

University of Colombo, Sri Lanka

Faculty of Arts

Special Degree Examination in Arts (English), Year 2, Semester 1, 2017/2018

ENG 2124 – History of the English Language

Two Hours

Answer **TWO (02)** questions, choosing one from each part.

Part A

1. “The awakening of nationalism of the Britons paved the way to the rise of English language.” Evaluate this statement with reference to the changes in linguistic characteristics and the wider social context in which English developed from the latter part of the Middle English period to the Early Modern English period.
2. A key milestone in the history of the English language is the Great Vowel Shift (GVS). Labov (1972) states that the success of such a phonetic change can be genuinely understood only if the transition from the earlier pronunciation to the later pronunciation is examined with reference to the social environment within which the change is embedded. To what extent would you agree with this statement? Discuss with reference to the GVS.

Part B

3. According to Warschauer (2000), the English language is “neither good nor bad: nor is it neutral. To declare that English is unequivocally harmful or beneficial is to deny the human agency that shapes how English is used in different circumstances”. Critique this statement with reference to varieties of English.
4. The existence of varieties of English points to the fact that the political and cultural history of the English language is one of international history and one of a variety of societies and cultures. Discuss how this diversity has enriched the language with special reference to the expansion of the Empire via different types of colonies.