

Proposal for Presentation at the 16th World Conference of Applied Linguistics

AILA 2011 - Beijing
<http://www.aila2011.org/en/>

TITLE (15 WORDS): Are you among those who would claim that a little English is better than none?

SUMMARY FOR INCLUSION IN THE CONFERENCE PROGRAM (47 WORDS)

The universal English language (UEL) requirement is failing in its mission. There are too many people learning English to provide adequate training, and there is insufficient real demand to sustain what has been learned after having been trained. In short, there is tremendous social and economic waste.

ABSTRACT (265 WORDS)

The universal English language (UEL) requirements of our nations are failing in their mission -- not because there has not been important success, rather because this success has been achieved with little regard to its cost. In the simplest of terms there are too many people learning English to provide adequate training, and there is insufficient real demand to help sustain what has been learned after having been trained.

Moreover, there are too few people learning the languages of non-English speaking peoples to provide a sufficiently strong foundation for good cross-cultural communication and understanding. As a result the overall quality of the English language has suffered, many languages of the world are being neglected, and understanding between peoples has been impaired.

By way of example, Hong Kong's trade volume, although four times greater than its gross domestic product, is serviced by less than twenty-five percent of its domestic economic activity. Moreover, only three percent of all Hong Kongers claim the English language as their usual language. Nevertheless, all of Hong Kong citizens are required to spend anywhere from nine to 15 years in pursuit of the English language. With China and all of East Asia as its nearest neighbors, this pursuit is a tremendous waste in time, effort, and human resources.

The obvious solution to this problem is to remove the artificial demand for the English language created by national governments and the language's global proponents. Unfortunately, those who are in the best position to remove this excess demand and consequent oversupply of poor quality English are the least inclined to do so.