Six Years on: English Test for International Communication (ETIC)

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Abstract

This paper presents a critical evaluation of the English Test for International Communication (ETIC), a large-scale, computer-based, and criterion-referenced English language proficiency test developed by the China Language Assessment in 2016. The ETIC test battery comprises five categories: Basic, Intermediate, Advanced, Superior, and Translation, with the goal of assessing test-takers' oral and written communicative language abilities in workplace contexts. Given that a revised version of ETIC with many structural changes has been in use since 2021, and the recent growth of interest in assessing communicative language abilities, a critical review of ETIC is warranted. Drawing on Kunnan's (2018) recent model of test fairness and justice, this review primarily evaluates the usefulness and fairness of ETIC Basic, ETIC Intermediate, and ETIC Advanced. Appraisals reveal that ETIC encompasses the philosophy of fairness, justice, and usefulness in the development, administration, and scoring procedures. There is, however, room for improvement in various areas, such as establishing a test inquiry and appeal service and keeping the channels of communication open. As reviewers, we hope this article will assist language testing researchers and practitioners, teachers and students, or even potential test-takers in better understanding the unique ETIC assessment scene in China and spark more discussions about communicative language testing worldwide.

Keywords: Communicative Language Testing; English Test for International Communication; Language Testing and Assessment; Test Fairness and Justice Framework

1. Introduction

This test review aims to provide a critical evaluation of the English Test for International Communication (ETIC), a large-scale, computer-based, and criterion-referenced English language proficiency test in China. Previous large-scale tests developed in China (e.g., College English Test [CET]: Zheng & Cheng, 2008, National Matriculation English Test [NMET]: Cheng & Qi, 2009, Graduate School Entrance English Examination [GSEEE]: He, 2010, Test for English Majors [TEM]: Jin & Fan, 2011, Hanyu Shuiping Kaoshi [HSK]: Peng et al., 2020; Su & Shin, 2015) are all designed and used primarily for educational purposes, rather than for employment decision-making. Intended to address this gap, ETIC is designed as a proficiency accreditation test system by China Language Assessment (Established in September 2014 at Beijing Foreign Studies University, China Language Assessment develops

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foreign language tests for promoting foreign language education in China. For more information, please visit http://www.claonline.cn/indexpage/index.html) to evaluate test-takers' oral and written communicative language abilities in workplace contexts (China Language Assessment [CLA], 2017). To be more specific, the ETIC test battery comprises five categories: Basic (ETIC-BL), Intermediate (ETIC-IL), Advanced (ETIC-AL), Superior, and Translation, based on the different needs of international communicative activities at different levels. This test battery was first officially launched in November 2016 among 28 testing sites; by 2022, the sixth anniversary of ETIC, it had been administered to more than 100,000 test takers at 121 testing sites across China (Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press [FLTRP], n.d.). In light of the recent growth of interest in assessing communicative language abilities and ETIC's unique design in assessing the said abilities as a proficiency test, this test review seeks to evaluate the usefulness and fairness of ETIC-BL, ETIC-IL, and ETIC-AL, using Kunnan's (2018) model of test fairness and justice. As reviewers, we hope this article can help language testing researchers and practitioners, teachers and students, or even potential test-takers to better understand the unique ETIC assessment scene in China. Through that, test developers worldwide may find a venue for assessing communicative language abilities in their contexts, while emphasizing and considering their specific differences and nuances. This review also summarizes key considerations and concerns for China Language Assessment to improve the ETIC.

2. General Description of ETIC

2.1. Test Purpose

According to *The Official Guide to ETLC* (CLA, 2017), ETIC is designed to assess test-takers' communicative language abilities in workplace contexts for cultivating and improving their capabilities across the following three dimensions: international vision and cooperation, intercultural comprehension and communication, as well as problem-analyzing and problem-solving. ETIC scores are used to make decisions related to occupational training and education; namely, ETIC functions as a tool for test-takers to check their current knowledge level and plays a facilitating role in job-seeking and job-promoting processes (CLA, 2017).

