Diaries and journals
Collecting insider perspectives in second language research

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Introduction
In research methodology, the terms diaries, journals and logs are used to describe data collection instruments in which participants record their own thoughts and behaviours related to a research topic or event being investigated. The term diary and the term journal are often used interchangeably to refer to these personal records. The term log – as in logbook – connotes a more systematic type of diary, where highly specific data are input alongside specific questions or criteria. According to general definitions of these three terms, a diary tends to refer to an artefact of daily record keeping (e.g. to record meetings or events that occurred on each day), and a journal connotes a more personalized, reflective account (e.g. a personal journal). In practice, however, the three terms get rather muddled: the historic Diary of Anne Frank or the fictional Bridget Jones’ Diary are highly personalized and reflective accounts; a ship’s journal is used for fastidious record keeping of only non-personal information; and the fictitious Captain’s log from Star Trek contained much more than specific information recorded in discrete categories. Similarly, the terms are used interchangeably in much applied linguistics research, such as the popular use of the term diary to refer to reflective accounts written for professional development in teacher education.

In keeping with popular use, this chapter uses the term diary to refer to personal accounts, journal to refer to systematic record keeping and log to refer to a highly constrained record of events. The chapter uses the term ‘diary methods’ as the umbrella term to capture the range of data collection tools available to researchers within this format. This chapter explores the use of diary methods for research purposes rather than as pedagogic tools for learning, which has typified their use in early applied linguistics research (e.g. Bailey, 1983, Parkinson & Howell-Richardson, 1990). Further, the chapter does not explore diary methods as tools for reflective practice in teacher education (e.g. Jarvis, 1992), as these are used for professional, rather than research, purposes. Bartlett and Milligan (2015) argue that there is a distinction between ‘solicited journals’, in which participants are instructed to record specific items for research purposes, and ‘unsolicited journals’ which are produced by the writers of their own accord, for various other reasons. This chapter aims to explore the advantages and recommended uses of solicited diary methods in applied linguistics research in order to promote their future use.
The benefits of diaries and journals to applied linguistics research

In language learning research, a diary is defined as “a regular record of language learning or learning-related activity which is kept by the learner, together with some form of review of that activity in order to inform future action” (Murphy, 2008, p. 199). It has long been observed that diary methods are powerful data collection methods for classroom-based L2 research, especially when students are participants in a study. As they are completed by the students themselves, diaries and journals can tap directly into learners’ everyday language practices and thoughts, which may otherwise be difficult to capture with other data collection methods (Dörnyei, 2007). Porto (2007) notes that diary methods can be used to promote reflection and introspection into learner autonomy in particular, where learning behaviours occur outside observable learning contexts.

Diaries and journals are also beneficial for applied linguistics topics which relate to the psychological aspects of L2 research. Bolger, Davis, and Rafaeli (2003) state that diaries and journals, as “self-report instruments used repeatedly to examine ongoing experiences, offer the opportunity to investigate social, psychological, and physiological processes, within everyday situations” (p. 580). In second language psychology research, researchers are often most interested in tapping into participants’ inner thoughts surrounding a particular construct (e.g. motivation, self-regulation, anxiety), which can be difficult to capture using other means. Moreover, some of these constructs are time-sensitive, such as exploring foreign language anxiety immediately after a real-life communicative experience, so retrospective accounts, such as interviews, do not always capture life as it is lived in the moment (see Rolland, Dewaele & Costa, this volume). As Krishnamurty (2008) observes:

Data from diary studies can be used to make cross-sectional comparisons across people, track an individual over time, or study processes within individuals or families. The main advantages of diary methods are that they allow events to be recorded in their natural setting and, in theory, minimize the delay between the event and the time it is recorded.

(p. 197)

Thus, an advantage of diary methods is their ability to enable the investigation of behaviours and thoughts surrounding events and experiences in their real-world and unprompted context – something not attainable via most other introspective research methods (Reis & Gable, 2000).

Another advantage of diary methods is the agency they transfer from the researcher to the participant. Dörnyei (2007) argues that diary methods provide an insider account of the research construct, in that the participants act as co-researchers in the study. The participants are provided the agency to put forward their own thoughts and interpretations as data for a research project, rather than relying on the researcher to use indirect methods to access the same thoughts. If robust methods are followed, diaries and journals can provide researchers with a highly contextualized and individualized account of the research construct. This is because the potential influences of researcher manipulation over the data are minimized – as the researcher is not even present when the data are recorded. Good diary methods can collect meticulous and systematic data, which are often well-suited for quantitative or qualitative data analysis.

