

Using Web 2.0 Technologies in a College Composition Classroom in the Caribbean: The Case of the Electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English

Raymond Oenbring

The College of The Bahamas, Nassau, The Bahamas

The article provides an example of how wikis and other web 2.0 technologies can play an important role in building knowledge and conducting research in post-secondary English composition classrooms in the Caribbean and other academic sites on the global margins. Specifically, the piece overviews the development of the electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English (eDBE) from Holm and Shilling's publication of the original 1982 Dictionary of Bahamian English to recent international collaboration leading to the development of the eDBE. Using the eDBE as an example, the piece provides insight into what role research projects using web 2.0 technologies can play in the post-secondary English composition classroom, especially in academic sites in the Caribbean.

Keywords: *Computers and composition, Bahamian Creole English, Caribbean composition, Caribbean English, wikis*

Introduction

Although wikis and other web 2.0 technologies offer unprecedented opportunity for information transfer and collaboration between socially and geographically distant individuals and social groups, most work in the field of rhetoric and composition¹ promoting the use of wikis and similar web 2.0 technologies have endorsed these technologies primarily for the ways these platforms can, through class writing assignments, support intellectual and critical development in the individual student – rather than for the legitimate and important public research such technologies can support. That is to say, compositionists and digital media scholars who have endorsed the use of wikis in the classroom have usually done so for one or more the following reasons: to break down cultural, geographic, and/or public/private barriers between and within students (see, for example, Almjeld, Rybas, & Rybas, 2013); to facilitate collaboration, critical engagement, and transfer of information within and between classrooms and student groups (see,

¹Broadly stated, the discipline of rhetoric and composition is an academic field dedicated to the systematic study of best practices in the teaching of postsecondary writing. While there have been some moves toward institutionalising the discipline of rhetoric and composition in the Caribbean in the past few years (see, for example, Milson-Whyte, 2015), rhetoric and composition remain, unfortunately, a largely American-based discipline.

for example, Albert & Kussmall, 2008; Gibert, Chen, & Sabol, 2008; and Moxey & Meehan, 2007); to offer students a site for extensive but low stakes writing (see, for example, Maxwell & Felczak, 2008); or to give students a medium for multimodal writing (for an overview of all of these different threads, see Lundin (2008)). Almjeld, Rybas, and Rybas (2013), furthermore, described their use of wikis and other web 2.0 technologies to facilitate collaboration between students at three geographically distant universities in the United States.

As the range of the previous studies suggests, what is missing from the critical conversation in rhetoric and composition is what the use of wikis and other web 2.0 technologies in the composition classroom can add to public research and public knowledge – not merely as platforms for ephemeral assignments and/or class web publication – but as legitimate tools for building and storing knowledge, especially in academic sites such as the Caribbean that are outside the Western academic establishment and that may not have the funding and resources for more traditional research. Indeed, speaking of the success of wikis at challenging traditional academic models of scholarship and knowledge building, Cummings (2008) noted that “no matter how improbable it may seem that a web page that anyone can edit would lead to valuable knowledge, Wikipedia makes it clear that there is now another model for knowledge creation” (p. 2). Furthermore, if rhetoric and composition scholars are to take seriously our claims that web technologies can and should allow students the opportunity to become public writers (see, for example, the critical discussion in Isaacs & Jackson, 2001) and we are to truly elevate student writing and inquiry in the composition classroom beyond mere fleeting assignments below the level of genuine research, wikis and other web 2.0 platforms seem promising and cost-effective vehicles for allowing students – especially students in sites on the margins of the global academy – to participate in genuine research aimed at storing and safeguarding their cultural and linguistic memory.

Several existing studies have found that using web 2.0 technologies such as wikis in post-secondary classes can increase student engagement and learning (see, for instance, Caeton, 2008). Senier (2015) found, for example, that having students in her class on 21st Century Native American literature compose their essays on Wikipedia as lasting entries¹ made students notably more “motivated and invested” (p. 33) in their writing assignments. Similarly, Stafford, Elgeuta, and Cameron (2014) found that having students in cognitive psychology classes participate in a class wiki led to statistically significant improvements in student average grades compared to classes where the students did not participate in a classroom wiki.

The present study offers a case study in the Caribbean context of how wikis and web 2.0 platforms can be used in the post-secondary composition classroom to support student research and student engagement. The specific web 2.0 platform discussed in the study is the *electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English (eDBE)*, a ‘wiki-ised’ version of linguists John Holm and Alison Shilling’s 1982 magisterial study of the lexicon of the diverse sociolinguistic communities inhabiting the Bahamian archipelago, the *Dictionary of Bahamian English (DBE)*. After providing some historical background regarding the social situation and state of research in the Bahamas, the piece traces the development of the *eDBE* from the original 1982 *DBE* to recent international collaboration leading to the development of the *eDBE*.

¹ 21st Century Native American literature is, according to Senier, an area where there are significant gaps in coverage in Wikipedia.

