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## Representation of Sri Lankan State University Academics in Print Media

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### ABSTRACT

*The undergraduates' protests and violence within the state university system are frequently reported in Sri Lankan print media. Yet, the state university academics are a group absent in the reports until recently. This paper aimed to qualitatively examine how Sri Lankan state university academics were portrayed in four selected Sinhala print newspapers. The study focused on media coverage generated by the trade union action launched by state university academics on 9 March 2023 and employed content analysis to identify the themes and linguistic features evident in the newspaper articles. Both state-owned and privately owned newspapers appearing daily and on weekends from 9 March 2023 were taken into analysis. The main aim of the study was to explore how the state university academics in Sri Lanka are represented in the Sinhala newspapers. As a secondary aim, a linguistic analysis was conducted on the Sinhala linguistic features used in Sinhala Print media. The findings demonstrated a significant difference in the attention paid to the university academics in the two categories of newspapers, with the state-owned newspapers paying higher attention than the privately owned newspapers. Overall, the Sinhala print media demonstrated a negative view towards the state university academics, and the media depicted the academics as a destructive group of individuals who were in perpetual protest sacrificing the youth's and the children's future in the country and hindered the development and the future of Sri Lanka. Moreover, the press highlighted that these academics have a responsibility towards the future of the country and the children while condemning the leftist movement for persuading the academics to be a vicious group of individuals. Furthermore, Sinhala linguistic features such as metaphors and similes, rhetorical questions, code-mixing and code switching and also the omission of the verb can be noticed in this data set.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Sinhala press, State university academics, trade union action, linguistic analysis*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Sri Lankan media frequently feature articles on problems, politics and unrests in the state universities of Sri Lanka. Student politics has received the most attention of the print media until recently. Yet, due to the university academics' trade union action in 2023 against taxation and their withdrawal from the evaluation of the GCE Advanced Level examination, print media's attention was drawn to the university academics to a similar extent. University academics are a group of individuals on whom very little research has been carried out. According to Aturupane (2018), university academics are research-worthy because such studies would provide an understanding of the quality of teaching in the university system which would support the creation of links between the labour market needs and education. This study explored how the state university academics in Sri Lanka are represented in Sinhala print media, as it is still the most widely available medium of information for the Sri Lankan general public. The main aim of the present study was to do a content analysis of the articles.

Moreover, it is evident that there is a dearth of research regarding the Sinhala language in Sri Lanka and, this study will contribute to the areas on linguistic elements in Sinhala language where further research is necessary. Hence, a secondary aim of this paper is to contribute to the studies on Sinhala language. Despite the attention given to the English language in Sri Lanka and in the world, only a very few studies are conducted on the Sinhala language and its

linguistic features. Yet, when focusing on newspaper articles and Sinhala language and its linguistic structures, the only study that I could locate was Perera's (2018) study on "the Sri Lankan undergraduate in the Sinhala press". Hence, a linguistic analysis was conducted to explore the Sinhala linguistic structures used in Sinhala print media when representing state university academics in Sri Lanka.

To explore the above-mentioned issues, the following research questions were employed.

1. How is university academics represented in Sinhala print media in Sri Lanka?
2. What are the Sinhala linguistic structures used for stance marking when representing the Sri Lankan state university academics?

In the following section, I define news discourse and present the current status of literature on news discourse, including studies done in Sri Lanka. In this same section, I also synthesise work on political unrest in the state universities in Sri Lanka. In the third section, I outline my research design and provide a description of the methods and data. Following this, I present the findings of the study, which showcase the representation of state university academics in local print media and a brief discussion on the Sinhala linguistic elements used in print media when discussing the state university academics.

