



OXFORD UNIVERSITY CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT

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Too cool for CATs? Participation, Stance and Affect in the PIAAC assessment

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Abstract: This paper examines the role of participation, stance and affect on the performance of adults in the computer administered PIAAC assessment (the OECD Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies) in Slovenia. The paper is based on video recorded, ethnographic observations of real-life testing situations. The discussion of testing situations, and the role of Participation, Stance and Affect draws from ethnographic studies of assessment, and on theories of Linguistic Anthropology and Conversation Analysis.

The paper discusses how test-taker responses are shaped by their orientation to, and participation in the testing situation. This includes responses to the test and test items, and interaction with the tester and computer (including interfaces the underlying CAT multi-stage adaptive design). Respondent *stance* is examined as the cognitive-affective orientation of respondents to the testing situation as a distinctive form of social occasion with significant interactive, temporal and spatial dimensions. The paper considers the idea that test performance is the result of rational and intentional responses to the testing situation – and to the underlying CAT. Poor test performance may therefore be a feature of subtle forms of resistance (i.e. as rational choice) rather than an indicator of a generalised lack of resilience. The paper concludes by considering the implications of these findings for CAT design and the theory of testing situations.

Dr Bryan Maddox is a senior lecturer in education and development at the School of International Development, University of East Anglia. He is a director of the Laboratory of International Assessment Studies www.international-assessments.org. His inter-disciplinary research applies ethnographic methods to develop small-scale insights into large-scale assessment data, and combines ethnographic and psychometric analysis.

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