Social situation and the state of research in the Bahamas

As is the case in other English-speaking Caribbean nations, the majority of people in the Bahamas speak as their home language an English-based creole, referred to by linguists as *Bahamian Creole English* (BCE). Despite BCE's close and interesting historical connections with African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and Gullah, a relationship that a number of scholars have suggested might provide insight into the historical development of AAVE and creole languages more generally, presently there are only limited number of publicly-available academic studies of Bahamian language and culture. This paucity of scholarship is due both to a lack of attention from international researchers and from the limited amount of research activity that has traditionally taken place in academic and government institutions in the Bahamas. Formed soon after independence, and having until recently an almost exclusive focus on teaching, the College of the Bahamas (COB) remains the only four-year college or university in the entire country. Although the government of the Bahamas has expressed a commitment toward moving COB to a more research-intensive university, there remain significant roadblocks to conducting research at COB, including a lack of funding, library resources, research facilities, and research assistant support. Indeed, despite the Bahamas' complex sociolinguistic situation, COB still lacks a linguistics major and until recently did not offer a Bachelor's degree in English. (As all of this suggests, if an English scholar at COB is looking for students to mobilise for research activity, the clearest available source is their sections of first-year and advanced composition, which, of course, constitute the vast majority of sections offered by the School of English Studies at COB.)

I see the ongoing dictionary project as a good example of using wiki and web 2.0 technology as a means to safeguard cultural memory and build academic knowledge, especially in cultural contexts and institutions without extensive research support or research traditions. Moreover, I argue that wiki and web 2.0 technologies, such as those that I outline here, are valuable tools for allowing international collaboration facilitating research in academic sites without extensive research funding or research assistant support. Indeed, as a small, still developing country without extensive research funding, but with relatively high rates of internet use and access, even in rural 'family islands', the Bahamas seems well-suited for research studies using digital media and computer-mediated communication. With regard to student experience, the working hypothesis of the study was that having students work directly with the web 2.0 technologies of the online dictionary would improve student engagement in writing assignments due both to the arresting nature of the multimedia technologies and to students recognising the importance of their work in preserving their language and culture.

The history of the DBE

In 1982 John Holm and Alison Shilling, two expatriate scholars who had been working at COB, published the groundbreaking *Dictionary of Bahamian English* (DBE), a book that remains the only complete academic study of the unique patterns of usage of Bahamian English. Impressively comprehensive at the time of publication, the volume includes all of the following: contemporary BCE terms and expressions; terms used at different social levels in the Bahamas; terms only attested in historical documents; terms used in various island enclaves; and, finally, terms used by the local white and Haitian minorities. To build the dictionary, Holm and Shilling combined extensive word lists they had individually developed for their respective research programmes. Supported by a grant from the United States' National Endowment for the

Humanities, Holm traveled extensively throughout the Bahamian archipelago, interviewing informants in many different settlements on many different islands.²

Despite the importance of the study, the *DBE* has long been out of print and not widely available to either the Bahamian population or the scholarly community. In fact, only a limited number of copies of the book were printed during the original run and the publisher, Lexik House, went out of business soon after the original publication. In recent years, the only possible way to obtain a copy of the volume has been to purchase an (oftentimes decidedly expensive) used copy on the secondary market. What's more, COB has only one copy of the 1982 *DBE* and it, like the rest of the specifically Bahamian material has been housed (that is, basically locked away) in Special Collections in the library. That is to say, the dictionary has for decades been unavailable in any form to the vast majority of the Bahamian population. In addition, most Bahamians are still unaware of its existence.

As early as his presentation at the 1988 Society for Caribbean Linguistics conference in Nassau entitled "A Supplement to the *Dictionary of Bahamian English*," a piece where he offered up a number of corrections, addendums and new entries for the dictionary, Holm had openly invited scholars interested in Bahamian English to continue his and Shilling's work on the *DBE* and to expand it beyond the original 5,000 entries (see, Holm, 1988a).³ Indeed, despite its comprehensive nature, there have, in the decades since its original publication, developed a number of glaring omissions in the *DBE*, especially in the realm of youth speech.⁴ Furthermore, although the original authors did their best to include as much terminology as possible from rural 'family islands' in the Bahamas, the original *DBE*, like much academic research done in and about the Bahamas, may have used an informant sample in which individuals from the capital, Nassau, are over-represented and informants from rural areas are under-represented. Nevertheless, after decades without any progress, work on the continued development of the *DBE* has advanced dramatically since 2009 when Holm and Shilling granted COB the copyright to the *DBE* and, furthermore, the rights to digitise and update the work.

The design and development of the dLOC *DBE* and *eDBE*

At present, the 1982 *DBE* is currently being digitised and updated through the combined effort of scholars and students at The College of The Bahamas, the Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) cooperative (technical infrastructure is provided by the University of Florida, Gainesville), and the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich (LMU), Germany. The initial stage of the project – that is, the scanning of the book's pages and uploading of the page images to dLOC – was completed between 2009 and 2010 by COB libraries.⁵ These digital page images

²After leaving COB, Holm has gone on to become an important scholar of the study of creole languages, publishing several foundational texts in creolistics, including Holm (1988b, 1989).

³Holm (1988a) noted for example that: "As our work [on the *DBE*] progressed it became increasingly clear that we had uncovered only the tip of the iceberg, and that much more work remains to be done. We hope other linguists in the Bahamas will continue this endeavor, which is richly rewarding for all that it reveals about Bahamian society, culture, and history" (p. 1).

⁴For example, the most common term of address between young Bahamians, male or female, pronounced [bəj], usually spelled <bey>, is only present in the 1982 *DBE* in the form of the spelling variants <buoy>, <boy>, and <beyeh>.

⁵For their work in securing the copyright and scanning and uploading the page images, I thank the COB library team, especially former head librarian Willimae Johnson.

(in .jpg format) are now available on the web through dLOC (for the purposes of this study, I call this interface the dLOC DBE).⁶For a screenshot of the dLOC DBE interface, see Figure 1.

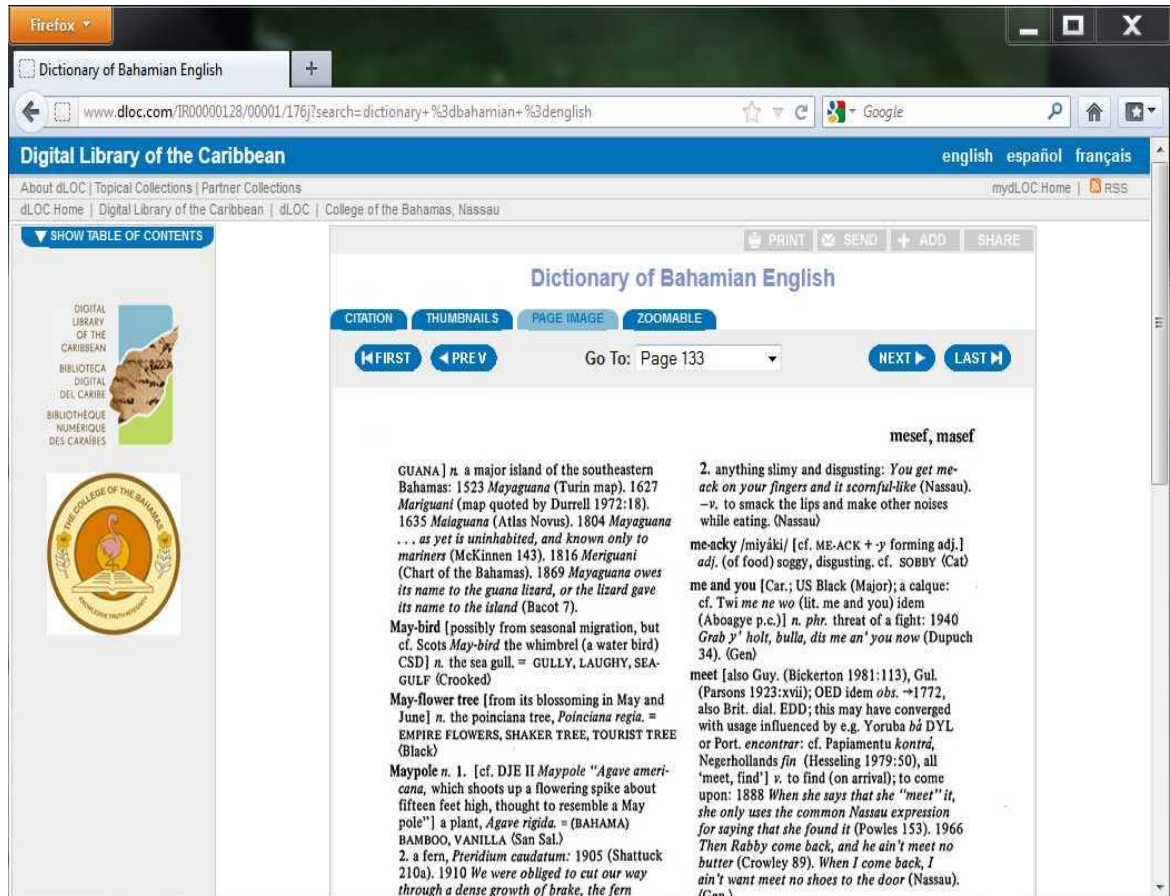


Figure 1. dLOC DBE layout

Although the dLOC DBE does provide an accurate, broadly-accessible record of the original 1982 volume, the dLOC DBE interface does not take advantage of much of what digital technology is good at: that is, the ability for rapid searching and sorting, and the potential to be updated. Indeed, the dLOC DBE is a static work; the definitions cannot be edited, expanded, added to or supplemented with multimedia content. Furthermore, the definitions of the dLOC DBE are not searchable. In fact, in order to search for a definition a user of the dLOC DBE must click through the images much as they would turn through the pages of a physical book. Finally, the dLOC DBE lacks a capacity for part of speech or semantic tagging. Thus, as all of this suggests, the dLOC DBE's potential uses as a research and publication tool in the composition classroom are limited.

Following the research of Lisabeth (2015) and others into the use of wikis to build student engagement in postsecondary writing classes, I determined that a wiki-style interface would increase students' opportunities for substantive engagement and interaction with the Holm and Shilling's (1982) important study of Bahamian language and culture. Accordingly, starting

⁶ One can access the page images at the following URL: <http://www.dloc.com/IR00000128>

in 2010, I began development of the *electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English with wiki* (*eDBE*) platform as split of the open source PHP-based platform phpMyFAQ⁷, making a number of extensive modifications to the source code myself. Completed in late 2010, the final platform has a number of features that the dLOC *DBE* interface lacks (See Figure 2 for a screenshot of the main page). First of all, the *eDBE* allows for editing and expansion of the original 1982 set of definitions.⁸

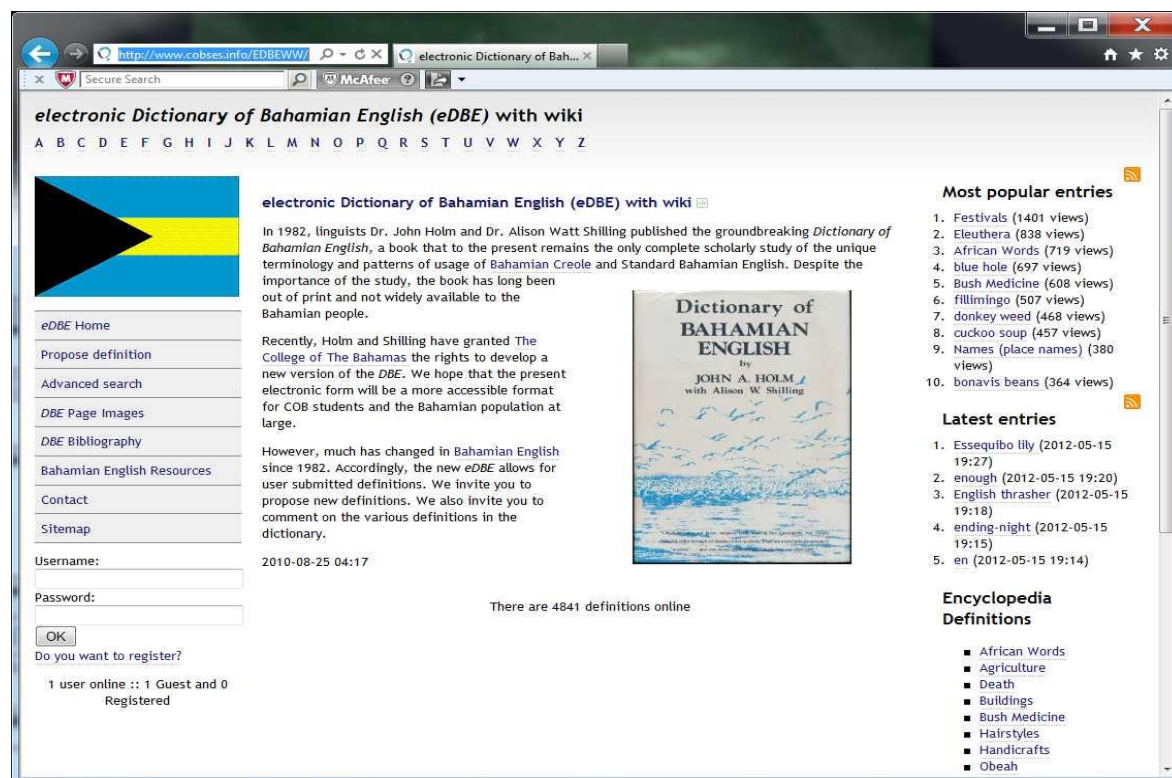


Figure 2. Screenshot of *eDBE* main page

Secondly, the *eDBE* platform contains a search function, using the native search feature of the MySQL database (See Figure 3 for a screenshot of a search).

Furthermore, the *eDBE* platform allows for parts of speech and/or semantic tagging and for the addition of multimedia content to entries (See Figure 4 for a screenshot of a multimedia entry).

Finally, the *eDBE* platform, like much web 2.0 technology, allows users to leave comments.⁹

⁷For more on the phpMyFAQ platform, see the project homepage: <http://www.phpmyfaq.de>

⁸Indeed, adding Holm's (1988) corrections, expansions, and new definitions is a priority for the *eDBE* team.

⁹One can access the *eDBE* here: www.cobses.info/EDBEWW

electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English (eDBE) with wiki
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Search
25 search results
Page 1 out of 2 Pages

Definitions starting with B: Bogue, Boague
Entry: /bowg/ [W Car.; cf. Brit: dial. North bog /bowg/ + Sp. boca river mouth DJE, also US dial. South bogue creek ADD] n., Obs. ...

Definitions starting with B: Brilan
Entry: /bráylan/ [by aphaeresis] n. Harbour island, a cay off **Eleuthera**: 1936 'Brilan wuz all heat up 'bout dese 'lections (Dupuch 95). ...

Definitions starting with E: **Eleuthera**
Entry: **Eleuthera**, a major island of the Bahamas. See ELEUTHERIA ...

Definitions starting with E: **Eleuthera** bark
Entry: [W3 idem; not in DAE, OED; from the name of the island] n. cascarilla, the aromatic bark of a shrub, Croton eluteria or C. cascarilla, ...

Definitions starting with E: Eleutheria
Entry: [cf. OED Eleutherian from Greek ελευθερι-ος free + -an, the title of Zeus as protector of political freedom...1623] n. Obs. 1. a former name for ...

Definitions starting with H: Harbour Island cotton
Entry: [from the name of a cay off **Eleuthera**] n. a variety of cotton, Gossypium sp., with reddish-brown cotton adhering to green seeds: 1889 (Gardner 367). ...

Definitions starting with H: Hatchet Bay Fly
Entry: [alluding to the flies at the near-by chicken farms] n. nickname for a native of Hatchet Bay, **Eleuthera**. (Eleu.) ...

Definitions starting with I: Ilathera
Entry: [cf. ELEUTHERIA] n., Obs. an eighteenth-century name for **Eleuthera**, a major island of the Bahamas: 1731 The islands of Andros and Ilathera (Catesby 30). 854. ...

Most popular entries

1. Festivals (1402 views)
2. Eleuthera (838 views)
3. African Words (719 views)
4. blue hole (697 views)
5. Bush Medicine (608 views)
6. fillimingo (507 views)
7. donkey weed (468 views)
8. cuckoo soup (457 views)
9. Names (place names) (380 views)
10. bonavis beans (364 views)

Latest entries

1. Essequibo lily (2012-05-15 19:27)
2. enough (2012-05-15 19:20)
3. English thrasher (2012-05-15 19:18)
4. ending-night (2012-05-15 19:15)
5. en (2012-05-15 19:14)

Encyclopedia Definitions

- African Words
- Agriculture
- Death
- Buildings
- Bush Medicine
- Hairstyles
- Handicrafts
- Obeah

Username:
Password:

Do you want to register?
1 user online :: 1 Guest and 0 Registered

Figure 3. Screenshot of a search page

electronic Dictionary of Bahamian English (eDBE) with wiki
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Definitions starting with F
Festivals



The Bahamian festival which outshines all others is JUNKANOO, a heady mixture of fantastic, colorful costumes and exuberant African rhythms which both starts the year in the early hours of New Year's morning and ends it up the day after Christmas. Preparations for JUNKANOO can take up much of the year in between. Neighbors, friends, co-workers or fellow students form JUNKANOO groups, which might meet in a SHACK or on a sports field in the dead of night to practice their own particular rhythms on home-made GOOMBAY or KEG DRUMS as well as cowbells, whistles, and SHAKERS. They choose a common theme for their group's FRINGE SUITS and FACES, and then begin the long and painstaking work needed to make them. They FRINGE crepe paper of various colors into SHINGLING or FRINGE, which is pasted or sewn in

Records in this category

- fa
- face
- face
- face-basin, face-bowl, face-pan
- fainty
- fair, fear
- fair-skin
- fairly well
- fall
- fall
- fall away
- fall ill and shameful
- fall out
- falling crop
- false
- false boxwood
- false hog gum
- false pear
- fambly, family
- Family Islands
- family wood
- fan
- fan rake
- fanner grass
- fanner, fenno
- far as
- farm
- farrer
- farrer
- fast
- fast
- fat pine
- fat pork

Username:
Password:

Do you want to register?
1 user online :: 1 Guest and 0 Registered

Figure 4. Example of a multimedia entry

Although the *eDBE* platform does include numerous features that are generally present in platforms given the name ‘wikis’, and thus uses the term as an organising label, the *eDBE* platform and community are not designed with a certain feature that many laymen believe to be the *sine qua non* of a ‘wiki’ (a feature that very few ‘wikis’ actually offer): that is, unmoderated and uncontrolled user edits.¹⁰ Although the *eDBE* community does welcome user-submitted definitions from both students and the Bahamian community at large, all additions, comments, and changes to the dictionary are overseen by a network of Bahamian and international scholars. Indeed, given the *DBE*’s foundational place in the academic study of Bahamian English, maintaining the scholarly rigour of all edits and updates to the *eDBE* has been an important goal of the *eDBE* community. Therefore, what is entailed in the ‘wiki’ section of the *eDBE*, is a ‘wiki’ in the more general, cautious definition given by Cummings (2008) – that is, “a Web page that users can modify” (p. 5).