### 1.1 News discourse

News discourse is considered to be an important field of linguistic research and it is similarly viewed as an objective and formal

linguistic form of discourse (Xie, 2018). As Richardson (2007) defines news discourse, it is, “the system (and the values upon which it is based) whereby news organisations select and organise the possible statements on a particular subject” (p.76). In addition, scholars mention that an event has certain characteristics to be identified as news. Bednarek and Caple (2012) mention a list of characteristics which decide the newsworthiness of events such as “negativity” (p. 42) (negative features of an event), “timeliness” (p. 42) (the relevance of the event in terms of time), “proximity” (p. 42) (cultural and geographical proximity), “prominence/eliteness” (p. 43) (the status of the individuals who are subjected to the news), “consonance” (p.43) (the degree to which aspects of the storyline suit the stereotypical beliefs of the that people), “impact”(p.43) (the results or consequences of the event), “novelty/deviance/unusuality/rarity/surprise”(p. 43) (the unexpected nature of the news item), “superlativeness”(p. 44) (intensified features of the incident and “personalisation”(p. 44) (the personal or human interest in the event). They further mention that this newsworthiness itself is created through the discourse. Similarly, Perera (2018) states that news is something that is presented from the discourses already available in society at the time of reporting. Moreover, as Skovsgaard et al. (2012) mention, journalists are often conscious of the events that take place in the current news landscape. For instance, as Van Dijk (1991) mentions, Netherlands created anti- immigration policies based on the news reports on the flood of Tamil refugees to the country because the press

represented it as an ‘issue’ to the country. Hence, it is evident that the selection of news to be published in the media is not coincidental or random, but, they are important parts of the larger discourse happening in society.

Methodologically, however, most of the research conducted on the analysis of news discourse uses Critical Discourse Analysis (hereafter referred to as “CDA”). For instance, Teo (2000) conducted research on racism in two Australian newspapers using CDA. In addition, Sari (2019), Mardicantoro, Baehaqie and Siroj (2022) and Alyahya (2023) conducted studies analysing print media using CDA of news headlines. As van Dijk (2000) suggested, an analysis on the discursive structures in a text is more important to be studied as it represents the ideological and political implications in the public. Hence, my research, following this notion and taking a slightly different approach to what is conducted in Sri Lanka, employs a thematic and linguistic analysis and it was conducted using the sample of university academics and their representation in the print media in Sri Lankan Sinhala newspapers.

## **1.2 Print media discourse and academia**

The two concepts of academia and print media are studied sporadically. Further, it should be noted that the available studies on these aspects are not directly in line with print media and discourse and academia. For instance, Fürst et al. (2021) conducted a quantitative content analysis of many news articles to examine how Swiss universities and their academics are represented in print media. It identified that a few well-resourced universities receive uneven

attention from media, shaping public understanding and view of academic institutions. In addition, Heiberger, Hofstra and Unger (2025) conducted a study on how social sciences professors are represented in the media in Germany. They considered factors like their discipline, gender and reputation and the representation in media. They found out that male professors are discussed in media more often than the female and the “mediagenic” (p. 1) professors are selected based on the reputation, their discipline and gender. Furthermore, Laufer (2021) compiled an article on his experiences of writing a monthly column on Crisis Management in a newspaper in New Zealand. He mentions the benefits of writing a newspaper column including educating the public about issues relating to Crisis Management and the reputation that both the academic and the university gain in writing such articles for newspapers.

As noted, the print media worldwide and the university academia are studied sporadically. The next section will present the available literature related to print media discourse in Sri Lanka.

### **1.3 Print media discourse in Sri Lanka**

When considering the studies on news discourse in Sri Lanka, it is an area which was studied less. A small number of scholars have engaged in research on print media and linguistic features. For instance, Gnanaseelan (2015) conducted an analysis on the metaphors used for international intervention in Sri Lanka during the period of “peace talks”. His findings depict that the print media has failed to

differentiate “Sinhala people” from “Sri Lankan people”. Similarly, Jeyaseelan (2020) conducted CDA on newspaper editorials which promote insurance. He mentions that the findings show that print media have made insurance a fundamental need for life (Jeyaseelan, 2020).

In addition, Siriwardhana (2012) conducted a study on post-war media behaviour and he found that newspapers repeated the reports on crimes and war even after the war ended without erasing the war mentality from the minds of the Sri Lankans. Similarly, Gnanaseelan (2012) conducted a discourse analysis on ethnic conflict and peace in the editorials of Sri Lankan newspapers and found that newspapers present ethno-nationalism.

Furthermore, Ariyasinghe (2018) conducted a study on the features of written Sri Lankan English in the Letters to the Editor while Wickramasinghe and Tharanga (2021) conducted a study on the impact of the socio-political tenacity on language usage in Sri Lankan English journalistic writings. In addition, Perera (2018) conducted a linguistic analysis of how state university undergraduates are represented in Sri Lankan Sinhala print media.