Types of diary methods

Diary methods can vary depending on the type of information that is collected, and the degree of freedom afforded to participants when completing a diary entry. This dimension is best conceptualized on a continuum, with a ‘log’ at one end, and a ‘personal diary’ at the other. Other
types of diaries and journals exist along this continuum depending on how much structure is imposed on them by the researcher.

**Diaries**

At its extreme, a personalized diary may have very little structure imposed by the researcher, apart from general instructions for participants to record their thoughts, reflections, and even their moods and emotions surrounding the behaviours or events being researched. These diaries might best be thought of as narrative accounts. In language learning research, they function as “a type of self-report which allows learners to record on a regular basis numerous aspects of their learning process” (Oxford, Lavine, Hollaway, Felkins, & Saleh, 1996, p. 20). These reflective accounts of events through the eyes of the participants have also been long used within teacher education as a part of reflective practice, which are also used as sources of research data (e.g. Bailey, 1990; Jarvis, 1992; Oxford et al., 1996; Hall, 2008; Casanave, 2012). These reflective diaries typically involve the recording of individualized accounts of the constructs being researched.

A disadvantage of diaries can be a lack of control of the researcher over the quality, quantity and focus of participant entries into them. If specific research questions are being asked in a study, much information recorded in diaries might prove irrelevant during data analysis. Personalized journals are usually analyzed for their emergent themes and content via qualitative content analysis, and thus an unfocused entry may not lend itself to heavy data coding according to relevant themes. Thus, personal diaries of this type tend to be much better suited to exploratory ethnographic studies (see Wei, this volume) or research surrounding reflective practices.

**Logs**

In contrast to the highly reflective and open nature of diaries, a log is a constrained type of diary method that is used to collect very specific information surrounding a research construct. Data are usually (but not always) collected in the form of numbers or measurable records within pre-defined categories. For example, in a study exploring autonomous language learning, a research log might ask participants to record specific information related to the time and type of any out-of-class language learning they engage with during a set period of time. As logs often require participants to record information surrounding events ‘on-the-go’, they often adopt a questionnaire-like structure, which participants use to record their feelings and experiences via check boxes, scales or other quick measures.

An example of a log in applied linguistics research is Rose and Elliott’s (2010) exploration of students’ use of a self-access language learning centre for free conversation practice, where students were required to log the amount of time spent at the centre alongside their year of study, department and class number, which was used to explore patterns of use across year and proficiency levels. Outside of applied linguistics, log-type diaries are typically used to produce data intended for statistical analysis (Nezlek, 2012). In the field of psychology, logs are often used to obtain aggregate measures of a dynamic phenomenon over time, as they can yield data from multiple time points, from large numbers of participants, surrounding multiple inter-related constructs. The use of logs in this way is yet to be widely used in applied linguistics.

**Journals**

Placed along the spectrum of logs and personal diaries, we find a wide variety of research journals that include any routinely used record keeping by participants, which may include a range of
short and long-answer responses. Most journals typically ask participants to record very specific and highly targeted information related to the research topic under investigation. Good journals aim to minimize the input required by participants to ensure continued and systemic use of them, which can produce highly relevant data primed for analysis. An example of a journal in applied linguistics research is Galloway and Rose’s (2014) use of listening journals to explore students’ attitudes and reactions to world Englishes. In this study, 108 students were required to independently select and listen to ten samples of world Englishes each, and record in their journal the type of English selected, the reasons for choosing this variety, and their reactions to the listening task. These data were then subjected to both frequency analysis and qualitative analysis.

Rose, McKinley and Briggs Baffoe-Djan (2020) illustrate the differences between different type of diaries via an illustrative hypothetical study exploring out-of-class informal language contact of second language learners. They state that a journal could be used by participants to record specific moments of out-of-class language contact, accompanied by observations and comments surrounding these events. This could be used to qualitatively analyze how learners engage with language outside of the classroom contexts to build an accurate picture of language contact. They state that a reflective diary may follow a similar methodology, but due to the personalized nature of the data recorded, may be more appropriate to answer research questions that aim to explore participants’ thoughts and reflections on these language contact experiences. In contrast, a log would aim to only record moments of language contact according to set criteria such as: “length of contact (in minutes), difficulties in communication (on a Likert scale), nationality of the interlocutor (within set categories) and purpose of communication (in short word format)” (p. 136).

