

# ERC Seminar Series

## College English Test (CET) in China – Challenges and Reforms

Date & Time: 18 March 2016, 13:00 – 14:00 (Light lunch begins at 12:30pm)

Venue: Room G021, Tin Ka Ping Lecture Hall, Faculty of Education (E33)

Language: English

Audience: UM Staff / Postgraduate Students

Registration: [https://umac.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_1RZhpLJ8Is8j5J3](https://umac.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1RZhpLJ8Is8j5J3)

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\* Complementary light lunch will be provided.



### Abstract

In this presentation, I will discuss the challenges facing a large-scale English language test in China and the reforms to respond to the challenges. I will begin with an overview of English language education and assessment in China, with a special focus on the College English Test (CET), a test with the largest number of test takers in the world. I will then identify and discuss the major challenges facing this locally developed English language test from the perspectives of test validity and ethical concerns. The challenge to the validity of the test comes from construct under-representation or construct-irrelevant variance (Messick, 1989). One typical example of the former is the widespread adoption of target language norms, or native speaker norms. The latter, construct irrelevant variance, is of particular relevance to computer-based testing, which is becoming increasingly popular with providers of large-scale tests in China. The other major challenge relates to test fairness and ethical test use. This social dimension of language testing represents an even greater challenge than test validity (McNamara & Roever, 2006). In other words, English language testing in China needs to go beyond the cognitive and psychological models and explore a model that encompasses a clear social dimension (Yang & Gui, 2007). I will conclude with a discussion of the CET Committee's efforts to enhance the validity and fairness of the test and encourage ethical test use.



### Speaker



Prof Yan JIN is a professor of Linguistics and Applied Linguistics at the School of Foreign Languages, Shanghai Jiao Tong University. Since 1991, she has been involved in the design and development of the College English Test, which has a current annual test population of over 18 million and is the largest test of English as a foreign language in the world. She has been Chair of the National College English Testing Committee since 2004 and Deputy Chair of the National College Foreign Languages Teaching Steering Committee since 2012. She is also co-vice president of the Asian Association for Language Assessment and co-editor-in-chief of the Springer open-access journal Language Testing in Asia. She has been involved in many research projects related to test design and development and has published many articles in academic journals. She is on the editorial board of international journals such as Language Testing, Classroom Discourse, and Chinese journals such as Foreign Language Testing and Teaching, Foreign Languages in China, Foreign Language World, Foreign Language Education in China, Contemporary Foreign Languages Studies, etc.