In addition, Gamage and Perera (2024) conducted a study on the English matrimonial advertisements in the newspapers. They analysed Sri Lankan English features in these advertisements and the specific linguistic register used to present matrimonials. Furthermore, Ranaweera (2019) conducted a

study on Sri Lankan English morphological features and move structures of obituary notices in English newspapers in Sri Lanka. Hence, it is evident that most of the newspaper related research in Sri Lanka focused on the English newspapers while the only research that was conducted on Sinhala newspapers that the researcher could locate was Perera (2018) who conducted a study on the Sri Lankan undergraduates and their representation in print media.

#### **1.4 Political unrest and activism in Sri Lankan state universities**

The violence among students in relation to ragging or their activism regarding the inadequacy of allocation of funds for education or higher education have been the main focus of print media and related research in the country. Yet, the research related to violence in State universities in Sri Lanka is sporadic. Manuratne (2021) and Wickramasinghe et al. (2022) conducted studies on ragging considering it to be a form of student violence, while Samaranayake (2015) conducted a study on how university politics can be interpreted and viewed differently. Hence, given the importance of student activism to university issues, the lack of research in this area is highlighted. Furthermore, it is noted that students are the only group that is focused in research as a group of activists while the other populations in the university are vastly neglected. Hence, it is apparent that there is a dearth of research on other populations in the state universities and their politics, unrest and activism. Therefore, the attention should be

paid to studying these under-studied groups within the university system.

Considering the above studies, it can be noted that studies on state university academics and also on Sinhala language are minimal in Sri Lanka. Hence, this study attempts to contribute to these areas where further research is necessary.

It is also important to mention that the findings of this study will be the result of an analysis of a particular genre in its time and space. Therefore, I want to mention that the findings of this study may vary if a further study will be conducted in the future depending on the viewpoint of the media about the university academics. Hence, my aim of this study is not to generalise the findings, yet to raise awareness on the sporadic nature of research on Sinhala language, print media in Sri Lanka and on university academics.

## **2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is a discourse and a linguistic analysis of the representation of Sri Lankan university academics in Sinhala print media, using four Sinhala language newspapers, namely, *Lankadeepa*, *Irida Lankadeepa*, *Silumina* and *Dinamina*, depending on the ownership of the newspaper and the day of publication. *Lankadeepa* and *Irida Lankadeepa* are published by a private owned publication company, Wijaya Newspapers Ltd while *Silumina* and *Dinamina* are published by the state-administered Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd. Daily (*Lankadeepa* and *Dinamina*)

and Sunday newspapers (*Irida Lankadeepa* and *Silumina*) were chosen from each sector.

Mainly, thematic analysis and a linguistic analysis were used for data analysis focusing on qualitative analysis of items. The focus of this study commenced from 9th March 2023 following a university academics' trade union action and their withdrawal from Advanced level paper marking. The two research questions, how the university academics are represented in the Sinhala Print media in Sri Lanka? and what are the Sinhala linguistic structures used for stance marking when representing the Sri Lankan state university academics? were addressed in this study.

### 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Representation of state university academics in Sinhala print media

It was noted that 31 items were reported during the period which started from 9th March 2023. The number of items reported by the state owned newspapers (19) was higher than the privately owned newspapers (12).

**Table 1.** Number of items in print media

Ownership	Newspaper	No: of items
State	<i>Silumina</i>	2
	<i>Dinamina</i>	17
Private	<i>Irida Lankadeepa</i>	2
	<i>Lankadeepa</i>	10
Total		31

According to the above table (Table 1), out of the 31 items presented in this study, only the appearances in the news reports were considered disregarding the interviews, letters to the editor, press releases and advertisements. These items were disregarded as they contained more of a personal viewpoint towards the facts than reporting the truth. For instance, there is a difference between the language used in interviews as the interviewer and the interviewee may adjust their language according to the context and there can be potential biases (Richardson, 2007). Moreover, as Perera (2018) confirms, the content in these items are planned and there is a certain power deviated from the publishing company on the creation of these articles.