**Temporal designs of diary methods**

Diary methods can further be divided into several types according to the timing of when participants record information in them. Bolger et al. (2003) state that “diary studies serve one of two major purposes: the investigation of phenomena as they unfold over time, or the focused examination of specific, and often rare, phenomena” (p. 588). Thus, the purpose of the investigation will dictate when participants will be required to write in their journals. If the purpose of a research project is to map out behaviour over time, a systematic (or random) sampling of time will be needed. If the purpose is to explore issues surrounding a specific event or phenomenon, then participants would need to write in their journals only after the event being investigated has occurred. In different fields, different terms are used to capture these diverse purposes. This chapter adopts the terms interval contingent designs, signal contingent designs, event contingent designs (e.g., Wheeler & Reis, 1991) and variable-scheduled designs (Bolger et al., 2003).

**Interval contingent designs**

Interval contingent designs aim to capture behaviours, feelings or thoughts over long periods of time, in order to track or map out the phenomenon being investigated. For example, participants might be required to fill in their journals at pre-set times of the day or week, such as at 9am and 9pm, or the end of each workday, or on Wednesday morning every week. This type of design is very powerful to systematically explore changes in a construct over time. It is especially useful to collect a lot of data surrounding dynamic constructs, which are known to fluctuate. For example, study-abroad learners might be required to write in journals at the end of each day to keep records of anxiety experienced when using the target language. Similarly, in teacher education research, newly trained language teachers might be required to record
their attitudes in a teaching journal during their first semester of teaching in order to explore how ideas in teacher training are integrated into their classroom practices. Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990) highlight the use of interval-contingent diaries where participants were required to complete a journal entry each day, for over 7–10 days.

**Signal contingent designs**

While interval contingent journals might be useful for the hypothetical teacher education project, they might be less reliable for the hypothetical study-abroad study. In the study-abroad study, the anxiety experienced by learners at the end of each day might be very different from in-the-moment anxiety experienced at different times of day (i.e. when they are attending classes or engaging in social activities). A *signal contingent journal* is one way to randomize the timing of journal entries as they ask participants to fill in journal entries at randomized times when given the signal to do so. Signals are often given to participants via text messages or mobile applications which send a message to participants to fill in their diaries.

Signal contingent designs can be useful if timing is seen to be an important influential factor on the phenomenon being researched. This design aims to randomize the time of signals (within reason) to capture dynamic constructs in action. Obviously, randomization of time is highly dependent on the availability of a participant to complete a journal entry when signalled. In practice, most participants may be preoccupied when they receive the signal from the researcher, and will be unlikely to fill in an entry immediately, or in great length. For this reason, signal-contingent designs are best paired with logs rather than personal diaries or lengthier journals. For example, participants in the hypothetical study abroad study, might only be required to answer a few short questions regarding anxiety when they receive the signal, such as recording their current level anxiety on a scale of 1–100. While this design has a clear advantage of randomization, there is also a clear disadvantage of needing participants to write their journal entries at inconvenient times. Thus, researchers may also need to adopt some flexibility for participants to complete entries (e.g. within an hour of the signalled time), which then detracts from the original purpose of randomization.

**Variable-scheduled designs**

When signalling participants is deemed to be impractical or problematic, such as if it conflicts with class and social activities, a researcher might instead elect to have participants complete a variable-scheduled journal. In this design, a schedule for journal entry is pre-determined to capture a range of entries at various pre-determined times. Bolger et al. (2003) explain that a researcher would ask participants in advance of data collection that they adhere to a set data entry schedule, thus not necessitating the need for a signal. The advantage of this design type is that a researcher can work around a participants’ schedule to ensure they have adequate time to complete the journal entry at the allotted time. Thus, while the design sacrifices randomization in capturing a construct, it may gain better quality data, which is especially useful if longer journal entries are required. The timing of the journal entries need to be carefully considered and justified by the researcher in terms of being representative of a participants’ overall daily experience.

**An event contingent design**

An event contingent design asks participants to complete a journal entry only after they experience or complete the specific event being studied. Event contingent designs are useful to
investigate participants’ behaviours, thoughts or feelings surrounding a particular task. An advantage of this design is that it asks participants to engage in data production immediately after the completion of a task, and thus the thoughts, behaviours and feelings are fresh in the participants’ minds. As Rose (2015, p. 428) observes, event contingent designs help to “minimize the time between the event and the report, thus avoiding the problems of other retrospective data collection methods, but adds structure to a research project more so than a narrative account”. Galloway and Rose’s (2014) listening journal study is an example of an event contingent design, where participants wrote their journal entries only after completing a listening activity. A further example is a study by Goh (1997) who asked Chinese learners of English living in Singapore to keep listening journals in which they recorded real-life occasions of listening to the target language, alongside comprehension strategies and additional thoughts concerning the task. While interval-based designs may be ideal to capture ongoing phenomena, event contingent designs are more robust when diary methods are used to explore specific events.