2.2. Context and History

ETIC was first publicly introduced on April 16th, 2016, at a national conference centering on discussions of China's foreign language education in colleges and universities, aiming to meet the needs proposed by the Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan for the National Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China and The National Medium- and Long-Term Program for Education Reform and Development (2010 -2020) (CLA, 2017; FLTRP, 2016). Later, on September 27th, 2016, the test syllabus, sample test papers, and the registration method and process were released on the ETIC official website (For more information, please visit https://etic.claonline.cn/home). It had been six years since the first ETIC was officially launched on November 26th, 2016, at 28 testing sites in China.

The ETIC version reviewed here was put into use in the tests held on May 15th and 16th, 2021; some task types have been altered from the previous version to reflect China's

development and social changes. Nevertheless, no information detailing the modifications and validation is available.

2.3. Structure of the Test

ETIC is claimed to assess communicative language abilities in workplace contexts with both integrated and independent tasks, using both selective and constructed-response formats. Each level of ETIC is made up of an oral communication part and a written one, in computer-delivered form. The task format in ETIC-BL, ETIC-IL, and ETIC-AL is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Task Design in ETIC-BL, ETIC-IL, and ETIC-AL

	Oral Communication Part	Format	Written Communication Part	Format
ETIC-BL	Establishing contact	Constructed (Integrated)	Taking notes	Selected response format
	Extracting information	Constructed (Integrated)	Choosing headlines	Selected response format
	Leaving voicemail	Constructed (Independent)	Analyzing materials	Constructed (Integrated)
	Describing products	Constructed (Independent)	Filling out forms	Constructed (Integrated)
			Writing an email	Constructed (Integrated)
ETIC-IL	Interpreting Data	Constructed (Integrated)	Taking conference minutes	Constructed (Integrated)
	Replying a voicemail	Constructed (Integrated)	Choosing headlines	Selected response format
	Reporting information	Constructed (Integrated)	Writing a summary	Constructed (Integrated)
	Delivering a speech	Constructed (Independent)	Writing an e-mail	Constructed (Independent)
ETIC-AL	Summarizing and reporting	Constructed (Integrated)	Completing an outline	Constructed (Integrated)
	Delivering a keynote speech	Constructed (Independent)	Writing a report	Constructed (Integrated)
	Negotiating and decision making	Constructed (Integrated)	Writing a proposal	Constructed (Independent)

Note. The information is summarized from *http://etic.claonline.cn/aboutETICSyllabus*

2.3.1. Task Types of ETIC-BL. As for ETIC-BL, the 25-minute oral part consists of establishing contact, extracting information, leaving a voicemail, and describing products.

Overall, the four tasks integrate listening, speaking, and reading skills. In the establishing contact task, test takers listen to eight short conversations between speakers A and B. Following each conversation, test takers are required to reproduce speaker B's response precisely within 15 seconds, and each conversation is played once sequentially. In the extracting information task, test takers are required to speak within 15 seconds in response to five questions asked at the end of a 1.5-minute audio that is played twice. For the last two tasks, test takers are asked to leave a voicemail within 60 seconds or orally describe a given product within 90 seconds in response to the given prompts. It should be noted that each task has a 2-minute preparation period before responding.

Concerning the 65-minutes of written communication, the five tasks included in this part were taking notes, choosing headlines, analyzing materials, filling out forms, and writing an e-mail. Listening, reading, and writing skills are integrated into these tasks. The note-taking task asks test takers to fill in five blanks based on an audio of approximately 200 words long (played twice). The choosing headlines task requires test takers to select correct headlines from a list of options for each paragraph in a 300-word passage. The number of options here is greater than the number of paragraphs. The analyzing materials task requires test takers to figure out which passage of the three given ones is the source of the given key ideas or details. The filling out forms task asks test takers to fill in blanks with reference to the two reading passages; the e-mail writing task requires test takers to write a 70-word long response to a given prompt. It should also be noted that all the reading passages provided in this part are around 300 words long, and their genres focus primarily on expository texts (CLA, 2021a).