When considering the attention paid by the state owned newspapers and privately owned newspapers, it was evident that state owned newspapers had a larger focus on the university academics than the attention paid by the privately owned newspapers. This can be because the university academics became a potential threat to the smooth flow of the government and the regime at that time in Sri Lanka. As the newspapers were published by state mediated agencies, the newspapers were able to create a major attention on the event of trade union actions in a way that it created a negative perspective in the general public's eye which in turn may support the government as the general public may force the academics to give up the trade union actions. Therefore, this can be a possible reason for the reduction of the number of appearances related to state

university academics in the privately owned newspapers.

In the following sections of the paper, I first present an analysis of the articles on state university academics. Followed by that, a description of the Sinhala language features that are used to show stance is presented. News extracts are presented in a table with two columns. The first column presents the Sinhala extract transcribed in the Roman alphabet. Two phonetic symbols are used: /æ/ for the open front unrounded vowel sound (e.g. vowel sound in tap); /ə/ for the mid central unstressed vowel sound (e.g. vowel sound in stir). A colon indicates a long vowel sound (e.g. /mæ:n/ for man). The second column presents a near-literal translation in English, i.e. some pragmatic content may be lost. Note that for the purposes of this study ‘media’ refers to print media.

Irrespective of the amount of attention paid by the newspapers, the perspective the newspapers held about the state university academics was a negative one. Most of the newspapers labeled the academics as a group who attempted to prey on society, similar to terrorists, hunters and rotten people while the students and general public were viewed as victims. The newspapers stated that the students were penalised (/bætə kanəva:/) and trampled (/tælenə/) by the university academics considering them as hostages (/pra:nə æpəkaruvan/), penalised people (/dadə mi:ma:/) and respondents/defendants (/vagəuttərəkaruvo/). For instance, here is an excerpt from *Lankadeepa* newspaper published on the 15th of March 2023 representing their negative viewpoints towards the State University academics in Sri Lanka.

**Table 2.** An excerpt from *Lankadeepa* newspaper published on the 15th of March 2023

Excerpt transliterated	Translation
eheth ounge vurthi:jə satənə vi: mevarə pra:nə æpəkaruvange: thathvəyətə path vi: æththe: pasugiyə vasərə kihipəye: korona: uvadurinuth, indənə arbudəyə hamuwe:th, viduli kappa:duvə nisa:th, a:rthikə arbudəyə hamuwe:th bætə kə: asərənə usas pelə sisuva:yə. (“usas pelə sisun thælenə kriya:ma:rgə epa:”, 2023) (emphasis added)	The helpless advanced level student who faced difficulties during the last few years due to Corona, lack of fuels, power-cuts, economic problems have been <b>penalised</b> and they have become the <b>hostages</b> of their present trade union action.

Furthermore, the university academics were perceived to employ the students as a shield (/palihak/) to protect themselves in the Trade Union actions. The newspapers questioned if these actions belong to academia or terrorism (/trastava:dayatədə/). Moreover, the newspaper

mentioned that the decisions to conduct trade union actions were not just and lawful. The newspaper article published on the 3rd of April 2023 used many rhetorical questions condemning state university academics as perpetrators.

**Table 3.** An excerpt from the 3rd of April 2023

Excerpt transliterated	Translation
<p>...a. po.sə usəs pelə vibhagəyə sandəha peni: siti sisun            339, 000 kə ge: ana:gəthəjə me: a:ka:rəjətə pra:nə            əpəjətə gəni:mə kohomənam sa:dhārəni:kərənəjə            karannədə? lanka:ve: danumə niʃpa:dənəjə karanə,            adja:pənə sansthawe: ihələmə stharəjə thamange:            vurthi:jə samithi thi:ndu kriyawata nangva: gannətə            katajuthu karanne ehemədə? me: monə jukthijakdə?            me: monə sa:da:rənəjakdə? me: a:ka:rəje: pa:sal            daruvange: ana:gathajə pra:nə əpəjətə gəni:me:            katajuthu vada:th sami:pə vanne thrasthəvadəjətədə?            æcədəmi:ya:wətədə</p>	<p>How can one justify the action of taking 339, 000            A/L students' future as <b>hostages</b>? Is this the way the            knowledgeable personnel in Sri Lanka engage in            their trade union actions? What a lawless activity is            this? What an injustice? The act of taking school            children as <b>hostages</b> belongs to <b>terrorism</b> or            academia?</p>
<p>? (“mal kada: gas thala: wənasu: pamanin vasanthəyə            nima: kala həkida?”, 2023) (emphasis added)</p>	