**Combination designs**

In order to combat the disadvantages of each type of diary design, some researchers opt to combine diary types to enhance the validity and reliability of the method. Bolger et al. (2003) state that “mixed or combination schedules can markedly strengthen a study design” (p. 591). For example, a signal contingent log might be used to randomize the timing of data entered by participants, which could be supplemented by an interval contingent journal, where the same participants elaborate on the construct being explore in greater detail, but at fewer data collection points. Returning to the hypothetical language anxiety study, participants might record their anxiety on a scale of 1–100 at 50 randomized or variable scheduled time points throughout a ten-week study, and also complete ten lengthier journal entries at the end of each week of the study to add additional qualitative data. The mixing of journal type and format can allow for a diverse understanding of the phenomenon being researched, and can also save participants time by varying the type of entries required from them.

**Improving the use of diary methods**

One of the pitfalls of diary methods is that they necessitate a huge investment on the part of the participant, especially if personalized diaries are used. As Bolger et al. (2003) state, “in order to obtain reliable and valid data, diary studies must achieve a level of participant commitment and dedication rarely required in other types of research studies” (pp. 592–593). If participants are not committed, this can result in poor-quality entries, which erodes the reliability of information recorded in them. Enhancing the use of diary methods for participants is easier in contexts where the researcher can integrate the diaries within the existing structure of the activities being explored. This is particularly relevant for researchers exploring a classroom-learning activity, where there may be pedagogical value attached to the act of journal keeping by the participants (see Bailey, 1983; Oxford et al., 1996). If this is the case, the researcher might be able to integrate the diary method within the curriculum – thereby making the method part of what is perceived to be good pedagogy.

By making the journal part of the everyday practice of the research context, the researcher gains more control over how and when the participants completed their journal entries. In classroom research, learners will be far more likely to take the act of writing in their journal more seriously if they see value in the activity for their learning development. In Galloway and Rose’s (2014) listening journal study, the listening activity was embedded into a homework
task for the learners, and thus the researchers were able to collect 1,092 journal entries from 108 participants – more than the planned ten entries per student. Similarly, in Aubrey’s (2017a, 2017b) study of 42 Japanese English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, 208 journal entries were collected by the teacher, who was also the researcher, which further shows the benefits of a teacher-researcher role in diary methods. Thus, the diaries in both of these studies achieved a dual pedagogical and research purpose, which enhanced their effectiveness.

Reducing time commitments for participants

In contexts where a researcher has less control over the context, and is unable to embed the diary method into existing structures, efforts need to be made to reduce time demands on participants. All in all, diary methods require a substantial time investment for participants, and if participants do not see the value in maintaining their diary, the data set is likely to be riddled with missing or incomplete entries. In many cases, researchers need to consider what information is essential to answer their research questions, and target entries to obtaining this information. Researchers should consider how they plan to analyze or code the data, which may inform their use of checkboxes, short-response, scale and multiple-choice items within a journal to reduce time demands. Specific guiding questions can also help participants to focus only on the constructs of interest to the researcher to avoid them engaging in lengthy journal entries that contain irrelevant data for the research project. In the study by Parkinson and Howell-Richardson (1990), which explored the language use in and outside of the classroom of general English learners (N = 74) across two cohorts, journal entries consisted of short-answer log-style and long answer diary-type items, which were organised within a single A4 piece of paper – a format designed to not overwhelm the participants.

Reducing literacy demands of diary methods

In much applied linguistics research, researchers deal with second, foreign or additional language users. When diverse participant populations come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds, data collection often occurs through the second language of the participants, which can complicate the quality of data collected. In cases where participants need to fill in journal entries in their second language, low-proficiency language users may experience difficulties. Moreover, the high literacy demands of personalized diaries can also be problematic for even highly proficient participants, as researchers are often interested in exploring nuances of the participants’ narrative accounts. As a result of these literacy challenges, participants may write unreliable and invalid entries, which may not represent their actual behaviours, thoughts or feelings. To reduce the literacy demands of diary methods, researchers can choose from several strategies: allow participants to write in their preferred language; allow flexible use of language norms by the participants; reduce the amount of text required to be written.