2.3.2.   Task Types of ETIC-IL. In terms of ETIC-IL, the oral communication part lasts for 23 minutes, including four tasks: interpreting data, replying to a voice message, reporting information, and delivering a speech. This section assesses integrated skills in the same way as ETIC-BL does. For interpreting data, test takers are required to read a chart for 90 seconds and then make oral responses within 15 seconds to each of the five short questions from a pre-recorded audio; for the replying to a voice message task, test takers are asked to orally response within 60 seconds with the given key points to an audio that is played with an approximately 150-word length; for the reporting information task, test takers will hear an audio of approximately 200 words once and then respond to a prompt in 90 seconds based on a given outline; for the delivering a speech, test takers are asked to make a speech within 60 seconds in response to the given topic and related points. It should be noted that preparation time is offered for the latter three tasks before responding. Basically, the preparation time lasts for 60 seconds, 90 seconds, and 90 seconds, respectively.

Regarding the 87 minutes of written communication part, four integrated tasks are designed: taking conference minutes, choosing headlines, writing a summary, and writing an e-mail. In the taking conference minutes task, test takers are required to fill in an outline after two talks that are played twice and are approximately 300 words long each. The choosing headlines task is the same as the ETIC-BL, but the passage length is extended to 500 words. In writing a summary task, test takers are required to write a summary of 150 words based on a given reading passage of around 500 words; and in writing an e-mail task, test takers are asked

to write an e-mail of 150 words in response to a given e-mail of around 80 words. The genres of the reading passage are primarily expository and argumentative (CLA, 2021b).

2.3.3. Task Types of ETIC-AL. The 20-minute oral section of ETIC-AL comprises three tasks: summarizing and reporting, delivering a keynote speech, and negotiating and decision-making. For summarizing and reporting, test takers are required to make an oral summary within 90 seconds of an audio of around 300 words (played once). For delivering a keynote speech, test takers are asked to make a speech of around 70 seconds in response to a given topic and key ideas. As for the negotiating and decision-making task, test takers are required to make an oral response within 90 seconds to a video or an audio of approximately 2 minutes long (played once). It is worth noting that the above two tasks have another 120 seconds for test-takers to prepare prior to offering responses.

In terms of the written communication section that lasts for 80 minutes at this level, integrated skills (i.e., *reading and writing*) are assessed through the following three tasks: completing an outline, writing a report, and writing a proposal. In completing an outline task, test takers are required to complete a given outline by referring to an expository or argumentative passage of approximately 800 words long. In writing a report task, test takers are asked to write a report of 150 words to 200 words long based on a given chart, and in writing a proposal section, test takers are required to write a business proposal of around 300 words in response to given information and key points (CLA, 2021c).

To summarize, tasks designed in the ETIC test battery show diversity and emphasize assessing integrated skills. Although there is a decrease in the time allocation across levels, no technical reports or empirical studies are available to provide explanations for the said time allocation scheme or time decision. Besides, mock test and sample test is provided on the official website (see https://mokao.etic.claonline.cn/a/mock/index).

2.4.Length and Administration

The ETIC is administered by the Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press on behalf of the developer China Language Assessment. The three tests reviewed here are held biannually, on a weekend of May and November. Until May 2022, 121 testing sites have been developed across China. According to the official website, in order to ensure the administering conditions across all the testing sites are consistent, working groups are dispatched from the CLA to participate in the invigilation and preparatory work of each site (CLA, n.d.-a). Test sections and length of administration differ across the five ETIC levels. For instance, the total test time is 90 minutes for ETIC-BL, 110 minutes for ETIC-IL, and 100 minutes for ETIC-AL.

2.5.Scoring and Reporting Procedure

As a criterion-referenced and large-scale assessment, ETIC classifies proficiency ranks in each level into four categories: fail, pass, pass with merit, and pass with distinction. In order to be certified, participants should perform above the cut-off point set at each level for both the oral and written communication parts. Those who only gained a pass in one part will not receive a certificate, and the passing score of one part will not be carried over to the next exam if they

retake it. The total score and corresponding cut-off score also vary across different levels (see details in Table 2).

