



checklist

It is always worth carefully planning the practicalities of the analysis stages of a project, since although analysis really begins from the moment you begin to design a project, it is often the case that in the end, not enough time remains for a systematic approach to the data analysis. Part of that planning is to think ahead about what software you will use and how you will use it. Di Gregorio and Davidson (2008) usefully address the planning dimension in principle and also in much practical detail with a number of illustrative case studies. Here are just a few things which are worth putting into practice:

- Find out what software is locally available. Does it seem to suit your purposes?
- Plan how you will transcribe the data efficiently; if using digital recording techniques, investigate the transcription aids and software referenced earlier in the chapter.
- Investigate what the chosen CAQDAS software expects in the way of data format and file types.
- If it is most important for you to be able to 'mark' the data as you analyse it, make sure the package you choose will give you full and unproblematic 'editing' rights for your data files.
- If you are working in a project team, it may be very important that you do not mark or change shared data in any way. This varies, but when it matters it matters a lot.
- If you have special types of data, for example audio-visual, find out the real extent of the support that the software will give you in handling the data (see earlier in the chapter). To prepare, generate some video material with the equipment you are about to use, download a free trial of the CAQDAS software you are thinking of using, and find out if there are any complicating factors which stop the software from seeing or importing the data.
- If you are engaging in a team project, prepare properly by finding out how the work will be divided up and how the software packages will support the later sharing or merging of work. Look at the different models of support for working together. Do you need to work synchronously with colleagues on the same data set or do you need just to be able to combine work later? Find out the cost and practical implications of synchronous working.
- Find out what units of text are recognised automatically in functions such as auto coding (in the software that you are considering using); usually paragraphs are recognised, but sentences may not be recognised in some programs. Does this matter to you?
- Allow enough time (and money) for the preparation of data and familiarisation with the software.



project

The sooner you start using a CAQDAS program, the sooner you will start to feel more secure about what the program expects of you and its style, and the sooner you will gain the confidence to try out new things:

- Visit the CAQDAS Networking Project website, as outlined in the resources section.
- Create a new project in the software.
- Find out what formats the software accepts data in – see online help menus and information in suggestions and preparation checklists

- Experiment by importing or assigning documents (data files), literature abstracts or anything textual.
 - Experiment in the creation of memos to map out elements of future work.
 - Explore the main menus and try out right-button context menus with various things selected.
 - Try out various tasks such as code creation, and apply codes to selections within the textual documents you have assigned or imported.
 - Nothing you do at this stage is dangerous – make mistakes and learn from them.
 - Delete codes or rename them.
 - Find out what you can't do!
 - Find out how to save your work, close the project and try to re-open it.
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