In addition, the Sinhala press condemned the state university academics as individuals with “rotten hearts” (/papuvə kunuvu: minisek/). The press here was attempting to create a pessimistic view towards the academics as they were against the agenda of the present government. As the media’s perception is a representation of the general public’s view, the media’s negativity may affect the general public’s opinion as well and the public will view Sri Lankan state university academia negatively.

Moreover, state university academics are viewed as a curse to the country and a group who performs evil tasks to hinder the development of the country. For instance, phrases such as, /vətə bandinəva:/(disturb, hinder), /kakulen adinəva:/(disturb), /ratəmə kotə udə/(the whole country is malfunctioning), /helmətəyətədə vedi t̪əbi:mətə patangenə æt̪t̪e: sarəsavi ænduro:yə/(the university academics

have started to shoot even the helmets), /a.po.sə usəs pelətə ha: sa:ma:nyə pelətə sa:payak vi:/ (they have become a curse to the advanced level and ordinary level examinations), /me: rate: ana:gəṭəyə bellen alla:genə/(they are throttling this country’s future) , and /sa:pəyen/ (curse) exemplify the idea.

Another thematic strand represented in the newspapers was the responsibilities of a university academic. The press always suggested that it is university academics’ responsibility to report to duty, report to GCE Advanced Level evaluation duties without attempting to win their demands through Trade Union actions. The media is attempting to create a stance which states that the state university academics always have a duty towards their nation, and they are obligatory. If they miss their duties, it is similar to being anti-patriotic and they are a group of people who do not think about the wellbeing of their nation.

For example, ... /e: anu:və, de:ʃəpa:lənə be:də vəlɪn ʃərəvə əpə səməŋe vətəma:nə vəkaki:mə ha: yuʃukamə viyə yuʃte: me: mohote: læbenə siyəlu awastə magə nohərə/... (..accordingly, we must not divide ourselves politically and our present duty and responsibility must be not to miss any opportunity....) , /daruvange ana:gətəyə gənə siʃa: uttərə pətərə sami:kʃənə kadinəmin a:rambə kiri:mətə sahayəvannəi/... (...thinking about the future of the children, start the evaluation of examination papers soon) and .../ʃamə daruvange ana:gətəyə venuven/... (for the future of one's own children...). The print media suggest that state university academics should be loyal to the country. The feeling of belongingness and excessive patriotism are promoted by the media. Through these patriotic stances, the media is attempting to make the public view the state university academia as anti-patriotic. Hence, the public will force the university academics to report to their duties again, which in turn will make the government agenda successful.

The reference to the leftist movement was another recurrent theme in the newspapers. The press bore a negative perspective towards the leftist movement. For instance, /viʃvə vidya:ləyətə ringa: gaʃ va:manʃikə deʃəpa:lənəyə/... (the leftist politics which crept into the universities...) indicating that the leftist movement was not openly welcomed or invited by the state universities. The press indicates that they have come into the universities against the university's will. The media is attempting to create a negative perspective about the leftist movement mentioning that it was an unwelcomed group or

ideology that is functioning within the state university system in Sri Lanka. They further stated that leftist movement persuaded the university academics to continue the trade union actions. *Dinamina* stated that universities and trade unions were possessed by the leftist political parties (/viʃvə vidya:lə menmə vurʃi:yə samiʃi vya:pə:rə arakgenə sitinə i:niya: va:manʃikə vya:pə:rə/..). The press used phrases such as /i:niya: vammū/ (the so-called leftists) to condemn the leftist movement labelling them to be the pioneers of the trade union actions in Sri Lanka.

It is evident that the recurrent themes present in the newspapers were negative and the state university academics were condemned by the media in Sri Lanka. The media are collectively promoting the government's ideology and are attempting to create the same negative opinion towards the academia in the public. Through that the government believes that it would support them to restore the academia's working culture and their usual behaviours.