After the *eDBE* platform was developed, I began to lead a team of both advanced English composition students at COB and paid student-research assistants at both COB and at LMU in adding the definitions to the *eDBE* database.¹¹ The student assistants at this stage of the project had four main tasks: upload copies of the scanned page images of the dLOC *DBE* interface into a web-based optical character recognition (OCR) software platform¹² (www.onlineocr.net); carefully proofread the OCR product text against the dLOC *DBE* page images; copy the text into the *eDBE* database backend; and, finally, add all appropriate parts of speech and semantic tags. By Summer 2012, all of the definitions in the original *DBE* had been added to the database and work commenced at this point to activate the links between entries (i.e., places where definitions refer to other entries in the dictionary), something indicated typographically by Holm and Shilling (1982) in the original *DBE* by placing words in all capital letters. At the time of writing of the present piece (Winter 2016), the intra-dictionary link digitisation is ongoing and incorporation of Holm’s 1988 updates and the addition and approval of new entries are in their nascent stages.

Student Assignments and Data Collection: Methods

I have tried two primary ways of getting my students involved in the *eDBE* project, each of which has served to enhance and deepen the scope of the *eDBE* and to preserve important cultural memory. First of all, in my Linguistics classes and Advanced Composition classes, I have asked students to help with the production of new content. Specifically, I have designed assignments where students either develop new definitions for the dictionary (indeed, as one can imagine, much has changed in the terminology used by Bahamian youth since the early 1980s) or take pictures to illustrate pre-existing definitions. However, in the interest of maintaining scholarly rigour, all proposed definitions must go through scholarly review and editing before going live. Furthermore, all entries clearly indicate their provenance and authorship, be it the 1982 *DBE*, a current scholar, a member of the Bahamian community based locally or in the

¹⁰Indeed, Wikipedia, the most famous example of a wiki, has an extensive hierarchy of editors and administrators (see, for example, Sundin, 2011).

¹¹I am particularly grateful for the help of two paid student research assistants: Erin Tenniel (COB) and Alexander Laube (LMU). I also thank Prof. Dr. Stephanie Hackert, chair of English linguistics at LMU, for her support. I also would like to thank COB for the small research grant I received to support the student research assistants.

¹²The page images of the dLOC *DBE* interface proved invaluable as they could be used for OCR, preventing the need for research assistants to type out all of the definitions.

diaspora, or a COB student. Nevertheless, once the definitions are accepted by the *eDBE* editorial team, they are treated the same as Holm and Shilling's (1982) original entries by the *eDBE* interface.

In order to expand the knowledge base of the online dictionary, I have, in my first-year writing classes, given students the following assignment: Find at least five words in the *eDBE* that they are unfamiliar with (preferably on a unifying theme [e.g., all terms from one island in the Bahamas]), and ask three separate people (the older, the better) the following: if they have heard of the term and how they would define the term. Students then use the *eDBE* interface and/or the *eDBE*'s comment feature to incorporate the insight they glean from their informants into the terms' respective definitions (See, for example, Figure 5 for a student's use of the comment feature). In order to gauge what students learned by completing the assignment and to get a sense of their degree of engagement with the assignment, I have, at the end of the dictionary assignment, instructed students to write reflective paragraphs on what they learned by completing the assignment.¹³

