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celebrating 75 years of FIPLV  
Diversity in Language Learning and Teaching

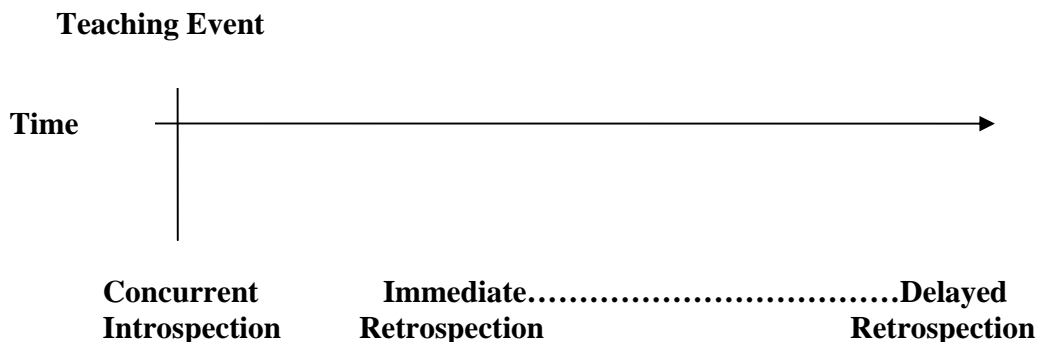
## Keeping a Language Teaching Journal for Professional Development

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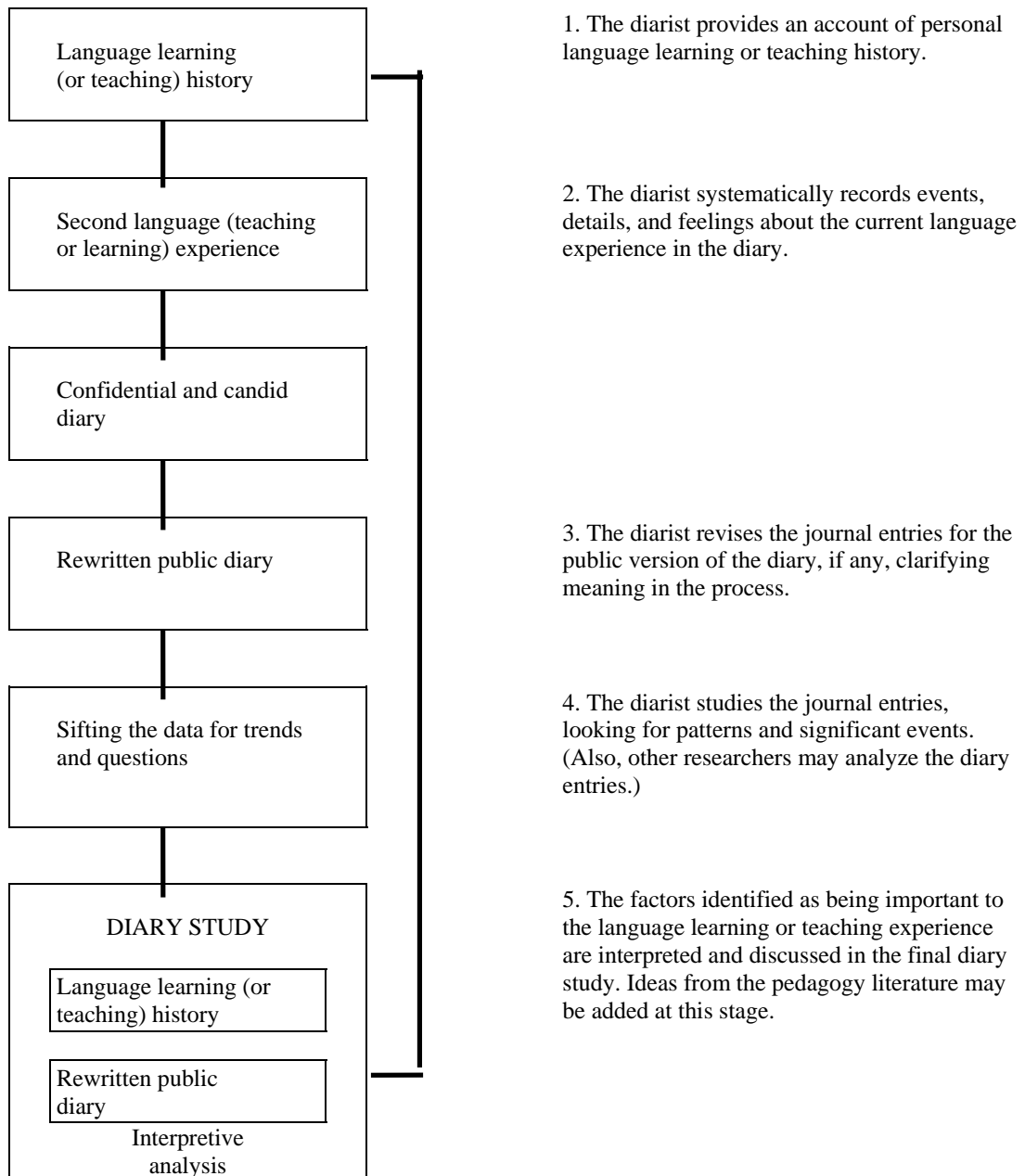
1. Introductions: Who are we and why are we here?
2. What is a diary study? What is a teacher’s journal?
3. What are introspection and retrospection?
4. How do teachers keep journals about their teaching?
5. What experience have other teachers had keeping journals?
6. Why do teachers keep journals? What are the benefits and pitfalls?
7. Where do we go from here?

### Introspection Immediacy Continuum



Bailey, K., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (2001). *Pursuing Professional Development: The self as source*. Boston: Heinle.

## Conducting a Language Learning or Teaching Diary Study



From Bailey, K.M. and Ochsner, R. 1983. A methodological review of the diary studies: Windmill tilting or social science? In K.M. Bailey, M.H. Long and S. Peck (eds.), *Second language acquisition studies*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle/Newbury House, p. 90.

Bailey, K., Curtis, A., & Nunan, D. (2001). *Pursuing Professional Development: The self as source*. Boston: Heinle.

## Suggestions for Keeping a Language Learning or Teaching Diary

1. If you are taking or teaching a regularly scheduled language class, set aside time each day immediately following the class to write in your diary. If you are not taking or teaching a class but are immersed in a target language situation, set aside a regular time and place each day in which to write your diary entries. Write your diary entries in a comfortable place (your favorite desk, outside with a pleasant view, in a sunny kitchen) where you won't be disturbed by friends or ringing telephones. Choose paper or a notebook that you like and find a pencil or pen that is easy to write with -- your favorite lucky pen if you have one. If you are word processing your journal entries, try to write where you won't be interrupted.

2. The time devoted to writing about your language learning or teaching experience can easily be equal or exceed the time spent in class. If you are teaching several hours a day or are immersed in the target culture, you will find you probably cannot record everything that happens, so you may want to focus your diary on some particular aspect of your experience that interests you.

**Note:** The items above are intended to make writing the diary entries a pleasant, easy experience. Try to set up the conditions for writing so that the diary-keeping process does not require a great deal of effort. The actual process of writing should be (or should become) almost effortless. If the writing becomes a burden, it will be hard to sustain.

3. Keep your diary or your diskettes in a safe, secure place -- a locked drawer, a file cabinet, a locked briefcase. The idea is for you to be able to write anything you want without feeling uneasy about other people reading and reacting to your ideas.

4. When you record entries in the original uncensored version of your diary, don't worry about style, grammar and organization -- especially if you are writing in your second language. The idea is to get complete and accurate data at a time when the information is still fresh in your mind. You can polish your presentation of the data at a later time, if you choose to edit the journal for public consumption. Thus the original diary entries sometimes read like "stream of consciousness" writing.

5. Carry a small pocket notebook with you so that you can make notes about your language experiences as they occur even if you don't have your actual diary with you, or you can't get to a computer conveniently. Some diarists have suggested keeping a notebook near your bedside so you can record any late-night or early morning thoughts.

6. Each time you write an assertion, ask yourself, "Why?" Why did you write that? What evidence do you have for the statement you just made? Some of the language teaching and learning journals are full of fascinating but unsubstantiated insights. Try to support your insights with examples from your class sessions, your daily interactions with the students, or with other learners, or with actual language data.

7. At the end of each diary entry, it may be helpful to note thoughts or questions that have occurred to you to consider later. Many anthropologists conducting field research keep an ideas file -- brief notes on topics to explore further. This is one way to narrow your focus somewhat during the diary-keeping process.

### **Some Time-Saving Suggestions**

1. You can limit your writing to one page, or one side of an index card.
2. You can allow yourself exactly ten minutes per day, or confine your writing time to a break between class.
3. Some diarists have chosen to make their journal entries only for the length of the bus ride or train trip home from school.

### **Some Remaining Questions**

1. Should a diarist read other language learning or teaching diaries or diary studies while keeping a diary, or does this lead to “contamination” of the data?
2. Should a diarist read about and comment on language learning or teaching theories while keeping a journal, or does this mold the diarist’s entries and insights to fit the theories?
3. Should a diarist try to take notes during the actual language learning or teaching experience (e.g., in class) or is that process so distracting that it would interfere with language learning or teaching events?
4. To what extent does the process of keeping a diary (i.e., of examining one’s own language learning or teaching experience) influence the experience?

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For a downloadable Word file of references on teachers’ journals, please visit [www.kathleenmbailey.com](http://www.kathleenmbailey.com) and click on “Resources.” Then click on “References” in the left panel and scroll down to the reference list about Teachers’ Journals.