Allowing participants to write in their preferred language is one strategy in which researchers can use students’ expert knowledge of their first language to enhance to quality and length of diary entries, and minimize literacy demands associated with writing in a second language. This was one recommendation in a study by Hall (2008) which required 12 English language learners in the UK to keep daily diaries. The researcher concluded that requiring his participants to write in English may have affected the quality and quantity of the data he collected, recommending that future studies include opportunities for L1 entries. The obvious disadvantage of having students write in other languages is that it repositions the literacy demands of the diary methods from the participants to the researcher, who needs to work across languages during data analysis.
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If it is necessary for participants to write in their L2, a second strategy is to ensure participants understand that the diaries will primarily be used by the researcher to investigate a specific phenomenon, rather than the language used by the participants. If researchers apply flexible guidelines to the journal writing task, it can relieve the participants of the pressures to conform to standard language norms. Further to this, participants could be encouraged to use flexible language forms (and even translanguaging if the L1 is shared between the researcher and the participant) to communicate ideas successfully. The allowance of multimodality in journal entries might also reduce literacy demands by, for example, allowing students to audio record their journal entries, use drawings, or attach pictures to communicate their experiences effectively.

If a researcher desires a more controlled type of data collection, a further strategy to reduce literacy demands is by integrating easy-to-complete scale items, short-response items and multiple-choice items within the journals to collect all essential information in a concise format that is easily understood by low-proficiency participants. When open-ended response items are needed, the literacy demands can be reduced in the physical presentation of the journal such as a reduction of space provided for a response item. This can alleviate pressure felt by students to complete a lengthy journal entry: for low-proficiency learners, an empty page can lead to feelings of dread when they begin to write their entries, and could encourage a lot of ‘filler’ content, which erodes the quality of the data collected.

Using technology to enhance quality of data

Bartlett and Milligan (2015) state that digital platforms, web-based programs and social networking technologies have afforded researchers using diary methods improved opportunities to collect good data in new and robust ways. These technologies also allow for greater flexibility in collecting data from remotely based participants. Mobile technologies and apps can be useful in signalling and reminding participants to write journal entries, and to track and schedule their entries over time. Online platforms can be utilized to include elements of interaction in collaborative journals, opening opportunities for future innovation avenues of research with diary methods.

Even small integrations of technology can be useful to enhance the research process, such as the use of electronic or online journals via platforms such as Google Forms. Advantages of online journals are:

1. the entries, which constitute personal data, are kept confidential under password protection;
2. the journals will not get misplaced or lost by participants;
3. the journals will be made immediately available to the researcher for analysis;
4. the journals will be stored in a systematic way; and
5. that participants can access them through any mobile or computing device, which is especially useful in signal-contingent, variable-scheduled, and event-contingent diaries, when participants are required to complete the journals ‘on-the-move’.

An additional advantage of an electronic or online journal is that all of the entries are delivered to the researcher in typed format, and thus the researcher can immediately input the data into qualitative data analysis software without a need for text conversion.

Of course, there may also be advantages to adhering to paper-based journal formats. There may be certain research contexts where a paper-based journal will yield better results, especially with participants that lack digital literacy or lack of access to the type of technology used at times when journal writing is required. For example, when on-the-move, many participants
may prefer to hand-write journal entries rather than to enter them on their phones. Many of the advantages of paper-based formats mirror those in questionnaire studies, which are discussed further by Iwaniec (this volume).

**Enhancing the quality of journal entries through training**

One of the largest issues that threatens the quality of data obtained in diaries is that participants do not complete their journal entries with the kind of information the researcher hopes to collect. Especially for unstructured personalized diary studies, participants may focus and reflect on elements of their behaviours and thoughts which extend outside the focus of the research project. As Rose et al. (2020) state:

> Nothing can be more frustrating to a researcher at the end of a journal study than to discover many of the journal entries contain the wrong type of information, due to being completed in unexpected ways. This can render data unreliable, and a study incomplete. *(p. 140)*

To counter this issue, it is advisable that researchers provide their participants with comprehensive training at the start of the study to ensure that participants fully understand the correct procedures for completing entries within their assigned diaries (Reis & Gable, 2000). If a training session is impractical, a journal should contain clear instructions to the participants regarding what information to record in the journal and how to record it in a way that reduces their literacy and time demands, and thus increases the likelihood that entries are regularly maintained. These instructions should be clearly worded and readily available so participants can refer to them throughout the data collection period. Model responses should be used cautiously, as these might lead participants to mimic the content of the models. If model entries are provided, it is advisable that they are written on a different topic so that participants are able to mirror the style of entry rather than the content.

