twelve percent (12%) of the responses of the respondents stated the use of clever or witty words, for photo captions to be humorous. The following examples substantiate this factor:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1: picture 2/caption 1 Minister John, "Yes, sometimes I say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	Witty-comment applicable with the controversial comments this minister often makes.
Example 2: picture 3/caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	Clever use of words i.e. Mediates and media, to effectively describe the picture and the situation captured in the picture, while being funny.
Example 3: picture 4/caption 1 Thilanga Sumathipala, "Try mastering all the silly things as politicians do: silly mid-off, silly mid-on, silly mid-wicket, silly point and every silly anything.	Caption one is very humorous, as it cleverly describes the actions of SL politics and politicians using cricketing terms.
Example 4: picture 5/caption 2 Police lass with "laughing-gas" to replace "tear-gas".	The connection created between laughing and tear gas makes it funny.
Example 5: picture 6/caption 1 From tree top to laptop.	The wording gives more humor and the phrase is not too long also.

Writing Concisely:-
In spite of wordiness, using words more than necessary could detract from the impact of writing. On the contrary, writing concisely improves the final product by keeping the points focused, ensuring the argument flows clearly and it also helps the writer stay within the word allowance.

Especially when writing to the newspapers, it is vital to avoid redundancy or using additional words, and repetition of words and phrases. Seven percent (7%) of the responses of the respondents had stated, being concise or short adds humour to captions, as follows:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1: picture 1/caption 1 A fair face, to make voters' hearts race!	Brief and the most obvious in relation to the pic. Caption 2 and caption 3 are very lengthy.
Example 2: picture 1/caption 3 The beauty and the beast, hands entwined, in the run up to the mayoral race with the bond scam ogre looking on benignly!	I find none of the three captions particularly funny. Number 3 is too long to be catchy anyway.
Example 3: picture 2/caption 2 We know we politicians are labeled hard nuts to crack!	Concise and funny without over use of words i.e. 'nut'
Example 4: picture 3/caption 1 Minister (following the chinese saying), "speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil!"	Caption 1 is not as long as caption no. 2 and easier to read and appreciate.
Example 5: picture 5/caption 1 Looks like the IGP's courtesy project is showing results!	Concisely descriptive of the story behind the picture while being funny

Code-Mixing:-
Bi-lingual and multi-lingual individuals move from one language to another in communication. Code is a language, a variety, or style of language. Code-mixing is a term in linguistics referring to using more than one language at the same time, or hybridization. Code-mixing is mostly observed in oral communication; but in advertisements in the print and electronic media, code mixing is prevalent as a tool to attract consumers. Code-mixing is mostly observed

in second language speakers. It is not only urban Sri Lankans, people living in rural areas too resort to code-mixing, mostly due to the impact of the printed and electronic media. Humour and interest are also generated through mixing two languages. In Sri Lanka, the majority of the population speaks in sinhala and the minority speaks in Tamil. Whilst English remains the first language of a comparatively smaller population, it is the second language of the rest of the population.

A dialect of sinhala language used by the indigenous people of Sri Lanka is in the caption of the third example, mixed with English language. The other examples have the dialect of sinhala language most commonly used throughout the country, mixed with English language. Four percent (4%) of the responses of the respondents stated that certain captions are humorous due to the usage of Sinhala and English languages or code-mixing, as listed below:

example	Response(s)
Example 1: picture 4/caption 2 Sumathi, "how are our boys in bangladesh? Mathews, "*kiyala wedak ney*! *Kollotika* like they got the "president's sword!" (*kiyala wedak ney* = no point in talking about it, *kollotika* = the group of boys*)*	(i) Caption 2 could have been written more briefly rather than in dialogue form. But the reference to the president's sword makes it funnier than caption 3. Also the use of sinhala makes it easier to understand the tone in which these words are uttered, but may make no sense to someone who doesn't know sinhala. (ii) I find the second one funny because of the blend of sinhala dialogue into the caption. It gives a humorous touch to the caption.
Example 2: picture 5/caption 3 Govt. Surveyors seem to have got trapped in "police women's *mayam*". (*mayam* = female tactics)	The third one makes humour because of its reference to the sri lankan context of '64 *mayam*' of women.
Example 3: picture 6/caption 2 Veddha chief, "sir, your laptop *podgdga* is fine. But I sense someone behind me eyeing my "*keteri podgdga*". (*podgdga*=the one*, keteri podgdga*=the tool)	Code mixing creates humour because it is more contextual and applicable to a sri lankan bilingual audience. In terms of meaning as well, it shows the reality of a back-stabbing era.