The following section presents the linguistic structures present in the Sinhala print media when representing the state university academics.

### 3.2 Linguistic structures used in Sinhala print media to represent State university academics

Several linguistic features have been used by the Sinhala print media for stance-marking. These linguistic features were common to all the newspapers, though they have been used in different amounts.

One of the most common linguistic features was the use of colorful metaphors and similes. As Fairclough (1995) states, metaphors are the most productive and common strategy used in media discourse. As the newspapers reported that the country suffered (/bætə kə:va:/) because of the actions of the university academics and their actions hindered (/vætə bandinnə/) the development of the country. They further reported that people suffered (/tælənə/) because of their actions. Moreover, the academics were trying to escape the tax system (/baɪtə dʒælən/). Moreover, terms like /pra:nə æpəkaruvan/ (hostage), /vagəʊtʃərəkaruvo:/ (respondents/defendants), /palihak/ (shield), /ratəmə kotə udə/ (the whole country is malfunctioning), /pra:nə æpəjətə/ (keeping as hostages), /trastəva:dʒə/ (terrorism), /korahe:kimbulaŋ sijaŋ ganənak penvi:mətə/, (showing hundreds of crocodiles in the water basin) /si:tələ ihəɟija:vəkə gal gæsi:mə/ (throwing stones from a cold area), /ese:hisə esəwi:mətə tæɪ kələ sənin helmətəyətədə vedi tæbi:mətə patan genə ætʃe: sarəsavi ændʒuro:ya/(the university academics have started to shoot even the helmets), /papuva kunuwu: minisek/ (a person with a rotten heart) and /ɟada mi:ma/ (penalised person) were among many of the metaphors and similes used. The media are restricted to the use of metaphors rather than stating things directly to make the language more attractive and reader friendly. They are attempting to maintain the readership through the use of these linguistic features. Hence, the creation of the ideologies would be easier for them.

The second common strategy used in the selected sample of newspapers was the use of rhetorical questions. A rhetorical question is a question which does not require an answer. These questions are used to provide information (Špago, 2016). Stainton and Ilie (1996) illustrated that rhetorical questions are used with the purpose of requiring a cognitive response represented by the addressee's approval of the response implied by the speaker. They further define a rhetorical question as "a question used as a challenging statement to convey the addresser's commitment to its implicit answer, in order to induce the addressee's mental recognition of its obviousness and the acceptance, verbalized or non-verbalized, of its validity" (p. 128). For example, in this study, questions such as "/mal kada: gas di: vənəsə: vasantəjə nima: kələ həkida/" (can the summer where flowers were offered and trees were destroyed be finished?) and "/ruhunu sarəsavi upəkuləpəɟi koibatədə/" (where does the Ruhuna university Vice-chancellor go to?) were noted. As the scholars have mentioned, these questions did not expect an answer when the press published them in the newspaper. Instead, they attempt to provide information and to create an obviousness and acceptance in the readers' mind. The following excerpt presents many rhetorical questions where the author or reader does not require answers, whereas the print media is attempting to create a certain stance in the readers' mind.

**Table 4.** An excerpt from a newspaper in 2023

Excerpt transliterated	Translation
<p>...a. po.sə usəs pelə vibhagəyə sandəha peni: siti sisun  339, 000 kə ge: ana:gəthəjə me: a:ka:rəjətə pra:nə  əpəjətə gəni:mə kohomənam sa:dhārəni:kərənəjə  karannədə? lanka:ve: danumə niʃpa:dənəjə karanə,  adja:pənə sansthawe: ihələmə stharəjə thamange:  vurthi:jə samithi thi:ndu kriyawata nangva: gannətə  katajuthu karanne ehemədə? me: monə jukthijakdə?  me: monə sa:da:rənəjakdə? me: a:ka:rəje: pa:sal  daruvange: ana:gathajə pra:nə əpəjətə gəni:me:  katajuthu vada:th sami:pə vanne thrasthəvadəjətədə?  əcədəmi:ya:wətədə? (“mal kada: gas thala: wənasu:  pamanin vasanthəyə nima: kala həkida?”), 2023)</p>	<p>How can one justify the action of taking 339, 000 A/L  students’ future as <b>hostages</b>? Is this the way the  knowledgeable personnel in Sri Lanka engage in their  trade union actions? What a lawless activity is this?  What an injustice? The act of taking school children  as <b>hostages</b> belongs to <b>terrorism</b> or academia?</p>