**Reducing recall bias**

Diary methods are very susceptible to recall bias (Carson & Longhini, 2002). As with all types of retrospective data collection techniques, recall bias is especially problematic in situations when substantial time has lapsed between the phenomenon being investigated and the recording of it in the journal by the participant. However, the effect of recall bias can differ depending on the focus of the research. For example, journals which require record keeping of ‘descriptions of L2 interlocuter’ might be less disposed to recall bias than more abstract constructs such as ‘descriptions of anxiety felt’. Unlike other introspective methods such as think-aloud protocols (see Zhang & Zhang, this volume) and stimulated recall (see Sanchez & Grimshaw, this volume), the researcher is not present during data collection when using diary methods, and thus is in no position to help participants’ recall of events.

While signal-contingent and event-contingent designs aim to lessen this time, there are many circumstances where it is simply not possible for participants to make a journal entry in a timely manner. In some cases, busy participants may have to wait until the end of the day to report on the event or construct being researched. In such contexts, researchers need to develop procedures to help ensure events are recalled accurately. To reduce the effects of recall bias in one study on language learning strategies (Ma & Oxford, 2014), the participant (who was
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also one of the researchers) kept a notebook during her language classes to write down notes to draw on later in her diaries, which she wrote at the end of the day. This informal type of record keeping can help recall of an event when transferred to a formal journal entry. Obviously, the best way to counter recall bias is to have participants complete the journal entry in a timely manner, but ensuring this can be difficult if the constructs being investigated occur when participants are engaged in other activities. This is further reason to lessen the time demands of the diary method to ensure participants are able to quickly record an entry on-the-move.

Implications for researchers

Bartlett and Milligan (2015) have observed that most popular research methodology books give little to no attention to diary methods, despite their clear advantages of providing insider accounts from participants. Rose, McKinley and Briggs Baffoe-Djan offer the following explanation for this contradiction:

If journals are such a powerful way to collect data, then why do we not see more good journal studies in applied linguistics? One explanation may be that early, and influential, diary studies in the field (e.g. Bailey, 1983) took a somewhat constrained view of journals, and presented them as the stereotypical ‘dear diary’ instruments in which participants were free to record their feelings and reflections . . . While such diaries might be useful for reflective research, they offer a very narrow illustration of how journals can be used by applied linguistics researchers. Looking at the bulk of journal methods over the decades in applied linguistics, it is no wonder that the method has developed a reputation for not being terribly robust.

(pp. 149–150)

Accordingly, current applied linguistics research that utilizes diary methods largely consists of narrative-style ethnographic research (such as Casanave, 2012, and Ma & Oxford, 2014) or diaries methods that are used to generate qualitative data analysis from the participants for thematic analysis (such as Galloway & Rose, 2014, and Aubrey, 2017a).

Applied linguistics currently lacks good models of diary methods used for advanced quantitative research like we see in other fields of research such as psychology. Quantitative researchers may, therefore, need to delve into the psychological research literature for further guidance on how diary methods are used to generate data for advanced statistical analysis (see Bolger et al., 2003; Nezlek, 2012; Iida, Shrout, Laurenceau, & Bolger, 2012). With a focus on multiple data collection points, diary methods are an ideal tool to explore innovative methodologies surrounding complex dynamic systems theory approaches to data collection in applied linguistics (see McKinley, this volume). These multiple data collection points are able to generate data that are primed for applying advanced quantitative analysis to explore non-linear development in language learning (see Pfenninger & Neuser, this volume).

Rose et al. (2020) write that the full use of diary methods has yet to be adequately explored in applied linguistics research, claiming that “this fact is especially egregious considering many of our researchers work alongside large cohorts of language learners, who are in a prime position to record in such journals due to their dual function as a research instrument and pedagogical tool” (p. 150). When diary methods are conducted with motivated participants, they can generate a lot of data in a short amount of time. Drawing more on psychological research methods, there is ample opportunity to expand the current meagre use of diary methods within
our field to incorporate a greater range of research. This scope should go beyond the narrative traditions of reflective journals and personal diaries and towards more dynamic constructs within applied linguistics. Diary methods offer a powerful insider account of the real-life lived experiences of our participants, and it is time that applied linguistics researchers harness this data collection method for its full potential.

References