In terms of scoring, two approaches are utilized. For those selected-response format items, such as the fill-in blanks and matching tasks in the Basic level, computer-automated scoring is adopted. For the limited-production and extended-production tasks, such as the "Interpreting Data" task in the Intermediate level and the "Negotiating and Decision-making" task in the Advanced level, test-takers' performance is evaluated by two raters independently (Luo & Han, 2018). The whole rating process is finished in a secure grading system on the computer. Prior to the grading, sample responses are selected based on the analytic rubrics, and there is a training session using the sample responses. During the grading process, if there is a rating discrepancy between the two raters, the grading system will automatically forward the response to a third rater, who often acts as the group leader, for further checking and rating. If the discrepancy still exists, the scoring arbitration group will join the discussion. However, no additional information about the discrepancy is available. Basically, the score that each participant receives is the average score given by two graders. The final-reported score and level are also calculated and awarded based on the weighted average score of the individual oral and written part. Each of them has a weight of 50% (Luo & Han, 2018).

Table 2

Scores and Their Corresponding Certificate Across Three ETIC Levels

Certificate	Level		
	ETIC - BL	ETIC - IL	ETIC -AL
Pass with Distinction [b]	190 – 220[a]	230 – 260	270 – 300
Pass with Merit [b]	160 – 189	200 – 229	240 – 269
Pass	140 – 159	180 – 199	220 – 239
Fail	below 140	below 180	below 220

Note. The above information is summarized from *An Official Guide to ETIC (2017)*.
[a] The highest score in the section of "Pass with Distinction" is the total score of the corresponding level.
[b] 'Pass with Distinction' and 'Pass with Merit' are equal to 'Excellent' and 'Very good'.

The general grading rule is correct or wrong for the selected response format items and those limited production response format items. In addition, China Language Assessment (2017) developed two analytic rubrics respectively for evaluating the extended production tasks in the oral and written parts. In grading oral extended production tasks, the two raters evaluate test-takers' performance on two key dimensions, namely, CONTENT and PRONUNCIATION. Specifically speaking, the criteria of the content part mainly consider the relevancy between content and the given topic, task requirements, logic, and explanation. Fluency, vocabulary and grammar, sentence patterns, manners, and accuracy are all highlighted in the pronunciation features. Likewise, the written part is evaluated by two raters across three dimensions: CONTENT, STRUCTURE, and LANGUAGE. In terms of content, the relevancy between content and the given topic, task requirements, explanation, and details are all involved. The main concerns for the structure section are logic, cohesion and coherence,

fluency, and format. For the language dimension, raters should evaluate test-takers' responses across the following aspects: accuracy of vocabulary and grammar, the complexity of sentence patterns, and lexical resource (CLA, 2017).

2.6. Price

The test registration and payment of registration fees can be completed on the official website. The current registration fee varies for different levels, and the basic fee scheme is listed as follows: a) 180 RMB ($28) for the ETIC Basic level; b) 380 RMB ($59) for the ETIC Intermediate level; and c) 580 RMB ($90) for the ETIC Advanced level. At the time of writing, the exchange rate of US dollar VS. RMB was roughly 1:6.5. It should also be noted that scholarships will be awarded to students who pass any level with distinction, and the amount of scholarship is the registration fee corresponding to the level passed.

2.7. Author/Publisher and Contact Information

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3. Appraisal of the ETIC

The following appraisal of the ETIC largely draws on Kunnan's (2018) recent framework of test fairness and justice, which not only serves as "a worthwhile addition to the ethical debate in language testing and to ethical professional practice" (Inbar-Lourie, 2021, p.203), but also involves "relevant discussion of test quality and test usefulness" (Zhao & Liu, 2019, p. 620). As noted by Purpura (2018), Kunnan's (2018) considerations of fairness and justice in language assessment also provide a solid evidentiary foundation for the selection and principled uses of assessments.