There are four rhetorical questions in the same article and also they are written together. Continuous use of questions provides the reader an idea that the matter discussed in the article is serious and they cannot be easily solved. It creates a sense of seriousness about the issue which would support the media to create an ideology in the reader that the academia is creating a serious problem in the country. Moreover, the code-mixing and code switching were other linguistic processes used in the print media. Code switching can be referred to as the juxtaposition of two languages in a spoken discourse which involves shifting from one code to another in interaction; while code-mixing uses two or more codes in a single statement (Ezeh et al., 2022). In certain areas of linguistic studies, code switching and code mixing have been viewed differently. However, Geetha (2010) explains that the difference between code switching and code mixing is a theoretical difference based on a matter of grammatical items, situation and topic. It is also

noticed that linguists use the term code-mixing and switching interchangeably (Barnali, 2017). In my study too, I consider them to be interchangeable terms. Phrases such as “*api ada strike*” (/api aɔə straik /) and “*tax eka*” (/tæks ekə/) use English terms code-mixed with Sinhala language. The following excerpt from *Lankadeepa* showcases that the English terms are assimilated and amalgamated into Sinhala newspapers in a smooth manner.

**Table 5.** An excerpt from *Lankadeepa*

Excerpt transliterated	Translation
<p>lamainge: uttərə patrə  bəli:mə tæx ekə saməgə  patələwa: ganna epa:  a:cha:ryə varjənəyən  usas pelə prəthipalath  sathi dekak  pama:wənəwa:  (2023)(emphasis added)</p>	<p>Do not mix up the  paper scrutinising  process and the <b>tax</b>  process</p>

Moreover, another recurrent linguistic strategy used in the newspapers was to have sentences where the verb or the action word is absent. The

sentences end abruptly without an action word. For instance,

**Table 6.** Sinhala excerpts which do not have the verb

Excerpt transliteration	Translation
saundarjə vɪʃvə vidya:ləje: kulapathi maha:cha:ryə sunil	The chancellor of visual and performing arts university is professor Sunil
boru maha:cha:ryə pattamwələtə wətə bandinnə komisəmətə balayə	The power is given to the commission to prohibit false professorships
pera:deniya sarəsavi hisə thel ulele:di	At the University of Peradeniya “hisa thel” festival
saundarya sarəsavije abhinəvə kulapathivərəja:tə subə pəthum	Best wishes for the new chancellor of visual and performing arts university
sa:/pela viba:gəyath arbudəjəkə	Ordinary level examination is in a chaos
sarəsavi əndurange kriya:kala:pəjə kanəga:tuda:jəkai	The actions of university lecturers is regretting

The phrases with missing verbs create a poetic effect in the phrases. The media does this on purpose to attract the reader to engage with the published article. Furthermore, this linguistic strategy was mostly noted in the headlines and they would believe that these abrupt endings would force the reader to read the full article without limiting them to the headline.

As mentioned above, it was noted that the Sinhala linguistic features were employed in the newspapers to attract and maintain the readership and to propagate the same ideology that media has towards the Sri Lankan academia in the general public.

#### 4 CONCLUSIONS

This paper presented an analysis of the representation of Sri Lankan state university academics in the Sinhala press. Focusing on a duration commencing from 9 March 2023, the paper presented the differences in the treatment of state university academics in state-owned and privately-owned newspapers. It was evident that state-owned newspapers feature more articles related to state university academics. However, both state and privately owned newspapers viewed the academics with a negative perspective and they considered them to be a troublesome group that hindered the development of the country. Furthermore, according to the Sinhala press, the state university academics must be responsible for the future of the country and students.

Additionally, the press created a liaison between the state university academics and the leftist movement in Sri Lanka. It was also evident that many Sinhala linguistic structures were used in the print media. In conclusion, the negative perspective towards the state university academics and the use of Sinhala linguistic structures were to attract readers and to plant the same negative ideology that media contained about the university academics in the general public's eye as the academia is behaving against the accepted norms of the government and the country.

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