Funny Captions With No Humour:-
A competition on funny photo captions is among multiple participants, who are required to give humorous descriptions for a certain image offered by the contest organizer. Considering this factor, all the competitors are expected to compete forwarding the most humorous caption of their choice, in order to win the competition. Nevertheless, seven percent (7%) of the responses of the respondents stated that none of the funny captions of the respective photo are humorous, as listed below:

Example	Caption(s)
Example 1: picture 1 i. A fair face, to make voters' hearts race!	i. I don't find any of the captions funny because I think that each of them has been written with a very deep in serious meaning. They have more of a sarcastic touch.
ii. Instead of giving a politician the keys to the city, it might be better to change the locks.	ii. Either way, a woman's professional work being ignored, because the focus is constantly on her appearance is sexist, and nothing sexist is ever funny.
iii. The beauty and the beast, hands entwined, in the run up to the mayoral race with the bond scam ogre looking on benignly!	iii I find none of the three captions particularly funny. Caption 1 is probably the least offensive. All three are fairly sexist.

Example 2: picture 2 i Minister John, "yes, sometimes i say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!" ii We know we politicians are labeled hard nuts to crack! iii Sir, if the economic nut sees this nut, he will dash it on your nut.	i None is funny ii None of them are funny and frankly very lame.
Example 3: picture 5 i Looks like the IGP's courtesy project is showing results! ii Police lass with "laughing-gas" to replace "tear-gas". iii Govt. Surveyors seem to have got trapped in "police women's mayam".	i I am sorry I do not find any of the captions funny ! Just mediocre! ii I find all 3 captions to be objectifying the police officer, and therefore unfunny. The police officer, regardless of her gender, being able to handle this situation, without the usual use of physical coercion, is something that could have been appreciated, but instead the writers, in an attempt to be funny have let their misogynistic views take over.

It was also noted that four percent (4%) of the responses stated that none of the funny captions in the questionnaire were humorous, as detailed below:

Responses:-
1.   Pretty sexist and misogynist comments. More than humour it creates anger in people.
2.   It is hard to understand the humour given in these captions.
3.   Captions are not funny

Literary devices:-
In order to produce a special effect in the writing, writers use literary devices. They are narrative techniques that add energy and excitement to the written piece of work, so that it would grab the reader's attention and imagination when conveying the meaning. Among many literary devices at the disposal of the author, it is a handful of devices that are most commonly found. Twenty two percent (22%) of the responses of the respondents were based on the usage of literary devices, such as, alliteration, pun, repetition, etc., due to which the photo captions are humorous, as in the grid below:

Literary device	Percentage of responses
Alliteration	7%
Rhyme and rhythm	5%
Repetition	3%
Analogy	2%
Pun	2%
Irony	2%
Metaphor	1%

Alliteration:-
When words in close proximity begin with letters of the same sound group, the device   used is alliteration.   It creates a repetition of similar sounds in the sentence. It is used when the words begin with the same letter. Alliteration is used to add character to the writing and adds an element of humour, as shown in seven percent (7%) of the responses of the respondents, as per the examples below:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – Picture 1/caption 1 A fair face, to make voters' hearts race!	(/f/ = fair, face) The alliteration gives it a rhythm. Also it's funny cause rosy being quite old and she's still seen as a 'young, attractive, fair skinned' female.
Example 2 – Picture 2/caption 1 Minister john, "yes, sometimes i say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	(/n/ = nutty, nutshell, nut) Clever use of words (e.g. Nutty) and alliteration.
Example 3 –	(/m/ = mediates, media)

