

EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICE: Validating tools for use with those from a different cultural background (CNIN MARCH 2010)



Australia is a multicultural country. Nearly a quarter of the population was born overseas. Many others born in Australia identify with different ethnic or cultural groups. Around 15% of homes speak a language other than English at home. The most commonly spoken languages in Australia are English, Italian, Greek, Cantonese, Arabic, Mandarin and Vietnamese.

Assessment tools, performance scales and outcome measures are important in providing health care. Therefore tools are needed that can be used with populations from different cultures and with people who do not speak English.

Issues in translating and validating tools

The development of appropriate tools to be used with CALD populations does not involve simply the translation of English language versions to another language. Instruments also need to be assessed for reliability, validity and other psychometric properties.

There is no gold standard of translation techniques in international research. The main difficulty is ensuring that the content in the translated version is equivalent to the original language. Some phrases, words or concepts may not be easily understood in other languages and cultures. For example [Lotrakul, Sumrithe and Saipanish 2008](#) noted that finding 'feeling down', 'fidgety' and 'restless' were difficult to translate into Thai. Forward translation of the scale, back-translation and community review are some of the approaches that have been used.

Reliability and validity are important in establishing the worth of a tool. Reliability indicates that something can be measured consistently while validity indicates that the thing being measured is what is meant to be measured. When translating tools for another language and culture, researchers should ensure that the reliability and validity are not affected.

[Pickering et al \(2009\)](#) provide an example of a study to determine the reliability of the translation of a pain behavioural scale (Dolopus) into five languages.

Finding out more

[Validating research instruments](#)

[British Pain Society: Pain scales in multiple languages](#)