The *Principle of Fairness*, in particular, advocates concerns about opportunities to prepare and learn the relevant resources before taking the tests, reliability and validity, the absence of bias, and appropriate access and administration. Additionally, the *Principle of Justice* encompasses discussions that a test should have positive impacts on the community and society, as well as advance justice through public justification. In this review, thus, the appraisal of the ETIC will be conducted from the perspectives of (1) opportunity-to-learn, (2) consistency and meaningfulness, (3) absence of bias, (4) access and administration, and (5) washback and consequences.

3.1. Claim 1: Prior to taking the ETIC, adequate opportunity, time for preparation, and practice with technology and experience are provided.

The availability of learning resources that test-takers can use to learn the content or skills to be assessed prior to taking the test is referred to as the opportunity-to-learn (Kunnan, 2018). Resources about ETIC are accessible to the general public on its official website, official guide, and official WeChat account. Documents for the test preparation comprise the following: the *Official Guide to ETIC*, which contains test syllabuses, sample test papers with

answers, and grading criteria at different proficiency levels; the official website, which provides informative animations, free online level-specific courses, and a mock test system with 21 test papers for the sake of practicing and familiarizing; and the level-specific products published by Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, which consists of exam preparations guide, the collection of simulated questions, and relevant textbooks (e.g., *Going Global*). Due to the fact that most resources related to ETIC can be accessed by the general public at any time, it is persuasive to argue that ETIC provides test-takers with adequate opportunities to learn knowledge to be assessed and to prepare for test-taking.

Adequate time for preparation is another concern before taking the test. For example, in 2021, the ETIC registration period runs from January 25th to April 12th, with the test period taking place on May 15th and 16th. After calculation, we discover that the preparation time for ETIC ranges from 32 to 121 days. In this case, it is convincing that the ETIC has provided sufficient time for test-takers to prepare before taking the exam. Additionally, prior to taking the test, test takers can gain familiarity with using the test system. For one thing, the mock system on the official website (https://mokao.etic.claonline.cn/a/mock/index) offers test-takers direct access to the test formats and system; for another, the computer tutorial attached to the *Official Guide to ETIC* elaborately introduces the test system's registration and operation procedures.

Some may argue, however, that the information concerning the test syllabi and exam preparations guide is primarily presented in Chinese. This may cast doubt on the claim that ETIC is open to all interested test takers, regardless of nationality (CLA, n.d.-b). To some extent, these materials in Chinese only have restricted access to the test for those learning Chinese as a second/foreign language with low proficiency. Besides, the English instructions printed on the test paper may be challenging to some low-proficiency test takers. According to our analysis of the test instructions provided in the sample test paper 2021, the Coh-Metrix L2 readability concerning the instructions of the ETIC-AL to ETIC-BL varies from 9.263 to 16.438. It is also worth noting that the ETIC-IL (16.438) has a higher L2 readability than the ETIC-BL (14.860). Roughly speaking, the instructions at the aforementioned levels may be mostly suitable for test-takers at college and graduate schools. Although we understand that the test developer may attempt to adopt the level-specific instructions, this still violates the rule that the instructions should not be used to assess test-takers (Bachman & Palmer, 1996).

3.2. Claim 2: ETIC is fair to test-takers in terms of consistency, test contents, tasks, and constructs.

As stated previously, the ETIC develops a relatively comprehensive scoring procedure to ensure the consistency of test scores. Computer-automated scoring is used for selected-response format items, such as fill-in blanks in ETIC-BL; while for limited-production and extended-production tasks, such as the proposal writing in ETIC-AL, performance is evaluated independently by two raters (Luo & Han, 2018). If there is a discrepancy between the two raters, the system will automatically forward the response to a third rater. Furthermore, all raters must attend a training session prior to the actual grading in which some propositional staff may be involved (Luo & Han, 2018). To some extent, such arrangements help provide reliable results for making meaningful interpretations of test performance. There is, however,

no additional evidence introducing the rater recruitment process or the task distribution rules. Meanwhile, it is difficult to make a definitive judgment about the overall reliability of the test due to a lack of empirical research evidence and technical reports. Such practice is unacceptable; test developers, actually, must demonstrate that the test they developed is reliable, and make their technical reports widely available.

