



The E3PT: Innovation for Turbulent Times

Through innovation in English testing admissions staff can become more confident in applicant English assessment scores, improve the applicant experience, and increase the number and diversity of international applicants, even as competition for international students increases¹.

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Introduction

Admissions offices need increased confidence in English assessment tools to ensure that international applicants are prepared to succeed in their academic program and to function effectively on a day-to-day basis². To provide increased confidence, English3 has developed the English3 Proficiency Test (E3PT), a valid³, reliable⁴, and academically authentic⁵ online English test utilizing patent-pending video technology.

The E3PT is an accurate, affordable, and accessible option that delivers confidence⁶ to admissions offices and convenience to applicants. This white paper describes the research and development of technologies used in the E3PT, the scoring and security of the test, and how the test benefits admissions staff and international applicants. Subsequent white papers will address academic development and research pertaining to test structure, questions types, prompt creation, rubric alignment, and rater certification.

Improving Testing Through Technology

English3 uses proprietary online and interactive video tools to simulate the academic scenarios in which the applicant will be placed. These tools include Asynchronous Video Technology (AVT) and Timed Review Technology (TRT).

Asynchronous Video Technology (AVT)

The educational use of computer-based asynchronous video technology was pioneered by Dr. Michael Griffiths at Brigham Young University to bring the positive aspects of in-person classroom interaction and assessment to asynchronous online education⁸.

In the pilot class using asynchronous video, students reported that they knew their online teacher better than their on-campus face-to-face teachers⁹. The teacher reported that he was able to have a personal interaction with every student and was able to better assess individual ability and to understand each student's unique needs¹⁰. The principles underlying asynchronous video for evaluation and feedback continued to develop through pilot classes and studies. As a result, Dr Griffiths led creation of the Asynchronous Video Learning Model (AVLM), which became the core model for the online learning program at BYU-Hawaii, which serves students in more than 50 countries¹¹.

In 2012, Dr. Griffiths began collaborating with English3 to incorporate the AVLM into English Language Learning and English Language Assessment and Evaluation products.

Using the AVLM, English3 was able to achieve a high degree of success by employing a method requiring large amounts of authentic language production by students, thereby providing teachers a better tool with which to assess actual language ability. With the AVLM, students submitted videos of themselves producing language that could be easily assessed.

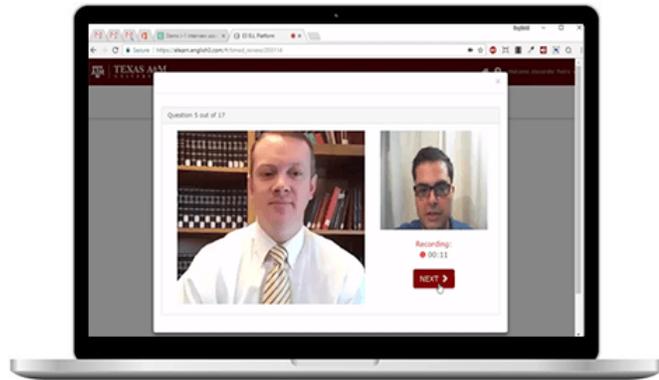
Timed Review Technology (TRT)

The AVL M did not incorporate the ability to assess real-time (immediate) ability to produce language under the pressure of real-life situations, such as answering questions as part of a face-to-face discussion

To address this shortcoming of AVL M Dr. Griffiths and Matthew Heiner of English3 developed the use of an automated experience to simulate a real-time conversation. This new use of asynchronous video became known as Timed Review Technology (TRT).

TRT simulates group conversations or classroom discussions by recording the test-taker through a webcam while they respond to video prompts displayed on their computer screen. At the end of each prompt, the webcam records the test-taker's response. The result is a video that seamlessly combines prompts and responses to effectively simulate real-time conversation, allowing English3 to create highly authentic and reliable language assessments.

English3 continued to develop AVL M and TRT into more comprehensive language assessment tools, initially used to assess students in English3's online ESL courses. These methods were refined and adapted for specific use cases including the E3J1 English Interview¹² for J-visa applicants² and the E3PT as a comprehensive assessment of English ability for use in admissions.



Both the E3J1 Interview and the E3PT result in videos that show students performing various communication activities in English, including many TRT activities reviewed, assessed, and scored by English language evaluators. Aggregated scores, along with scores of specific components of applicants' English communication ability (reading, writing, listening and speaking) are available for institutions to conveniently access and review on the English3 dashboard. Many institutions also find it useful to view actual videos and writings of students evaluated for admission.

Scoring and Security

To maintain consistency and reliability in evaluation, each section is evaluated in accordance with detailed rubrics. Each rubric evaluates applicants' ability to function in authentic situations. Within each rubric, fluency, task completion, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation are considered to create a summative assessment score. Accent does not affect the applicant score.

