**INTERACTIVE MODE VERSUS SYNTAX MODE**

There are two basic ways that you can work with SPSS. Most users typically open up an SPSS data file in the data editor, and then select items from the menus to manipulate the data or to perform statistical analyses. This is referred to as ***interactive mode***, because your relationship with the program is very much like a personal interaction, with the program providing a response each time you make a selection.

If you request a transformation, the data set is immediately updated. If you select an analysis, the results immediately appear in the output window.

It is also possible to work with SPSS in ***syntax mode***, where the user types code in a syntax window. Once the full program is written, it is then submitted to SPSS to get the results.

Working with syntax is more difficult than working with the menus, because you must learn how to write the programming code to produce the data transformations and analyses that you want.

However, certain procedures and analyses are only available through the use of syntax. For example, vectors and loops (described later) cannot be used in interactive mode.

You can also save the programs you write in syntax. This can be very useful if you expect to perform the same or similar analyses multiple times, since you can just reload your old program and run it on your new data (or your old data if you want to recheck your old analyses).

If you would like more general information about writing SPSS syntax, you should examine the *SPSS Base Syntax Reference Guide*.