Reviewer's report

Title: Qualitative data in Mandarin: six principles to ensure rigorous analysis

Version: 1 Date: 14 February 2008

Reviewer: Sheila Twinn

Reviewer's report:

This is an interesting paper that focuses on an important topic in the methodology of qualitative research. It should make a useful contribution to the literature available to the growing number of researchers working across cultures and as such I would recommend publication. There are, however, some issues which in my view need addressing prior to publication. I have listed these below but believe they qualify within the category of minor essential revisions as they can be addressed quite easily by the authors:

1. It would be helpful to expand the background to also include some discussion about the use of software in data analysis in qualitative research. This seems an omission as the title specifically refers to rigorous analysis and the discussion includes reference to the use of software in ensuring rigour in data analysis. Alternatively perhaps the title of the paper could be changed to reflect the importance of language in determining rigour in qualitative research.

2. The methods section is very brief and it is difficult to assess how the issues identified by the authors have arisen. It would strengthen the paper to expand this section to indicate to readers how these issues have been identified and cite the publications that have been referred to rather briefly. An example is provided in table 1 where the authors identify the language problems associated with data collection. These issues appear to more about skills in interviewing rather than language but this may be due to the lack of discussion about methods used to identify the issues.

3. It would also strengthen the paper if the authors gave more details about the process of translating the extracts and direct quotes particularly as the English summaries formed the discussion about patterns in the data (see page 10).

4. Another issue that needs to be addressed is that in places the focus of the paper seems to get a little lost. There appears some ambivalence about whether the paper is about issues of rigour and language or teamwork. Although I accept it is difficult to separate out these issues it would strengthen the paper if the authors remained focused on the issues of language rather than teamwork (see page 11 for example).

More minor issues are as follows:

5. The paragraph relating to mixed methods research on page 8 seems totally out of context and it would strengthen the paper if is was omitted.
6. The authors consistently refer to the participants as respondents. This needs to be changed to either participants or informants to reflect the philosophical underpinning of qualitative research.

7. Figure 1 would be more useful if the coded segments from the transcripts were translated into English so that readers can see how the coding system is reflected in these segments and make their own judgements about the rigour of the analysis (see page 11).

8. It would be helpful to more specific in references to China by referring to it as either PRC or mainland as many of these issues are very different in Hong Kong which is of course part of China and where a lot of published research is readily available.

**What next?:** Accept after minor essential revisions

**Level of interest:** An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests