

# Methodological Issues in Qualitative Research with Minority Ethnic Research Participants

Mabel L S Lie, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University.

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## Abstract

*This article draws on qualitative research on the Chinese and Bangladeshi communities in Newcastle upon Tyne. In-depth household research that includes the participation of different family members for inter-generational perspectives is not only inclusive in its approach but also invaluable in policy research on minority ethnic groups. Household research can lead to analyses that are holistic and take into consideration intra-household power relations as well as contextual and structural factors such as the impact of racism. The inclusion of children as research participants is of particular importance in minority ethnic households that are undergoing shifting identities, and thus changes in their values and preferences. The research found that the participants' country of origin, length of stay in the UK, whether they were born or brought up in the UK were important factors to consider, apart from the more conventional variables of age, sex, area of residence and employment status. Many issues arise in the use of interpreters and whether there are alternative approaches to conducting interviews with minority ethnic research participants. This article proposes that there are ways of working with varieties of language known as 'inter-languages', i.e. the varieties of English spoken by Speakers of Other Languages.*

## Keywords

Black and minority ethnic people, interpreting, inter-languages, research methods, qualitative research, household research.

## Introduction

This paper draws its material from the qualitative research conducted in collaboration with the Newcastle Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership (EYDCP) from 2000-2003. The research looked at the childcare practices and needs of two contrasting minority ethnic groups: the Chinese and Bangladeshi communities in Newcastle upon Tyne. In-depth household research was conducted to provide greater understanding of these groups and the specific socio-cultural circumstances surrounding the care and development of their children. Contrasts between these two communities include their country of origin, languages used, religion,

family, migration history, settlement patterns and gendered division of labour (Lie, 2006). The impetus for this research arose out of the implementation of the Labour government's flagship policy, the National Childcare Strategy, which was aimed at tackling social exclusion. EYDCPs were given the task of using this strategy to promote social inclusion and the Newcastle EYDCP was interested in an account of the childcare practices, needs and preferences of these two groups so as to be able to plan childcare provision in a more ethnically inclusive way. These groups are often described as 'hard-to-reach' but this term is often used from the perspective of service providers in the sense of not being able to reach these

groups because they are ‘hard-to-talk to’ (Craig, 2004). However, this sense of the term fails to cover the accessibility of service provision from the point of view of the service-user. A better description coined by a seasoned Chinese community worker and race adviser involved in the research is ‘hard-to-hear’. The article will address three main areas of researching minority ethnic participants:

- the household as a useful unit of analysis for minority ethnic households;
- issues around sampling and access; and finally
- language and communication issues.

This honest discussion of the problems will hopefully make a case for an improvement in the resources for researching minority ethnic communities.

### **Minority ethnic household research**

Increasingly, there is recognition in social research that the individual is embedded in families, households and social networks, and that in order for a holistic understanding, the unit of analysis has to go beyond the individual to include the context in which he or she operates. Because the household is the social site for structures of constraint and social reproduction (Folbre, 1994; Jarvis *et al.*, 2001) it is often the most appropriate unit of analysis for sociological investigation (Wheelock & Oughton, 1996). Household research takes into consideration the role of women in the unpaid productive work of the household. The use of the term ‘household’ in statistical datasets is generally restricted to people occupying the same physical space, but for the purposes of in-depth qualitative research the household can also be thought of as

having ‘porous boundaries’, that is not confined to the relationships within a physical building, but beyond it, as regular exchanges can occur beyond these boundaries such as between two homes. One of these established exchanges of resources occur for example between parent and grandparent generations. The mistake is to view the household as a self-interested individual or as the nuclear family, when it should encompass all those members that share and manage a common pool of material and human resources for a common economic purpose (Wheelock & Oughton, 1996). This flexible notion of the household is particularly useful for minority ethnic households with their varied family configurations and indeed for the changing structure of modern-day households experiencing family breakdown, ‘living together apart’ because of work demands and those with transnational family networks.

Household research as described above takes on board the power relations within the household, the cultural norms and values that lie behind such relationships, the processes of maintaining the household which include the division of labour according to gender and age, the development of personal and social capital and the important work of reproduction and the socialisation of children. Household research that takes into account the perspectives of all the members of the household also allows for triangulation and crosschecking. However, as in other qualitative research contexts where inclusivity is often compromised for do-ability, minority ethnic research respondents that are recruited are often those in the second or third generation who are able to communicate in English, or those women whose responses are mediated by interpreters because of their lack of proficiency in English. The following examples from my field notes

illustrate the importance of inclusivity and the usefulness of household research in minority ethnic households. For confidentiality, the names used in all the cases described are pseudonyms:

In the Haque household, I discovered the power dynamics that were operating when I sought to interview Mrs Haque. Mr Haque insisted on being present at the interview and answering on his wife's behalf, although we tried to persuade him that with the interpreter present, there was no need for him to be present. He still insisted and then proceeded to answer the questions on his wife's behalf. When he was called away by a telephone call, there was an obvious difference in the way his wife answered the questions put to her.

Interviewing the children was a pleasure. When asked if they had been looked after by non-family members, the Ahmed girls described instances when they were looked after by a close friend of the family quite regularly when their mother made visits to relatives in another city. Their mother was understandably more reticent to describe such accounts. The interviews with these children also revealed the active part they played in housework and childcare of their younger siblings. They also uncovered racist incidents experienced by the children in their neighbourhood.

Mrs Pang described the dynamics of her mother-in-law living with her and the tensions of different child-rearing priorities that were partly a result of her being Vietnamese and growing up in the UK, whereas her husband was from mainland China. By the time the fieldwork ended, the

family had split up, leaving her as a lone parent who was juggling work and childcare, but with the support of her own mother and sister-in-law.

Interviewing Grandmother Tang revealed the pleasure that she got out of helping to take care of her grandchildren, and that it was not one-way but a reciprocal or symbiotic on-going relationship existing between two different residences. Accounts from grandmother, parents and children confirmed anxieties around neighbourhood spaces and feelings of insecurity in a council housing estate.

Apart from using the household as the unit of analysis, the research also looked at plotting the social networks of the households that related to the care of the children. These differed from household to household and were found to influence the kinds of childcare practices and preferences of the parents. Social networks could also throw light on the nature of the relationships between interpreters, research participants and researchers, which as will be demonstrated, can influence the collection of data. This is particular pertinent in those cases where interpreters are also community leaders occupying defined positions in the community. In recent times there has been renewed interest in social network research because of the policy focus on social capital of which 'social networks' is a part (Phillipson *et al.*, 2004). Latest developments in national statistics have also begun to look at collecting data that would help measure 'social capital' (see <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/socialcapital/>).

### **Sampling and access**

To move away from stereotypical views of Chinese and Bangladeshi people in

the community, purposive sampling was adopted in order to achieve a range of households. For example, the category 'Chinese' is far from homogeneous and could include people not only from Hong Kong but Mainland China, Vietnam, Taiwan and Malaysia, as well as those born in Britain. However for the purpose of the study, certain limits were placed on the sample, so those who were not ordinarily British residents such as students and asylum-seekers were omitted, and households with children under the age of 15 were included because of the remit of the EYDCP. The result was a sample with variability in terms of area of residence, size of household and socio-economic status. As the study had to do with socially excluded groups, those on low incomes and/or on benefit were given particular attention. It should be pointed out however that in the United Kingdom both the Chinese and Bangladeshi communities are still little researched and understood. This constitutes a form of social exclusion in itself. Rather than a representative sample, the aim was to collect narratives of the practices, needs and preferences of a group of people that could give the researcher a valuable insight into these communities. This was to be an exercise in questioning and understanding, rather than claiming to be definitive of what the community needs in terms of childcare.

Household research was conducted with eight Chinese and seven Bangladeshi households. A total of 27 Chinese and 29 Bangladeshis were interviewed, of whom eight were Chinese children and 13 Bangladeshi children. Grandparents were also interviewed where there were three generations in the household, but there were also lone parent families in the samples. Access to these households was through a combination of the researcher's personal networks in the two communities, snowballing and

community gatekeepers. The respondents varied with respect to the conventional categories of age, sex, area of residence and employment status but other variables that were noteworthy included: length of stay in the UK, place of birth, whether born or brought up in the UK or whether they came to the UK as a child or as a spouse. These were indicative of the migration history of the respondents, which was found to have an impact on people's norms, values and preferences. The following vignettes illustrate some of the findings:

Mr Chan was born and brought up in Malaysia, but came to the UK for his university education. He got married and settled here with his wife who is also a graduate, but who was born in the UK of Hong Kong parents. Mr Chan exhibited very distinct views about the way he desired his children should be brought up. He was not in favour of the way children in the UK were not sufficiently disciplined. His wife who was sent back to Hong Kong as a child to be looked after by relatives reflected on the fact that she did not have the attention of her parents, and thus worked very hard to give this attention to her two children, aged one month and two years. They were both hesitant to make use of formal childcare, believing that it is the mother's responsibility to care for children under the age of three.

Mrs Ferdousi was brought up in the UK since she was primary school age. She did not have a traditionally arranged marriage and moved away with her husband to live in a suburb down south. She was fluent in English and was well integrated in the predominantly white neighbourhood, being very involved in her daughters' school Parent Teacher Association (PTA). She was

later employed as a community health interpreter before they moved to Newcastle where she hopes to pursue a social work degree. She saw a need for on-site childcare at the college where she was pursuing her studies so that she did not have to miss part of her class when fetching her son from playgroup.

Mrs Bari and Mrs Haque came to the UK as brides from Bangladesh. As such, they both have a limited command of English and with small children and heavy household responsibilities in extended families, have limited opportunities to interact with the white community. Their childcare needs revolved around having time for themselves for leisure and personal development while ensuring that their children were well looked after.

### **Language and communication issues:**

#### *Approaches to interviews with minority ethnic research participants*

Whether or not we choose to acknowledge the problems of language differences in research processes and to engage in discussions about how these differences are treated should be recognised as an ethical decision. Others have argued that it is not only ethical but epistemological and political as well (Roberts and Spivak, referenced in Temple, 2005), a relevant point in the present political climate surrounding citizenship and migration. Temple describes three different approaches to cross-language translation and the construction of meaning:

- non-recognition or dismissal of representational issues (there is no problem);
- a recognition of issues of representation and a position that argues these cannot be tackled by

people who don't speak or write the relevant languages (there is no point); and

- an attempt to tackle the issues by situating the translator within the text ('have a look at what we did').

The rest of this paper will be an invitation to readers to 'have a look at what I did' in the research with Chinese and Bangladeshi participants.

#### *Interpreters*

While I had experience of working amongst these two community groups in the past, I did not have the fluency of language that would enable me to conduct interviews in Sylheti and Cantonese, the two main languages used by those who were not proficient in English. I therefore used a range of interpreters, who were there not just for the task of interpreting but were invaluable in providing insights into the communities, a role similar to that of the 'key informants' described by Edwards (Edwards, 1998). Often there is little recognition of the fact that interpreters have useful contributions to make, which if they are given the chance to do so, should be properly acknowledged in the research. On the other hand, interpreter 'knowledge' can interfere with the collection of information from research participants as I will demonstrate. Ideally, interpreters should be recruited as part of the research team rather than being hourly-paid workers, as open-ended sensitive interviews can stretch beyond the time that has been booked. Altogether, I used one Chinese interpreter for a focus group, and two Chinese interpreters for five interviews in three households, and one Bangladeshi interpreter for five interviews in three households and a focus group.