The entirety of the test is proctored remotely by trained and certified human raters. Video recordings allow raters to see student expressions and give transparency to the applicant's English ability. Raters are continually evaluated against scoring standards and benchmarked against those standards to ensure inter-rater consistency. Rater scores are

also compared with automated scores as an additional quality control mechanism. If concerns arise, a senior rater serves as a scoring arbiter.

English3 is continually improving biometric technology used to ensure test-taker identity. In addition to remote proctoring, robust facial recognition protects the integrity of the E3PT by comparing test-taker photo ID and a pre-test setup photo, to test-taker videos. Facial recognition software also compares test-taker identity against previous test-takers, preventing individuals from taking the E3PT multiple times under different identities.

Admissions Offices Love the E3PT

The E3PT provides admissions staff the confidence they need to make admissions decisions through a holistic view of applicant English proficiency. In addition to providing scores, including subscores, the E3PT dashboard allows staff to see applicants' video responses and to view applicant persuasive and expository essays (the 'evidence' of English proficiency). Applicants can be seen responding to interview-style questions, reading and discussing academic passages, and participating in classroom or group discussions.

The screenshot shows the English3 Proficiency Exam dashboard. On the left, there is a search bar and a table of applicants. The main area displays the profile for Gabriel Cruz de Oliveira, including his date (Mar 12, 2018), email (gco.seguro@gmail.com), and buttons for 'View ID', 'View Report', and 'Forward Results'. Below this, a table shows his scores: Overall Score (77.5), Speaking (21.5), Reading (19.5), Listening (21.2), and Writing (15.3). At the bottom, there is a section for 'Applicant Submissions' with columns for Speaking, Reading, Listening, and Writing, listing activities like 'Activity 1', 'Activity 2', 'Activity 3', 'Class Discussions', and 'Group Discussion'.

Administrator testimonials:

“The E3PT removes the requirement that applicants have access to a proctored testing center. In doing so, it creates options for potential students and allows for a more diverse pool of students to study at BYU. In addition, the incidence of cheating or misrepresenting English proficiency is much lower. The E3PT gives us an accurate view of applicant English ability.”

Logan Gillette, Director of Graduate Admissions, Brigham Young University

“We require the E3PT for all of our scholars. We opted not to use TOEFL or IELTS, primarily due to the huge problem with test cheating on these exams. The TOEFL and the IELTS are also considerably more expensive. The E3PT provides a real snapshot of what

applicants can do and is actually an easier test than the TOEFL if the applicant knows how to speak English well. International students/scholars tend to struggle with the E3PT when they focus their training on parts of speech, grammar, vocabulary, and other things that might help them pass a TOEFL-type test. [The E3PT] is designed to determine performance in an academic environment.”

Brenda Campbell, Program Administrator, Western University of Health Sciences

Improving the Process for Applicants

For applicants, the barriers to international study begin long before they arrive on campus. Of the many challenges international applicants face, meeting the English proficiency requirements is often one of the most expensive, time consuming, and inconvenient. Completing a traditional English test often means paying unreasonably high test fees, reserving a seat in a testing center a month or more in advance, paying hundreds or even thousands for test prep materials, traveling to the testing center, and completing the test in a group environment that is often loud and distracting.

The E3PT addresses all these challenges by offering an affordable test that can be taken at a time and place convenient for the test-taker. Eliminating these challenges and providing a more natural and academically authentic testing experience result in applicants being more relaxed and able to accurately show their English ability.

Applicant testimonials:

I considered taking TOEFL, but it is only offered at limited locations and times. TOEFL is also does not evaluate one's actual English ability. E3PT is also preferred because I can take it in my private room so that I do not get bothered by others speaking while I am reading.

Ren Nishimura, Japan, Applying to The University of Utah

“I just finished with the test and it was amazing. Most of the people here don't know about the E3PT. Looking at how convenient the E3PT is, I would like to talk to people [about choosing] the E3PT instead of the TOEFL, which puts much stress on the individual. [The E3PT] Is the best online test I have ever come across.”

Phillip Nartey, Ghana, Applying to Texas A&M, TEEX Engineering School

“I don't know exactly what to write to accentuate my gratitude for this very fast evaluation of my exam, I am literally speechless because I never imagined that an English test's turnaround time could be this quick.”



David Akinbo, Nigeria, Applying to MPA program at Brigham Young University

"I would recommend it for all international students. It helps people see basic conversation used in US universities. You can improve your English with this [test]."

Francine Kasongo, South Africa, Applying to Brigham Young University

"I chose the E3PT because it was the most affordable and the most accessible for me. It was a great test experience."

Philippe Zonou, Mali, Applying to Cedarville University

Conclusion

Evaluating English proficiency in a reliable, affordable and convenient way is increasingly important for institutions competing for international students. As competition for international students increases among domestic and international institutions, even small advantages are magnified in importance.

By accepting the E3PT test scores admissions staff can become more confident in applicant English assessment scores, improve the applicant experience, and increase the number and diversity of international applicants, even as competition for international students increases.

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