

Translating & Adapting Examinations

Question: *What issues should be considered when translating or adapting an examination?*

Answer: Several critical public health and safety issues should be considered in any circumstance for which translating or adapting an examination from one language to another is proposed. While care must be taken in assuring the validity and comparability of the original examinations to their adapted versions, the first issues that should be addressed focus on whether it is sound public policy to offer the test in multiple languages. Under no circumstances should an examination be offered in multiple languages without proper attention to these issues.

The following issues require careful consideration in determining the feasibility and appropriateness of adapting a test into additional languages.

1. Are safety resources such as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) and product labels available to practitioners in the target language?
 - If the purpose of licensure is to protect the public, it is essential that all candidates have access to comparable MSDS, product labels and other safety information in the language(s) proposed for testing.
 - If products that are labeled in the target language are not manufactured to the same safety standards, the health of the public and practitioners may be compromised.
2. Are comparable training materials and textbooks available in the original and target languages?
 - Validation of the comparability and appropriateness of test questions in multiple languages is nearly impossible without parallel textbooks and training materials in each language. Since, there is no single dialect of most languages, the safest way to validate test content in multiple languages is to base questions on how each topic is **taught** in each language. This is nearly impossible without parallel sources in each language to support the validity of each question in each language.
3. How are target language candidates trained? In what language(s) do they receive training?
 - The best and most common argument for adapting a test into another language is that the candidates were trained and will practice in that language.
4. Are comparable health and safety resources used?
 - Are practice standards compromised in any way by training as it is delivered in the target language?

Once it is determined that it is appropriate to adapt or translate a test into another language, it is equally essential to follow standards and guidelines for adapting a test into a new language. The CLEAR Resource Brief on translating or adapting tests is a valuable resource for this purpose.