



PeopleFuzion is the idea of bringing people of different ethnicities to an appropriate environment, and when together, the sum of these ethnicities multiplies exponentially so that any idea, work effort, discover or combined viewpoint is more complete and more adequate to the task.

Volume 3.1

Which English Is Enough?

In the early 1990s, declining enrollments in U.S. universities motivated many administrators to scramble to Asia in search of cash-paying students. In spite of the problems and controversy, a large number of these students completed their degrees in various majors, most notably in business, and returned home to become highly successful in their chosen fields. In many cases, they rose above their peers simply because they were able to communicate in “global English” that is generally understood in Asia.¹

It would be a good idea to ask ourselves, at least once a year, why we in Christian education recruit and enroll Asian students that come from a non-native English speakers’ environment. What is our purpose? What is our vision for the university community and how does that vision mesh with enrolling such students in various programs around the campus?

Since schools were first founded in the U.S., the central purpose has been to enculturate the younger generation in the values, norms, behaviors and beliefs of the older generation. Specifically, we in the academic community have stressed the need for students to master English grammar and acquire knowledge of a body of British and American literature. For our present discussion, I contend that a Christian university should refrain from trying to force international students into the American culture mold. Were that to happen, these young people would lose their effectiveness when they return home. In contrast, they can achieve a high-quality U.S. education that is founded on a Christian world view without embracing the cultural aspects of American life.

All students, including Asians, should be encouraged to become bi-cultural as a minimum, and better yet, global citizens. Asian students from past decades who returned home and became successful, had learned through their experiences to function effectively in more than one culture. This should serve as a model for Christian educators

who are committed to educating students for life and service in the 21st century.

For international students, I would argue that mastery² of English grammar is not an appropriate goal since it is not of primary importance for helping these students achieve their educational and professional goals. Of course, they should be required to read literature and a variety of English language texts even though these students will need more time to complete English course assignments. They may also need a tutor to polish formal papers. After fulfilling these graduation requirements, these students will achieve their career goals and become successful...assuming they can demonstrate competency in global English once they are back home.

As we strive to assist the development of these young people in becoming world leaders, we must keep in mind their international environment and the fact that the level of global English they attain will make them successful as well as validate us as educators.

Without wanting to compromise university efforts to achieve excellence in teaching and set standards that challenge students, we merely want to advocate for a more thorough understanding of the realities your international students deal with on a daily basis and the future expectations they will meet.

¹The expression “global English” has been used in various ways but normally refers to the kind of English that is spoken or used in international contexts such as business. I do not intend to use the expression in any limited or formal sense, but rather to refer to the use of English among Asian nations and peoples who communicate in English when their own languages are mutually unintelligible. Much has already been written about the topic of global English. One example is: <http://www.english.ucsb.edu/faculty/rraley/research/global-English.html>

²We use the term “mastery” in referring to a student’s having achieved native fluency or “near native” fluency in English as spoken and written by academicians.