

Plenary Presentation by Dr. Tim McNamara

Challenges in the Performance Assessment of Speaking at Advanced Levels

Wednesday, November 4th, 3:30 – 5:00pm

Location: Margaret Morrison A14

As competence in the spoken language becomes a more and more central goal in language learning, more attention is being paid to the assessment of spoken language, particularly at advanced levels. This talk will consider how we may conceptualize the issues involved. It will offer a critique of views of assessment which see it as involving the recognition of objective features of performance corresponding to features specified in criteria, and suggest that on the contrary assessment is necessarily an interpretative activity. It will also examine what is at stake in the design of assessment tasks involving one or more students interacting. Challenges to orthodox views of performance assessment from advances in technology will also be considered.



Tim McNamara is Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Melbourne. Building on a career as an EFL/ESL teacher and teacher trainer in Australia and the United Kingdom, Tim has taught Applied Linguistics at Melbourne since 1987. His research interests are in language testing, language and identity, language teaching, languages for specific purposes and the history of applied linguistics. Tim's language testing research has focused on performance assessment, theories of validity, the use of Rasch models, and the social and political meaning of language tests.