



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
MELBOURNE

Seminar Series  
School of Languages & Linguistics

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## Technology and automation in language testing

**Prof. John de Jong**  
**VU University Amsterdam**

Technology is drastically changing the way people learn language and the way that learning is assessed. Today, people turn to the Internet – often on handheld devices – to access information. Search engines and keyword phrases have entered into daily uses. As such, it is crucially important that this new reliance on technology is considered when assessing language skills.

Technology now allows us to make the assessment of a range of aspects such as grammar usage, fluency and pronunciation on a single test taker's response truly independent. It also allows us to time response to different language stimuli. We can measure how long it takes to compose a sentence, either written or verbal, or how quickly a fluent speaker can understand and register spoken communication. Finally, we can use automated, or machine, scoring to improve the objectivity of item rating.

I will discuss the various ways in which technology is influencing language assessment and provide insights into ways that technology can be leveraged to provide the most accurate assessment model possible. I devote particular attention to automated scoring of speaking and writing skills and will argue that proper use of technology can allow for the use of realistic language tasks in assessment of language competencies thereby resulting in beneficial backwash. Claims will be supported by research findings using datasets from representative samples of subjects with a range of language backgrounds.

Time:	<b>4:00 to 5:30pm</b>
Date:	<b>Wednesday 16 September 2009</b>
Location:	<b>Room 605, Arts Centre, University of Melbourne</b>