Picture 3/ caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	(i) again, clever play on words & alliteration. (ii) caption three uses alliteration of the /m/ sound, so it sounds funny (iii) clever use of words i.e., meditates, mediates and media, to effectively describe the picture and the situation captured in the picture, while being funny.
Example 4 – Picture 5/ caption 2 Police lass with "laughing-gas" to replace "tear-gas".	(/s/ = poli<u>c</u>e, la<u>ss</u>, repla<u>c</u>e, ga<u>s</u>) (i) once again, it is clever use of alliteration, rhyme and assonance that attracted my attention to caption 2. (ii) here again the second statement has a rhythm, due to the /s/ sound. It indicates that the police has used another mode to control the mobs since all this time 'tear gas' was used for the purpose.
Example 5 – Picture 6/caption 1 From tree top to laptop	(/t/ = <u>t</u>op, <u>t</u>o, lap<u>t</u>op) 'from tree top to lap top' can denote a sense of from the 'wild to tame' or 'uncivilized to civilized'. It has a flow and the repetitive sound /t/ makes it quite effective and conveys the message effectively.

Rhyme and Rhythm:-
The pattern of rhymes created by using words that produce the same or similar sound, are referred to as rhyme and rhythm. Recurrence of such sounds in phrases and sentences create a musical and gentle effect. Depending on the usage of words and the intended message, rhyme and rhythm produce humour, which is evidenced in five percent (5%) of the responses of the respondents, as mentioned below:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 1/caption 1 A fair face, to make voters' hearts race!	Unlike the other two captions, the first caption is concise and is rhymed. Therefore it can be read to a tune. Also it conveys a deeper idea (that beauty may have been a factor that led this female mayoral candidate to be given the chance to contest) in a more effective manner.
Example 2 – picture 3/caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	Rhymes very well
Example 3– picture 5/caption 2 Police lass with "laughing-gas" to replace "tear-gas"	(i) Most appropriate to the pic with a sense of rhythm (ii) Police lass with 'laughing-gas' to replace 'tear-gas'. The wording (rhyming) gives more humor and is better matching.

Repetition:-
Writers repeat either words or phrases to emphasize the message intended to convey, or simply for effect. Repetition of this nature makes the reader go through such words or phrases repeatedly, so that the meaning created gets registered in his/her mind. Repetition in sentences also advocates humour, depending on its content. Three percent (3%) of the responses of the respondents had mentioned repetition of words as the reason for captions to be humorous, as listed below:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1– Picture2/caption 1 Minister John, "Yes, sometimes I say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	(i) All three captions seem to be at an equal level here. However, caption 1 which likens this politician (who was in the media spotlight for all the wrong reasons) to a nut is funnier since it points out that there are two nuts in the picture. The repetition of the word 'nut' adds some colour to the caption. (ii) It's quite funny as it clearly represents the minister in the picture. Also the nuance of the word 'nut' and the repetition kind of emphasizes his behavior being ridiculous, and 'nutty'. Also it represents the general idea (perception) people have about him.
Example 2 – Picture 2/caption 2 We know we politicians are labeled hard nuts to crack!	The repetition of the word 'nut' adds some colour to the caption. Caption 2 also uses this repetition but it's used to generate a slightly vulgar brand of humour.

Analogy:-

A comparison between one thing and another is analogy. It is used in writing in order to explain or clarify a situation, incident or individuals. Writers use well known sayings, titles of fiction, titles of fables and cartoon characters to make a comparison effectively. Two percent (2%) of the responses of the respondents had mentioned the use of analogy for the humour in captions, as shown below:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 1/caption 3 The beauty and the beast, hands entwined, in the run up to the mayoral race with the bond scam ogre looking on benignly!	(i) The third caption is political specific and an analogy with the beauty and the beast and a subtle reference to the political scandal. (ii) Comparing them to beauty and the beast - comparing to real life features. (iii) The term beauty and the beast adds more humor to the caption (iv) The use of famous characters from cartoons increases the funny element in the caption.
Example 2 – picture 2/caption 1 Minister John, "Yes, sometimes i say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	The preference for the first option as the funniest considering the attitude of politicians as an analogy to nuts whose behaviour is deplorable.
Example 3 – picture 3/caption 1 Minister (following the chinese saying), "speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil!"	I find the first caption funny because it is with reference to the general phrase, "speak no evil, hear no evil, see no evil".