What is more, the vague descriptors in the rubrics may call into question the reliability and validity of ETIC. In the rubric for ETIC- IL oral communication section, for instance, there are ambiguous descriptors such as "fully completed" and "completed," as well as "very rare verbal errors" and "rare verbal errors" (CLA, 2021b). In this regard, both test-takers and raters may struggle to clearly understand the extent of completeness and the number of errors that can be labeled as 'very rare' or 'rare.' Similar examples can also be found on the written communication rubrics for different levels. For example, the 'language' dimension in the written communication of the ETIC-AL ("diversified syntax patterns" and "relatively diversified syntax patterns") are bewildering. In fact, these vague descriptors will undoubtedly impact reliability and validity. Besides, there are no interpretations of the weight of each dimension in the entire rubric. There are also no explanations regarding how the final scores are determined when two or more dimensions are involved in the rubrics. Thus, it is still unclear how raters will interpret and give scores in actual scoring procedures, although they claim to have attended rigorous training sessions.

Published validation studies, however, are difficult to come by, with the exception of Dong (2020). Interestingly, Dong only compared the ETIC-IL sample reading tests to the Australian Occupation English Test, arguing that ETIC-IL should expand on its genre and reading texts, and diversify its test formats and questions (Dong, 2020). In this case, this study cannot be construed as justification for the ETIC's validity. In addition, there are no empirical studies, at least publicly available ones, to support that the test contents, tasks, and constructs are in accordance with the test syllabi and that there are no construct-underrepresentation and construct-irrelevances between the test paper and the test syllabi. It is thus demanding for the test developers to conduct more validation studies on the ETIC test battery.

3.3. Claim 3: ETIC is free of bias in terms of dialect, content, or topic across test-taker groups and differential performance by different test-taker groups of similar ability.

In general, bias can be detected by examining the test itself or analyzing test performance data. Nonetheless, due to limited access to performance data and a limited number of published ETIC studies and technical reports, it is difficult to draw a conclusion about the absence of bias in ETIC. Indeed, the ETIC test battery, to some degree, is free of bias in terms of dialect, content, or topic. For instance, the dialect used in the instructions or test materials remains consistent across different levels in the oral communication part. However, no further evidence introducing the rating influences of test-takers' dialect in their responses is available, despite the fact that the rubric excludes the 'pronunciation' dimension from considerations. Furthermore, the content or topics are all relevant to business topics or the common topics in workplace contexts, such as "product descriptions" in ETIC-BL and "negotiation" in ETIC-AL. As the majority of test-takers are Chinese, cultural or political bias is no longer a major concern.

Another source of concern is the inclusion of foreign experts on the test committee. The test committee includes three renowned foreign language testing experts: Charles Alderson, Liz Hamp-Lyons, and Lyle Bachman. Since the rest of the committees are all Chinese experts, it is argued that the tasks may be biased towards test takers from a similar background, as evidenced by the claim that ETIC is open to all interested test-takers regardless of their nationalities (CLA, n.d.-b). However, it is also possible to rebut that the introduction of foreign experts can reduce the aforementioned bias to some extent. Besides, Luo and Han (2018) point out that the ETIC research team consists of scholars and professionals from various fields. Notwithstanding, no detailed information regarding the people involved in the research and development center is accessible to the general public. Therefore, more publicly accessible research should be released to investigate the claimed "diversity" of stakeholders involved, as well as its potential influences on bias towards test design, development, administration, and scoring procedures. Likewise, analyzing test performance data from test takers of different backgrounds or attributes, particularly DIF studies, can be expected to identify biased items or tasks, assisting in removing construct-irrelevant barriers that may interfere with other test-taker groups of similar ability (Kunnan, 2018; Amirian et al., 2020).