The following are my observations about the use of interpreters in research:

#### The interpreter's social position in the community

If the interpreter is well known to the community it can facilitate the interview, as a degree of trust already exists. On the other hand, sometimes that trust is not there for one reason or another such as the interpreter's association with certain sectors of the community. There can also be the fear that the rest of the community will find out what has been said if participants are not convinced about the promise of confidentiality. Interpreters can also be looked upon unfavourably as institutional representatives (Alexander *et al.*, 2004). However, if the interpreter comes from outside the community, rapport needs to be built between the interpreter and the interviewee. All the interpreters I used came from within the community and fortunately had good rapport with all the research participants.

#### Interpreter and interviewee match

A match of identity markers between interviewer and interviewee is more advantageous especially for interviews of a sensitive nature, and this is true also between interpreters and their clients. In my research, the interpreters matched their clients in terms of their gender, ethnicity, marital status and in some cases, religion and age. Language matching can be more complicated. Many Chinese in the older generation prefer to speak in other language varieties such as *Hakka*, while there are some educated Bengalis who prefer to speak in the more standardised form *Bangla*, which some British-born Bengali interpreters are not proficient in.

#### Interpreter backgrounds and personalities

My three Chinese interpreters had very different backgrounds and personalities which affected the interview process. They originated from three different countries, Mainland China, Hong Kong and Malaysia, which resulted in their different interpreting skills and language competencies. One interpreter was confident and assertive and sought to give me her own analysis of the situation. In contrast, another was very laid-back and economical with her words. From past experience, I found that Bengali interpreters who are not from Sylhet may have a less favourable attitude towards the Sylheti language.

#### 'Accurate', truthful interpretation

Interpretation is a complex process in that an interpreter can select to interpret meaning from a range of words or phrases, but words themselves have a range of connotations across different languages and contexts (Edwards, 1998). There is also the effect of the interpreter on the interview process in terms of the process of interpreting, resulting in gaps in information and meaning through the interpreter summarising and editing out repetitions, emphasis, emotions and feelings, etc. or adding their own version of events and meanings. Awareness of the possible cultural and linguistic filters that exist is important (Chiu & Knight, 1999). It is on the whole very difficult to get a word-for-word accurate interpretation because apart from the factors outlined above, the interview is conducted in real time (*in vivo*). The aim should perhaps be truthful accounts rather than linguistic accuracy. Ideally, transcripts of interviews can be tested for meaning and accuracy through back translation, but this is an expensive process rarely within the budget of most research projects.

### Interpreter skills

Some interpreters might be very proficient in their own language but not sufficiently so in English, or vice versa. Some may have speaking skills but not the reading skills necessary for handling written material used in the course of the interview. Competencies in grammar (for example, in the use of tenses) and vocabulary may vary as the interpreters themselves are often operating in their own 'interlanguage' (see next section). In addition, some may be proficient in vernacular everyday languages but not formal varieties or styles.

### Interpreter training

The interpreter has to be briefed about the nature of the research, and to be familiarised with the interview schedule and the terminology used in it. For example, I had to explain all the different types of childcare services available, and how the childcare tax credit worked. As part of their training, I decided to apply the interview schedule to them by interviewing them using the interview topic guide. In this way, the interpreter could better grasp what was in the interview and could explain the rationale of the interview more clearly in order to obtain respondents' informed consent. In a piece of related research, I recruited Sylheti speakers to administer a questionnaire (written in English) to fellow speakers for a small fee (£5 per questionnaire completed). Before they did so, they attended a session in which they paired up to role-play the interview and to discuss any problems encountered. In a separate research project, the interpreter played the role of the interviewer speaking in Cantonese, and in the process was able to clarify any ambiguities. Later under my guidance, she conducted the interview. (In this situation, I was able to understand about half of what she said in Cantonese and so was able to get a

general drift of the conversation and to steer it back when it went off-track!). This technique could be useful to researchers who have some knowledge of the language but not enough to conduct the interview themselves, for instance, among Bengali researchers who know some Urdu.