Pun:-

When a word is used in a manner to suggest two or more possible meanings, it is known as pun. This is done mostly to create either humour or irony. The use of pun leads the reader to discover two or more meanings of a word.   Two percent (2%) of the responses of the respondents identified puns being used in the funny captions to create humour, as per the following examples:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 2/caption 1 Minister John, "Yes, sometimes I say nutty things in a nutshell like a nut!"	I like the use of pun and simile to put the joke across.
Example 2 – picture 5/caption 3 Govt. Surveyors seem to have got trapped in "police women's mayam".	The funniest because of the pun intended
Example 3 – picture 6/caption 3 Oh dear! Chief has a pressing problem!	Caption three has superb use of pun!

Irony:-

Irony implies a meaning different or suggests a contrast to the literal meaning. Deeper meaning is not only revealed by words, but by the situation and context. Two percent (2%) of the responses of the respondents were on the use of irony to create humour in the captions as follows:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 3/caption 1 Minister (following the chinese saying), "speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil!"	It's funny because he is at a press conference and is expected to see speak and listen.
Example 2 – picture 3/caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	(i) The term 'meditates' is ironic as what he speaks does not project such a disciplined use of language or behavior, which is quite funny. (ii) Given the character of rajitha, who often repents after saying something, this caption sums up what his motto should be. The exhausted expression of r along with this particular caption reminds the audience in an ironical manner that meditation is the need of the hour for r.

Example 3 – picture 4/caption 3	Caption 3 has a more punch line – it is ironical, and
The pitiful three: an injury prone skipper; an inconsistent all-rounder and a washed-out politician!	critical without being overly long and complicated.

Metaphor:-

When the writer needs to draw a comparison of meaning or identity, a metaphor can be used. The first subject is compared to the second subject; so the latter is used to characterize the former. Since the concept of the second subject is understood clearly, it is used to create a better understanding of the first subject. One percent (1%) of the responses of the respondents had identified the usage of metaphor due to which the captions are humorous, as shown below:

Example	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 6/caption 3 Oh dear! Chief has a pressing problem!	(i) Caption 3 is the funniest because it uses the word 'pressing' both in the literal and metaphorical sense hinting that exposure to technology may create problems for the vedda chief and his community. (ii) Third caption is funny because it has a hidden meaning in the sentence which is funny.

Linguistic Features:-

Linguistic features were given as elements due to which the funny captions are humorous. Four percent (4%) of the responses of the respondents had given linguistic features, such as, parallelism and wit, as described below:

Parallelism	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 3/caption 1 Minister (following the chinese saying), "speak no evil, see no evil, hear no evil!"	It sounds familiar in comparison to the other captions to me due to the similar phrase structures used. It creates a catchy effect.
Example 2 – picture 4/caption 3 The pitiful three: an injury prone skipper; an inconsistent all-rounder and a washed-out politician!	I like the parallelism
Wit	Response(s)
Example 1 – picture 3/caption 3 Rajitha meditates before he mediates with the media!	Because it is witty. It summarizes what the picture is conveying – that the politician is tired and/or weary in front of the media.
Example 2 – picture 4/caption 3 The pitiful three: an injury prone skipper; an inconsistent all-rounder and a washed-out politician!	Caption in line with the narrative and the photo, witty and includes all three in the photo/narrative.

Other Responses:-

Twelve percent (12%) of the responses comprised of general, negative and irrelevant remarks, as listed below:

General responses:-

When people become politicians, they work selfishly, they even forget their past life.
When they shoot laughing gas, the crowd won't come against the police. They will laugh...then it will be easy to handle the situation.
Caption 3 stereotypes sri lankan police women and implies that any woman employed in the sl police force is incapable of settling the situation in an intelligent manner.

Negative responses:-

| Number 3 is once more, pretty offensive and inappropriate. |
|---|
| This caption is not relevant under the context of changes in the police-public relationships. |
| Do not apply to what action is portrayed on the picture. |

Irrelevant responses:-

Politicians are rouges.

Because if they have the keys they will do wonders as they want. So better not to give the remote to them to control.
Because they didn't play well in the bangladesh tour.

Discussion and Conclusion:-

To determine the elements that are vital in contributing to the funny captions to instigate humour in them was the aim of this study. To arrive at this conclusion, a corpus of sixty captions was identified with the most number of linguistic characteristics, which was in fact the primary objective. Thereafter the identified captions were categorized for further analysis, as the secondary objective. The analysis of captions was based on the remarks of thirty respondents, to whom a questionnaire with six photos was issued, with three captions each. The respondents were expected to identify the most humorous caption per photo, and to justify their answer in comparison with the other two. The notable input of figure 1, were identified in the analysis of the responses of the respondents, which are given in percentages in comparison to the total number of responses.
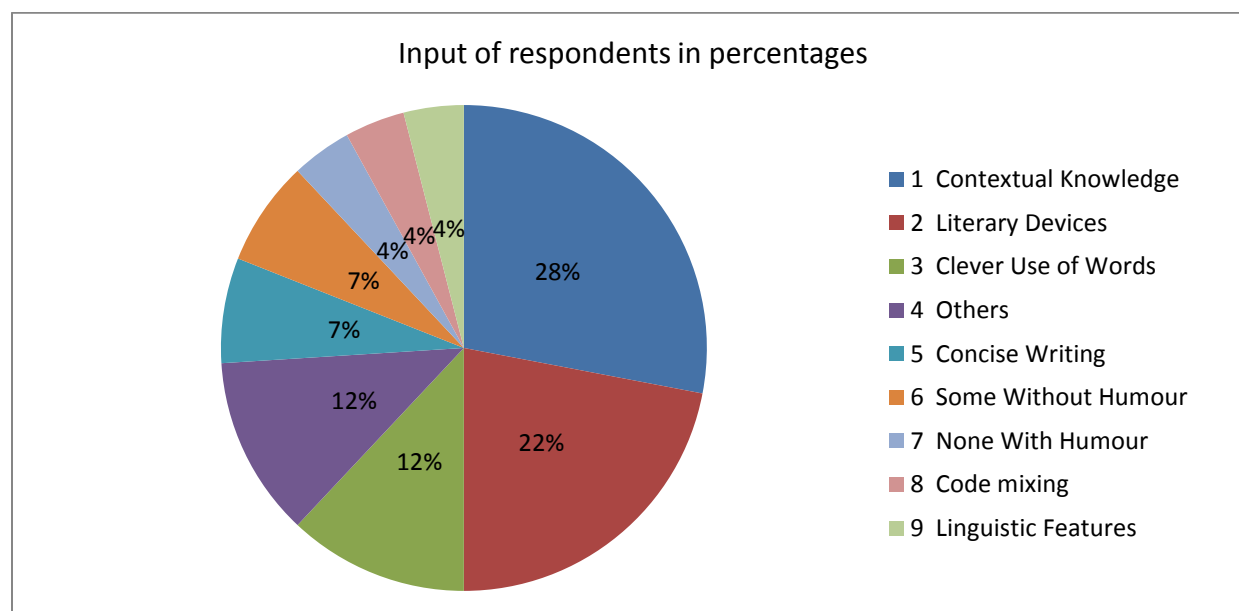
Figure 1:-Input of respondents on the funny captions