3.4.Claim 4: ETIC offers proper access, administration, and accommodation to all test takers.

Kunnan (2004) divides test access into five categories: financial, educational, geographical, personal, and equipment access. Regarding educational access, the aforementioned arguments in the opportunity-to-learn section have revealed that the majority of test-takers have access to learning information and resources for test preparations. In terms of financial access, the registration fee varying from 180 RMB to 580 RMB has been maintained since 2016. Though such a fee is rather reasonably priced for test takers, no relevant report on this price decision is available to the public. The reviewers, thus, cannot confidently conclude that the ETIC is actually financially available to all the potential test-takers from various financial backgrounds.

Regarding geographical access, although the ETIC has established 89 testing centers across China, it is still not as easily accessible as CET and TEM. In this sense, except for the abovementioned registration fee, some potential test-takers may need to pay an additional fee (e.g., airfare and hotel fee) to attend the test. For instance, there are no testing sites in the Tibet Autonomous Region. In this case, all potential test-takers here need to travel to the Xinjiang Autonomous Region or Sichuan Province. As a result, such limited geographical access, to some extent, may pose challenges to potential test-takers from relatively less affluent families. It should also be noted that traveling could have negative affective influences on the test-takers, such as fatigue and unfamiliarity with the environment. Personal access, on the other hand, is not offered. The *Official Guide to ETIC* and the official website reveal no accommodation information, let alone accommodation services for potential test-takers who may have special test-taking requirements.

Furthermore, there is little information available about the administrative procedures. First, the ETIC administration adheres to a top-down structure in order to ensure consistency and security. The CLA is in charge of the test development and design. The FLTRP is responsible for administrative affairs. Each year, the FLTRP will send relevant employees to

each testing site, where these employees will act as invigilators and technical consultants. Second, detailed administration procedures are not available to the general public. What the general public can obtain concerning the administrative information is provided in the mock test system, including only the full test name, test introduction, and warm reminders. Although the test invigilators may have received training on administration issues, no such information is available for public reference and use. Third, from the test taker's perspective, the computer-delivered ETIC necessitates a high level of familiarity with the computer keyboard. In addition, the quality of the keyboards and computers varies by testing site. Hence, it is necessary for the ETIC test developers to conduct relevant empirical studies to reveal the effects of these construct-irrelevant factors on test performance.

3.5. Claim 5: ETIC is beneficial to the immediate and wide stakeholders, community, and society, and the decision-making of ETIC advances justice.

As a proficiency exam of communicative language abilities in workplace contexts, the most relevant washback of the ETIC is on teaching, learning, and job-seeking. Li and Li (2019), for instance, conducted a washback study among 432 participants (including 82 students who took the ETIC-BL, 275 students without taking the test, and 75 university English teachers) and discovered that the ETIC test could promote students' professional development at tertiary institutions, and facilitates the reform of College English education in terms of teaching methods and contents. The said findings may imply that the ETIC could have a positive washback on teaching and learning.

Besides, the CLA has collaborated with universities and colleges, such as the North China Electric Power University (Baoding) and the Yangtze University, to design and provide specific curricula and textbooks (FLTRP, 2020). Teachers may inform teaching and adjust teaching goals and methods accordingly by encouraging students to attend the ETIC; students can adjust their learning strategies based on test results and give full play to their initiative in English learning. In terms of impacts on job-seeking, the ETIC has formed partnerships with over 500 enterprises to provide accelerated entry for the ETIC certificate holders. In addition, the development of ETIC has provided appropriate channels for related and interested enterprises to assess their employees' English levels in workplace contexts. Such evidence suggests that the ETIC can provide all potential test-takers with opportunities to succeed. Furthermore, the CLA and ETIC call for more exams, teaching, and learning centered on communicative language abilities rather than the traditional grammar-translation methodology and linguistic-knowledge-focused approaches.

