

Using NVivo 7 to Analyze Educational Dialogue Childrens Interpretation of Art

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In this article, Ana Belén Garc a-Varela (Universidad de Alcal , Spain), H ctor del Castillo (University of Cambridge, UK and Universidad Aut noma de Madrid, Spain) and Pilar Lacasa (Universidad de Alcal , Spain) summarize a presentation they gave at the recent conference, ‘‘Strategies in Qualitative Research Using QSR Software.’’

The use of ICT [information and communications technology] in the research process is currently one of the most important challenges facing qualitative researchers in the social sciences. Our particular interest is in how new ICT tools can help us across the whole sociocultural research process. We have explored how NVivo 7 can be used to ease the process of organizing, storing, retrieving and analyzing data in a specific research project inspired by this theoretical framework.

We deal with the evaluation process of the Educational Program ‘‘DAP’’, developed by the ‘‘Fundaci n ArteViva Europa’’ during the academic year 2005-2006 in Spain, a project whose aim was to introduce children to the analysis of works of art.

Our research analyzes this innovative educational practice, in which children participate by working and thinking together in the analysis of paintings in the classroom. The program aims to generate creative thinking and shared representations both inside and outside the classroom.

The data and units of analysis

For this project we worked with two different types of data: transcripts of video-files recorded at each lesson, and summaries of the sessions. The unit of analysis is the major entity analyzed in the study, [that is] ‘‘what’’ or ‘‘whom’’ is studied. This depended on the analysis performed, the aim of our research and the characteristics of the data. We thus progressively considered different views of the data and moved from one to another.

In the first phase of the study, our aim was to analyze the improvement in the children’s dialogues across time during the program. For this we looked at the transcripts of the video recordings from each lesson.

In the second phase, we switched our view and focused on the individual paintings because we wanted to analyze the children’s thinking when faced with each painting. In the analytical process, NVivo 7 allowed us to work directly with both the transcripts and the summaries in the discourse analysis.

The coding process

We coded the documents in terms of the dimensions defined in the methodology of the educational program for the analysis of children’s thinking. This enabled us to evaluate the learning process of children in terms by which we could compare the aims of the program with the actual achievements of the children.

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Data analysis and interpretation

After coding, we used the searching mode to find coincidences and non-coincidences in the coding structure. We created a co-occurrence matrix and started working with both this and the text for the analysis and interpretation of the data, and subsequently in the process of creating the evaluation report. We produced this report by combining the frequencies of the nodes coded by painting, and qualitative examples to show the relationships established and the improvements in the children’s learning process. Our aim was to create a single evaluation report that could be useful for teachers.

Concluding remarks

In this study, as it evolved from the first phase of the project, NVivo 7 provided us with the resources needed for the first approach to the categories; an approach that was relatively descriptive but which provided an important infrastructure for later data retrieval and for the subsequent analysis and interpretation. In the next phase of the study, NVivo 7 also helped us to create an analytical system of nodes for coding and interpreting the data in terms of children’s thinking and activity in the classroom.

About NVivo 7

NVivo 7 is designed to handle very rich text based information, where deep levels of analysis on both small and large volumes of data are required. It removes many of the manual tasks associated with analysis, like classifying, sorting and arranging information, so more time can be dedicated to explore trends, build and test theories and ultimately arrive at answers to questions. From policy formulation and education evaluation to mixed methods studies - NVivo 7 supports a wide range of research areas and is used by researchers, forensic scientists, psychologists, tourism managers, sociologists, consultants and academics worldwide.

About QSR International:

QSR International is based in Melbourne, Australia, with offices in North America and Europe. Its flagship products “XSight and NVivo 7” are both designed to help researchers and other people working with non-numerical data to compile, compare and make sense of their information quickly and easily. More than 350,000 users in 90 countries, from market research agencies, government bodies and universities, to tourism, urban affairs and human resources professionals, use QSR research software. QSR International is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner and the company’s NVivo 7 software was used as a reference project at the Microsoft TechEd 2006 conference in the United States. Information: www.qsrinternational.com