It is evident that the most number of responses, i.e., twenty eight percent had the importance of the reader's contextual knowledge to find humour in funny captions. The circumstances or facts that surround the event or situation depicted in the photograph, and narrated in the cutline would enable the reader to enjoy the humorous aspect of the captions; as most of the captions are caricatures to make fun of the situations and personalities. The majority of the funny captions of the Sunday Island newspaper portray sri lankan politicians, eminent personalities and sportsmen who are commonly known by the general public. Since they are public figures, cartoons and funny sketches are found in other segments of newspapers, too. Similar to the study on cartoons by Usman and Nuhu (2016); a measure of humour and entertainment is found in the funny captions of the sunday island newspapers, as they are aimed at getting a message across even to the personalities involved, such as, sportsmen, eminent personalities and cricketers. In order to achieve this goal, numerous communicative functions are advocated, inclusive of statements that imply weakness and absurdity of characters and photographs depicting awkward postures of the characters. Hence, contextual knowledge based on the characters and events would contribute towards promoting humour in captions.

According to Wylie (2016), photo captions get more readerships in comparison to other genres of a newspaper. She also says that photo captions are pillars of communication, hence the writer should ensure the statement is readable, to attract the reader. This is applicable when considering the twelve percent of responses on the use of clever or well used words. Wylie also says the writer should capture the eyes of the reader, by using phrases which are easy to read and understand, and be inviting to the reader. Similarly, seven percent of the responses were on funny captions being humorous due to concise writing or not writing at length. As per the view of Comcowish (2016), photo captions should be informative, yet it is imperative to be concise. She believes too much information would

distract the reader and finally not carry much weight to the caption.   Twenty two percent of the responses have the usage of literary devices which is instrumental in creating humour in the captions. Out of them, the mostly adopted devices are identified as alliteration, rhyme, rhythm and repetition; whilst analogy, pun and irony are also identified with equal proportions. According to Usman and Nuhu (2016), the use of figurative language and images addresses vital issues and in return criticizes or make fun of the persons concerned and their practices. In applying their findings, the funny captions in question are understood better because they are expressed through the literary devices mentioned above, which in return inject humour to the captions.

On the contrary, seven percent of the responses were on certain captions not being humorous. It was also noted that four percent of the responses was on none of the captions being humorous. Remarks, such as, 'none of them are funny and frankly very lame', 'none of them are funny and none of the captions goes with the picture', 'i am sorry i do not find any of the captions funny! Just mediocre!' and 'it is hard to understand the humour given in these captions', were given by the respondents. Every person's sense of humour differs to a degree according to Akshat (2012). He says humour is an extremely complex matter to determine, as what is considered as funny depends on many factors, such as, taste, character, background, schemata, etc. Hence humour has both subjective and objective elements. According to Gibson (2016), for a person not to find something humorous, it could be either due to the caption creating a different mental representation that conflicts with the one set up by the joke; or the possibility of the individual getting a different interpretation. Therefore humour is subjective, which depends very much on the individuals.

In conclusion, this study to determine the factors that contribute towards creating humour in the funny captions of the Sunday Island newspaper, revealed numerous notable findings, as discussed above. The importance of expressing certain rules in the competition was eminent, as the captions were at varied lengths. One of the findings was that when the statement is too long, it loses the meaning and the humorous factor. The eleven percent of the responses that had remarked the captions had no humour; were in fact of individuals 51 years and above, and retired professionals. This study exposed that humour is very much subjective; hence the level of intellect and maturity of individuals would have been the reason for not finding some or all the captions humorous. These features supersede the organization or the structure of statements given in captions.

The theoretical base of this study being, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), the corpus of funny captions has many choices, such as, photographs, cutlines, and linguistic and literary devices, to deliver humour. Sfl involves three simultaneously generated functions: experience or knowledge of the outer or inner worlds, social or interpersonal relations and the text or the wording created. In comparison, the findings justify the need for the reader's knowledge of the situation or event, being aware of the character or personality of individuals (Sri Lankan politicians, sportsmen, etc.) And the creative use of language using linguistic and literary devices, to discover humour in the funny captions. Therefore as per sfl, a relationship is built up between language and its functions, to advocate humour in the funny captions of the Sri Lankan weekly English newspaper, Sunday Island.

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