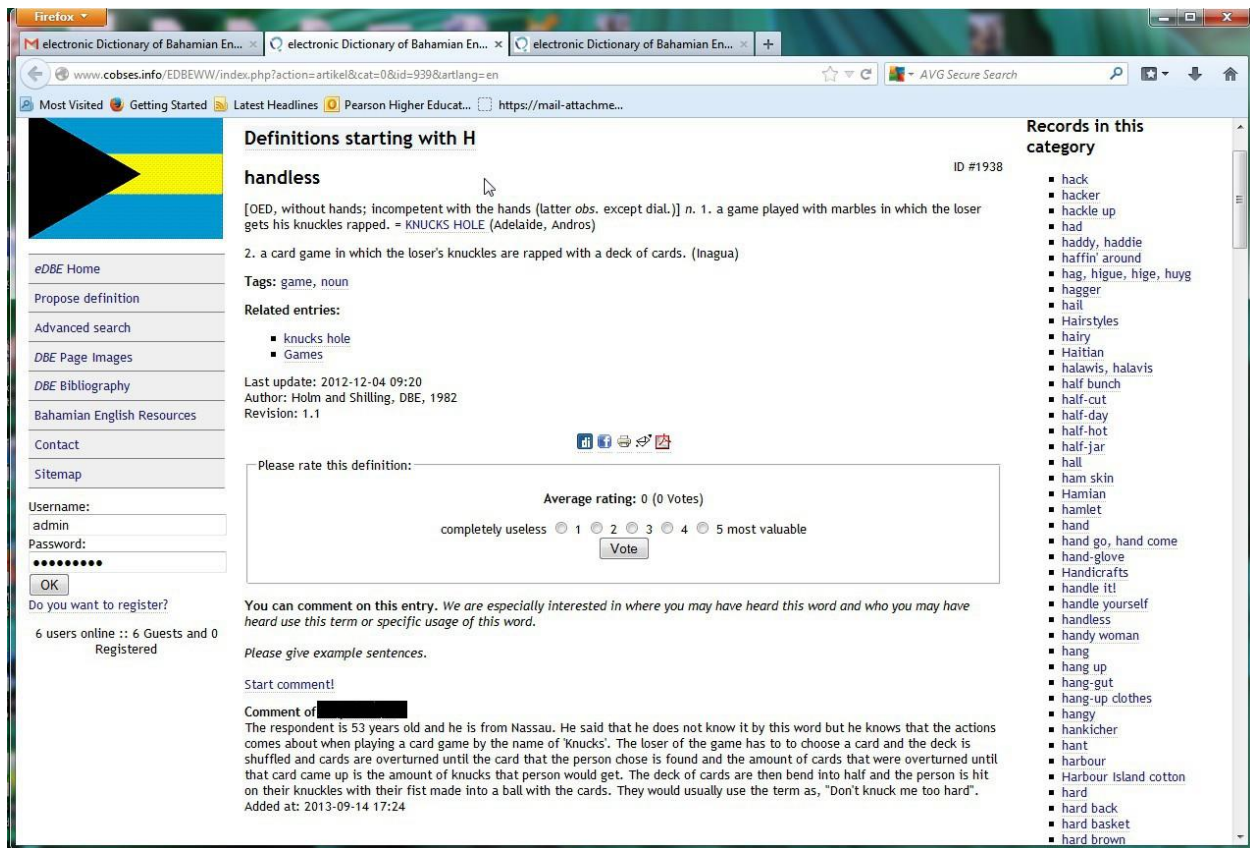


Figure 5. Screenshot of student comment

Results

The glosses to the original definitions provided by the first-year composition students serve an important function of updating and deepening the knowledge base of the original *DBE*. Although anecdotal and often based on small sample sizes, the first-year composition students' additions to

¹³The assignments I have given my students involving the *eDBE* never forget the (post) process writing paradigm's imperative for reflection as part of the writing process.

the *eDBE* provide much-needed examples and cultural background to flesh out the original *DBE* definitions. Indeed, whereas a printed dictionary must be economical in its use of space on the page, entries and their commentary in a web-based dictionary need not be stingy with their word count. Moreover, many students base their posts on informants from rural ‘family islands’, a group under-represented in the original 1982 *DBE*; the first-year composition students’ glosses and additions are working to counteract any Nassau-centric bias in the original dictionary.

In their reflective paragraphs, many students noted their surprise over the mere existence of the *DBE* and *eDBE*. One student, for instance, noted that participating in dictionary project *“truly opened my eyes [and] gave me a great sense of pride knowing that my country has its own dictionary.”* Indeed, many students expressed that working on the dictionary had helped them develop their sense of pride and historical perspective regarding Bahamian English. Another student, for example, claimed that *“I ... now have a broader perspective on my history, and therefore I can instill this knowledge on others that aren’t as familiar as [I am] about the terms.”* Similarly, another student observed that participating in the dictionary project *“allowed [them] to develop a wider understanding of how Bahamian English has advanced from 1982 to the present.”* Yet another student noted that the assignment task started with extensive reminiscing about food terminology with her mother, father, and grandmother and eventually led to an extensive discussion in her family about the use of old words and cultural preservation. Indeed, the student noted that *“I loved hearing [her father] talk about these words; it felt as if he took me into a time machine and took me back in history; I was so fascinated, interested and excited.”* Finally, multiple students commented in their reflective paragraphs that participating in the dictionary project had deflated their assumption that ‘island people’ (that is, people from one of the rural ‘family islands’ – that is just about every island other than New Providence, where the capital Nassau is located) would be more likely to know BCE terms than individuals from Nassau.

More generally, my students participating in the *eDBE* project have expressed, both in their reflective paragraphs and in class, their appreciation of the fact that their work for the assignments has contributed to legitimate cultural preservation and genuine research. One student, for example, noted in their reflective paragraph that *“usually, English assignments seem pointless...but with the dictionary assignment I felt like I was part of something important.”* Indeed, as college composition instructors oftentimes many of our assignments seem purely ephemeral tasks for student-writers, and this *one and done* nature can often serve to disengage and demotivate students. To be sure, as composition instructors we can do much to motivate students merely by making them feel like they are participating in something important when they write.

Discussion

As indicted by the students’ reflective paragraphs, as well as their increased overall quality of writing, the study’s working hypothesis – specifically, that working with the web 2.0 technologies to build lasting knowledge about their language and culture would improve student engagement – appears to be confirmed. This documented increase in student engagement is likely a product of both the arresting multimedia technologies of the web 2.0 platforms and students’ interest in cultural and linguistic preservation. Accordingly, the current study serves as a good example of how wikis and other web 2.0 technologies can be used effectively as research and student-engagement tools in postsecondary classrooms, especially in non-traditional and marginal academic sites. Indeed, it seems possible that the *eDBE* can serve as a model to inspire

cultural and linguistic preservation projects at post-secondary institutions elsewhere in the Caribbean.

Although the need for cultural and linguistic preservation of Bahamian Creole English grows greater, with older, basilectal speakers getting fewer and fewer and the homogenising forces of American media growing more pervasive, there remain few resources available for academic researchers in the Bahamas, a scarcity that seems unlikely to change in the near future despite the College of the Bahamas' planned transition to university status. Accordingly, scholars wishing to do research in the Bahamas must work with whatever they have available, and in the case of English scholars in the Bahamas, that is, Composition students. Despite being newcomers to the academy, these students can, as I have shown, be marshaled to produce valuable research serving to preserve their language and culture.

