

Learning Estonian: an insiders' view. A preliminary analysis of language learning diaries

Language learning diary as an introspective resource enables to observe and bring forth the learning processes and interrelations of phenomena that would remain unobserved when using other methods, such as interviews and observations (Bailey & Ochsner, 1983: 189).

The paper presents preliminary analysis of language learning diaries of Estonian language students in Tallinn University, concentrating on topics most reflected upon in these diaries, and on the differences when comparing the beginning and end of a diary.

First, I shall describe the language learning process and the context in which the studied diaries are written. Second, I shall present a brief overview of all 18 diaries collected: the language of diaries, the main topics and how they were presented. Most on the diaries were written in Estonian, whereas four were in learners' first language, Russian. The analysis shows that there is no connection between language choice and proficiency in Estonian. The results also show that most of the students only list and describe class activities and sometimes evaluate topics and exercises. Third, I shall concentrate on four diaries, whose entries were richer than the rest as far as content and wording is concerned. The preliminary analysis of diaries shows the role of expectations: the rise of motivation in a student with low expectations and falling motivation in highly motivated student with high expectations. The main topics language learners write about are joy over success and struggling with grammar, notes on teacher's work and other students.

Bailey, K. M., & R. Ochsner 1983. A methodological review of the diary studies: Windmill tilting or social science? In K. M. Bailey, M. H. Long, & S. Peck (eds.), *Second language acquisition studies*. Rowley, M.A.: Newbury House, pp. 188-198