### Relationship between interpreter and interviewee

I found the element of rapport to be very important in the interview situation. This was particularly so in cases when the interpreter was the 'gatekeeper', or the person who introduced the interviewee to me, or the one who persuaded her to participate in the research. In one case, the interpreter was the interviewee's friend and the interview was conducted in a mixed code of two Chinese languages, essentially their 'heart' language. In another case however, the interpreter used to interpret for the lady in a hospital setting and lapsed into 'speaking on her behalf' rather than 'interpreting' for her. Community interpreters often play the role of 'advocate' and some of this was being carried over into her role as interpreter in the research.

### Interviewee agency and language competence

One should also not underestimate the language competence and ability of the interviewee. Sometimes in my interviews, I have had Chinese grandmothers interjecting in English where they are able to, sometimes to correct the interpreter. Interviewees should have the freedom to do this.

### Group dynamics

Interviewing with an interpreter is a three-way process. With all the inherent difficulties of power relations between individuals on the basis of class, race,

age, language etc, there needs to be an awareness of how these can affect the interview (Chiu & Knight, 1999). Problems are further complicated in focus groups. When I compared the focus group with Chinese women and that with Bangladeshi women, I found that the Chinese interpreter was not as able to hold the floor and to moderate the discussion as was the Bangladeshi interpreter. She was also not as proficient in her interpretation skills as the other interpreter.

Recording and post-interview interpreting/translation:

The use of recording has its advantages in interviews using interpreters as the interpretation can be checked and corrected. This is however a time consuming process requiring extra resources. I have conducted an interview in English without an interpreter in which the interviewee was given an opportunity to express herself in her own language. That section in the interview was later listened to and translated. In another project, a Chinese interviewee refused to have the interview (in a mix of English and Cantonese) recorded, so I made notes. These notes were then translated into Cantonese (at the rate of 15p per word), so that the interviewee could read and check the notes.

To summarise, there are various methods of using interpreters which depend on the context and circumstances of the interview. Underlying the use of interpreters is the importance of acknowledging their role in the research process, a willingness to invest time in training, an awareness of the limitations of interpreters and a creative employment of their skills. An important guiding principle should be the need to be ethically responsible to the research participants in the course of meaning construction.

*Using interlanguages*

Table 1 shows the English speaking abilities of participants and their use of an interpreter in the research. Whether the interviewee required an interpreter was something that needed to be negotiated sensitively. In most cases, this was agreed with through a gatekeeper. Some respondents declined the offer of an interpreter even though their competency in speaking English was rather limited. This was possibly because they felt quite comfortable speaking to a non-English person. Then there were those who used interpreters even though they were able to communicate in English.

**Table 1: English speaking abilities and interpreter use**

English speaking ability	Fluent	Intermediate	Basic	Minimal
<i>No interpreter</i>	Chans Kwoks Mr Bari Mrs Ahmed Mrs Ferdousi Siddiques	Mr Lee (2) Mrs Pang Tangs Mr Ferdousi Miahs	Wongs Hos Mr Ahmed Mrs Bari Grandpa Lee Grandpa Bari	
<i>With interpreter</i>			Mr Haque Grandma Lee	Widow Fan Mrs Lee (2) Grandma Tang Grandma Bari Mrs Haque Grandma Haque Widow Tauhid

**Figure 1: English speaking ability and migration history**

English speaking ability 1 <sup>st</sup> language		2 <sup>nd</sup> language		
Born and brought up in UK	Brought up in UK	Primary school age	Secondary school age	Adult (bride/groom)

For both groups, each speaker used an interlanguage variety in the interview. An interlanguage is the language system that a learner of a language constructs out of the linguistic input that he or she has been exposed to. It can be thought of as a continuum between the first and second language along which all learners traverse. The categories shown in Table 1 above give some idea of this continuum. A more accurate classification can be found for example in the speaking descriptors used in IELTS (International English Language Testing System). Other measures of language proficiency include BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency), but in my previous research (Lie 1998) I used IELTS. Those who were born and brought up in the UK were more likely to have acquired first language competency, for example the school-age children I interviewed. (Child language is yet another category of language acquisition but this topic is not within the limits of this paper.) Among the remaining participants, I perceived a continuum of English language speaking ability corresponding to when they migrated to this country. This is shown diagrammatically in Figure 1.