Ultimately, the results of the ETIC are published on the official website about 50 working days after each administration. In general, each candidate will receive an electronic score report detailing their oral and written communication performance. If the test taker meets the cut-off scores, an electronic certificate indicating the certified level and rank is issued. Additionally, the printed certificate is available upon request, charging for the 30 RMB administration fee. However, no information detailing the test results inquiry and appealing services is available to the candidates. Such unavailability itself, to some extent, indicates that the ETIC test developer does not fully take test-takers' concerns into consideration when

designing the test. It should also be noted that the CLA's advocacy concerning fairness and justice through public justification and reasoning requires further evidence.

4. Summary

In sum, this review demonstrates that the ETIC test developers have incorporated the philosophy of fairness, justice, and test usefulness into consideration while designing, developing, and administering the test. Besides, a bonus system (*Guocai Scholarship*) is being developed to attract and motivate all potential test takers. Test-takers who receive distinctions at the corresponding ETIC level are eligible for a registration fee refund. Nevertheless, it would be helpful for the reviewers and other stakeholders to make a comprehensive evaluation of the test if more empirical studies and technical reports are publicly released.

Looking forward, however, there are some areas where the current testing system can make further improvements. To begin with, providing sub-scores for each task would be preferable. Currently, the performance data on the two general parts cannot help test-takers precisely locate their weaknesses and strengths in their English communicative language abilities in workplace contexts. The total score on each section prevents candidates from understanding where they should put more effort. Second, it would be more meaningful if the test developers could conduct relevant studies and publish important documents from various stakeholders' perspectives in terms of the following: (a) publish test preparation materials (e.g., the official guide) in English so that non-Chinese speakers can access the test; (b) rewrite the instructions in a straightforward and simplistic way and expand the differentiation across levels; (c) conduct consistency and validation studies from the perspectives of test-takers, raters, and rubrics; (d) disclose the detailed formulation of community and its impacts on the bias; (e) perform test performance data analysis, especially the DIF studies; (f) provide accommodation service to those test-takers who have special needs; and (g) make the standardized administrative procedures public. Third, the ETIC developers should establish a test results inquiry and appeal service for the sake of maintaining test-takers interests and promoting fairness and justice through public justification and reasoning. Last but most important, test developers should keep the channels of communication open. The reviewers do, in fact, have attempted many times to contact the test developers and relevant committee members. However, all of these attempts have failed. As Jin and Fan (2011) argued, test developers should publicly make associated research findings and test-related information available to all potential stakeholders. Thus, it is imperative that the test developers could "promote and enhance the integrity of their profession by fostering a sense of trust and mutual responsibility among colleagues. In the event of differences of opinion, viewpoints should be expressed with candor and respect rather than by mutual denigration" (International Language Testing Association, 2018).

As a proficiency test examining communicative language abilities in workplace contexts, ETIC differs from many large-scale and high-stakes assessments currently in use across China and worldwide (e.g., Japanese-Language Proficiency Test [JLPT]: Nishizawa et al., 2022, The Test of English for International Communication [TOEIC]: Im & Cheng, 2019). Although most of these exams claim to use integrated tasks to engage test-takers in authentic and multimodal activities, none have addressed communicative language abilities as ETIC

does. Drawing on our years' experience of taking different English tests as test-takers, we can say that most English tests in China continue to assess separate reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. However, researchers have already pointed out that assessing integrated skills should "become an important feature of language assessment in the 21st century" (Jin & Fan, 2011, p, 595). Indeed, the ETIC reviewed here resonates with the current trend within the language testing field. Though ETIC, a relative newcomer, has only existed for six years, it has expanded possibilities and chances for language testers, test takers, and other stakeholders to observe the significance of assessing communicative language abilities in China. We hope our review of the ETIC test battery here will reveal the unique Chinese test scenery to the rest of the world and spark more discussions about the development of exams assessing communicative language abilities worldwide. It will be interesting to see the adaptation and innovation of various exams to evaluate communicative language abilities across contexts, thus developing *context-and test-taker-specific, localized exams* from the current ETIC representation of testing communicative language abilities.

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