Qualitative Analysis Activity ('The Button Activity')

Lesson Plan

Duration: 3 hrs

Class size: 8-60 students

Level: Can be tailored, from advanced undergraduate through to doctoral level

Assumed prior knowledge

Basic understanding of research paradigms (ontology & epistemology) and qualitative data collection (e.g., interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, etc.).
No knowledge of qualitative data analysis assumed.

Aim

To introduce students to qualitative data analysis and prepare them for the analysis required in their thesis work.

Intended learning outcomes

By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

- **Describe** various coding and qualitative data analysis strategies
- **Design** a qualitative data analysis strategy using coding and **rationalise** its use for a particular dataset and research question

Key concepts

- Coding
- Inductive analysis
- Deductive analysis
- Thematic analysis
- *In vivo* coding

Resources

- Laptop (PowerPoint presentation)
- Jars of buttons
- Flipchart paper
- Markers
- Post-it notes

Classroom set up

'Pods,' or small tables with clusters of 4-8 chairs depending on class size with flipchart paper, pens, and jars of buttons at each 'pod.'

Time	Content & Teacher Activity	Student Activity	Resources
0-5	**Introduce aims/ILOs and timeline of the session**	Listen and watch	PowerPoint
5-15	**Review earlier content about quantitative vs qualitative data** **Introduce coding as a concept**	Listen and watch	PowerPoint
15-20	**Introduce coding button activity: Round 1** Give the following instructions: Treat the buttons as data. Without speaking, code the buttons according to the following question: *What themes are present in the data?* Invite process questions and respond.	Listen, watch, ask questions	PowerPoint, Buttons
20-30	**Facilitate coding activity: Round 1** Observe students. Respond to process questions.	Follow instructions from above	PowerPoint, Buttons
30-50	**Facilitate discussion about the activity: Round 1** Invite students to share what happened at their table, descriptively. The following questions could be used as prompts: *What were the themes you identified?* *How did the table decide which themes were coded for?*	Reflect, respond to questions, listen	Buttons

	How did the coding strategies differ between 'pods'? Then, once students have described what happened, invite students to consider the activity more reflectively, asking questions like: *Why do you think_____happened?* *How might this process have looked different using actual qualitative data, like interview transcripts, for example?* Use opportunities to identify examples of **inductive** or **deductive analysis**, **thematic analysis**, and ***in vivo*** coding.		
50-60	**Break**		
60-65	**Introduce coding button activity: Round 2** Give the following instructions: Divide the buttons into 5 piles and label them 'dataset 1,' 'dataset 2,' and so on with post-it notes. Think about the characteristics of the buttons and decide what characteristic you want to code for (only pick one). Down the left side of the sheet of paper, label with the datasets ('dataset 1,' 'dataset 2,' and so on). Think of the characteristic you want to code for. What are the possible categories for this? Label them along the top of the sheet. Code the buttons according to the following question: *What is the relationship between the datasets and the characteristic you are coding for?* Invite process questions and respond.	Listen, watch, ask questions	PowerPoint, buttons, flipchart paper, post-it notes, markers

65-75	**Facilitate coding activity: Round 2** Observe students. Respond to process questions.	Follow instructions from above	PowerPoint, buttons, flipchart paper, post-it notes, markers
75-95	**Facilitate discussion about the activity: Round 2** Invite students to share what happened at their table, descriptively. The following questions could be used as prompts: *How was this round of coding different from the last round?* *How did the coding strategies differ between 'pods'?* Then, once students have described what happened, invite students to consider the activity more reflectively, asking questions like: *Why might a researcher choose a strategy like was used in this round of coding rather than the first round?* *When might be a situation when you might want to analyse data in this way? Why?* *How might this process have looked different using actual qualitative data, like interview transcripts, for example?* Use opportunities to identify examples of **inductive** or **deductive analysis**, **thematic analysis**, and ***in vivo*** coding.	Reflect, respond to questions, listen	Buttons, flipchart paper, post-it notes, markers
95-100	**Introduce coding button activity: Round 3** Give the following instructions: Pile the buttons all together again.	Listen, watch, ask questions	PowerPoint, buttons, flipchart paper, markers

	Think about two characteristics of the buttons and decide on two characteristics you would like to code for. Think of the first characteristic you want to code for. What are the possible categories for this? Label them along the left of the sheet. Think about the second characteristic you want to code for, but don't think about the categories it could be subdivided into yet. Just label the top of the sheet with the characteristic. Code the buttons according to the following question: *What is the relationship between characteristic 1 and characteristic 2?* Invite process questions and respond.		
100-110	**Facilitate coding activity: Round 3** Observe students Respond to process questions	Follow instructions from above	PowerPoint, buttons, flipchart paper, markers
110-130	**Facilitate discussion about the activity: Round 3** Invite students to share what happened at their table, descriptively. The following questions could be used as prompts: *How was this round of coding different from the last round?* *How did the coding strategies differ between 'pods'?* Then, once students have described what happened, invite students to consider the activity more reflectively, asking questions like: *Why might a researcher choose a strategy like was used in this round of coding rather than the first round?*	Reflect, respond to questions, listen	Buttons, flipchart paper, markers

	When might be a situation when you might want to analyse data in this way? Why? *How might this process have looked different using actual qualitative data, like interview transcripts, for example?* Use opportunities to identify examples of **inductive** or **deductive analysis**, **thematic analysis,** and ***in vivo*** coding.		
130-140	**Break**		
140-155	Presentation on qualitative analysis Introduce strategies for analysis: • Thematic Analysis • Grounded Theory • Analytic Induction Describe different coding strategies • Lumping vs splitting • Manual coding vs computer assisted qualitative data analysis software • Useful tips	Watch and listen	Powerpoint
155-175	**Facilitate reflection on the activity and presentation** Invite questions and reflections generally, and if there is a need, the following prompts can be used: *What do you think are the benefits of using coding as a strategy to analyse data? Why?* *What do you think the weaknesses are of coding as a data analysis strategy? Why?* *How do you think rigour can be built into the coding process? Why?* *What measures of rigour do you think are appropriate for qualitative research? Why?* At this point it is common for epistemological questions to be raised, particularly concerning the subjectivity of the process. This is a good opportunity to link with earlier content about research	Reflect, respond to questions, listen	

	paradigms, and to reflect about how quality criteria differ in different research paradigms. This can put the ideas behind the different research paradigms more concrete and practical terms for the students. It is important that in this discussion that no research paradigm is labelled 'right' or 'wrong' because this can alienate students. It is more useful to frame the discussion about when a paradigm and corresponding data analysis strategy might be more or less *useful*.		
175-180	**Wrap up** Summarise key points from the lecture, intended learning outcomes Point students to academic resources for further information	Watch and listen	Powerpoint