Largely, the schema outlined above corresponds to the table of interviewees. All except one of the interviewees who used interpreters belonged to the category of *mangeters*, or those who came to the UK as brides or grooms (Kalra, 2000). Among those who were

born in the UK, one Chinese respondent was taken to Hong Kong where she was looked after by relatives till she was secondary school age when she returned to the UK to continue her education. Her spoken language was thus not as articulate as someone who was born and brought up in the UK. Of course, other factors such as educational levels and length of time in the country and so on also affect spoken language ability.

In a couple of cases, the interview was conducted in an interlanguage variety as well as code-switching between Cantonese and English with some assistance from a family member when required. ('Code-switching' is 'the juxtaposition within the same speech exchange of passages of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or sub-systems' (definition by Gumperz quoted in Romaine, 1995). In the following example, the father is helping his wife by interpreting her Cantonese for my benefit because of my limited ability in the language, and the translation is provided in square brackets by one of my interpreters. As an English-speaking Singaporean Chinese, I have some limited knowledge of Cantonese but am more proficient in Mandarin which was taught formally at school.

*Mrs Ho:* cho yea la [do something]

(laughter)

*Researcher:* cho mie yea [do what]

(laughter)

*Mrs Ho:* ngo chi ( ) cho kong la ( ) er ngo cho um kam lo, cho chor ho tor lei,

cho to ngo ko lei eh yau kei swei  
ko lei er yau kei swei ko lei ko ko  
e hang, kun chi em [ ] hai England

[working, working in gold, work  
for a long time till I came here,  
when I was in my twenties I came  
as a tourist]

Researcher: "Kam" what's "kam"

(laughter)

Mr Ho: Er em at Hong Kong, some

Researcher: 'Kam' is gold

Mr Ho: Yeah 'Kam' is gold that's it

Researcher: You're making gold? Jewellery?

Mrs Ho: Not jewellery, em is a ika hai, hai  
[it's, it's..]

Researcher: Precious stones?

Mrs Ho: No, no it's, you know em during  
the cake you're I make the cake  
'pong' [scales]

### Interlanguages and interpreted spoken texts

Here are some excerpts of interviews in the interlanguage varieties I have described.

Researcher: so the other children were also by  
caesarean?

Mrs Miah: no, is not by

C: [ ]

Mrs Miah: this one is premature you know, is,  
twenty-five weeks she's born

Researcher: oh

Mrs Miah: Long time is hospital in RVI  
hospital

Researcher: oh

Mrs Miah: Incubator you know, is, sixty five  
days

Researcher: okay

Mrs Miah: first time is good service

Researcher: in the General

Mrs Miah: General Hospital you know and  
also General now is, nobody  
bother you know

Researcher: so you prefer the General to the  
RVI, it sounds like

Mrs Miah: yeah

Researcher: er, so when er, you had your  
second child

Mrs Miah: second child is premature you  
know

Researcher: so that was difficult as well

(child screaming)

Mrs Miah: I had terrible time you know, it's  
25 weeks she's born, nobody,  
knows why she is born, I don't  
know

Researcher: yeah you never know

Mrs Miah: I never know

Researcher: so you were up and down the  
hospital all the time

Mrs Miah: yo, my God, is every day is two  
three times and going is RVI,  
know, how is, bus stop, is there is  
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Researcher: yeah

Often therefore, communication in interlanguages is indeed possible and sometimes more desirable than having to rely on an interpreter, who can introduce unwanted elements or interference in the interview, or loss of meaning.

In the following example, it is apparent that even with the interpreter, this Chinese grandmother is quite able to communicate in English.

Researcher: How long have you lived in  
Britain?

Grandma Lee: 21 year

Researcher: Where in Britain?

Grandma Lee: Here, Newcastle

Researcher: all the time?

Grandma Lee: Six months in the Portsmouth  
(cough)

Interpreter: Then move to here

Researcher: Are you retired now?

Grandma Lee: Ah yes

Researcher: for how long already, retired?

Grandma Lee: About three years

(Goes to drink water, coughing)

*Grandma Lee: Four years, six years then I go to the Nuffield Hospital, I working in there for nine year*

*Researcher: Right*

*Grandma Lee: Then I change the job for the er home help*

*Researcher: Aha*

*Grandma Lee: about two year*

In this second section of the same transcript, it can be seen that the interpreter has omitted or erroneously interpreted the grandmother's answer:

*Interpreter: When they are growing up, it's not necessary [for childcare], like her daughter's three sons, independent, the younger one is only ten*

*Grandma Lee: to mo so ye sai, che ke wan ke, ...tai ke*

*[no need to look after, play by himself...]*

*Interpreter: Just play in the estate with some of the neighbours*

*Researcher: Oh right he does that*

*Interpreter: No need anyone to look after them*

In another interview, the interpreter is suggesting answers to the respondent:

*Researcher: So were you happy with the arrangements?*

*Interpreter: Nei kok tat, pa lei ...sam fu okay la ho*

*[You consider, given that...the arrangements are okay aren't they?]*

*Mrs Lee: To mo pan fat [altogether there's no other way]*

*Interpreter: To mo pan fat, to ho la [altogether no other way, so alright]*

The preceding discussion is a caution against assuming that using interpreters will automatically overcome language barriers and that more thought should be given to time and money set aside for the selection and training of interpreters in qualitative interviews and the better

deployment of properly qualified bilingual minority ethnic researchers.

## Conclusion

The advantages of a household approach to researching minority ethnic communities are that it is inclusive and holistic, takes into consideration the internal dynamics of households, while also recognising the embeddedness of individuals in wider contexts. Using a purposive sampling frame in order to capture a range of household sizes and area of residences is a useful way to conduct qualitative research on minority ethnic communities. Other variables like country of birth and length of stay in the UK were found to affect values, norms and beliefs, and are therefore important to bear in mind.

A number of issues were identified that can arise in interviewing minority ethnic participants. Interviews can be conducted with or without interpreters. In those cases where interpreters were not used, the medium of language was varying forms of a learner variety of English, generally known as an interlanguage. The use of an interpreter can involve a whole host of complicated issues such as interpreter-interviewee mismatching, large variations in interpreter skills and insufficient interpreter training for the project. An alternative approach of interviews using interlanguage data can overcome some of this third party interference. The assumption that interpreted data is better than one-to-one conversations albeit using a simplified form of English needs to be challenged. Some would argue that there is the risk of misunderstanding or a simplification of issues, but that also exists for interviews that have been interpreted. Perhaps a flexible approach of using a combination of methods (such as has been experimented with), that respects the interviewee's preferences

and recognises that their agency can overcome some problems. In discussing these issues, I have in mind researchers who are able to use their spoken abilities in other languages to greater advantage in order to capture the meanings conveyed in other languages to better effect. At the end of the day, what is important is a critical awareness of these various issues that have to do with inclusivity in the research process and a willingness to explore the possible methodologies that can be adapted to deal with them. It is hoped that not only researchers but also research commissioners will benefit from an awareness of the complexity of these issues in researching minority ethnic communities.

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**Notes on contributor**

Mabel Lie's academic career began after she completed an MA in Applied Linguistics and Bilingualism at the Department of Speech at the University of Newcastle in 1998 and worked as a Research Associate for Lancaster University in 1999 on the Minority Language Engineering Project. She completed her PhD in Sociology and Social Policy at Newcastle University in 2004 and is presently employed as a research associate on a collaborative project with Age Concern Newcastle funded by the Big Lottery on volunteering in later life.

**Contact details**

Dr Mabel Lie  
Research Associate  
Institute of Health and Society  
21 Claremont Place  
Newcastle University  
Newcastle Upon Tyne  
NE2 4AA  
Email: [m.l.s.lie@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:m.l.s.lie@ncl.ac.uk)