Of course, the author of this study acknowledges that the *eDBE* research project, and thus my students' opportunity to produce assignments engaging with it, would not have been possible without the fortuitous event of the original authors of the *Dictionary of Bahamian English* bestowing the rights to digitise and update the work to the College of the Bahamas; the *eDBE* project has, like many successful academic endeavors, been beneficiary of fortuitous timing. Moreover, the research activity that students have engaged in for the dictionary project has, up to now, largely consisted of addendums and glosses on a previously published authoritative academic text, with the students' compositions receiving their status as 'research' as a result of their connection with Holm and Shilling's (1982) original text. These facts together might make any possible overlap and carryover between the *eDBE* project described here and projects that other scholars around the globe are engaged in questionable. Nonetheless, it is my sincere belief that what makes the *eDBE* platform and project noteworthy are less these issues and more the unique Bahamian and International research communities geared at collecting and safeguarding threatened linguistic knowledge that the platform allowed to be engendered. Indeed, I sincerely hope that the current study can provide inspiration to those teaching and working in similarly marginalised communities whose language and culture are threatened.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the COB Library team, especially former Head Librarian, Willimae Johnson, for their work in securing the copyright and scanning and uploading the page images. I am also particularly grateful to the COB for the research grant which I received to support the two paid student-research assistants: Erin Tenniel (COB) and Alexander Laube (LMU). Finally, I am thankful to Professor Stephanie Hackert, Chair of English Linguistics at LMU for her support.

References

- Albert, S. & Kussmaul, C. (2009). Why Wikis are Wonderful for Writing. In T. Carter, & M. Clayton (Eds.), *Writing and the iGeneration: Composition in the Computer-Mediated Classroom* (pp. 49-68). Southlake, TX: Fountainhead Press.
- Almjed, J., Rybas, N., & Rybas, S. (2013). Virtual Teaming: Faculty Collaboration in OnlineSpaces. *Kairos*, 17. Retrieved from <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/VirtualTeaming/Home>
- Caeton, C.A. (2008). Agency and Accountability: The Paradoxes of Wiki Discourse. In R. Cummings, & M. Barton (Eds.), *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (pp.123-136). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

- Cummings, R. (2008). What Was a Wiki, and Why do I Care? In R. Cummings, & M. Barton (Eds.), *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (pp.1-16). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Gilbert, D., Chen, H., & Sabol, J. (2008). Building Learning Communities with Wikis. In R. Cummings, & M. Barton (Eds.), *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (pp.1-16). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Hackert, S. & Holm, J. (2009). Southern Bahamian: Transported African American Vernacular English or Transported Gullah? *The College of The Bahamas Research Journal*, 15, 12-21.
- Hackert, S. & Huber, M. (2007). Gullah in the Diaspora: Historical and Linguistic Evidence from the Bahamas, *Diachronica* 24, 279-325.
- Holm, J. (1988a). A Supplement to the Dictionary of Bahamian English. Paper presented at the Society for Caribbean Linguistics Conference, Nassau, Bahamas, 24-27 August.
- Holm, J. (1988b). *Pidgins and Creoles: Volume 1, Theory and Structure*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Holm, J. (1989). *Pidgins and Creoles: Volume 2, Reference Survey*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP.
- Holm, J. & Shilling, A. (1982). *Dictionary of Bahamian English*. Cold Spring, NY: Lexik House.
- Issacs, E. & Jackson, P. (Eds.). (2001). *Public Works: Student Writing as Public Text* Portsmouth, NH: Boyton/Cook.
- Milson-Whyte, V. (2015). *Academic Writing Instruction for Creole-Influenced Students*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
- Lisabeth, L. (2015). Empowering Education with Social Annotation and Wikis. In J. Dougherty & T. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Web Writing* (pp. 249-262). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Lundin, R. (2008). Teaching with Wikis: Toward a Networked Pedagogy. *Computers and Composition*, 25, 432-448.
- Maxwell, J. & Felczak, M. (2008). Success through Simplicity: On Developmental Writing and Methods of Inquiry. In R. Cummings & M. Barton (Eds.), *Wiki Writing: Collaborative Learning in the College Classroom* (pp.90-105). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Moxey, J. & Meehan, R. (2007). Collaboration, Literacy, Authorship: Using Social Networking Tools to Engage the Wisdom of Teachers. *Kairos*, 12. Retrieved from http://www.technorhetoric.net/12.1/binder.html?praxis/moxley_meehan/index.html
- Senier, S. (2015). Student Accountability to Native American Authors on the World's Largest Encyclopedia. In J. Dougherty & T. O'Donnell (Eds.), *Web Writing* (pp. 33-46). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Stafford, T., Elgueta, H., & Cameron, H. (2014). Students' engagement with a collaborative wiki tool predicts enhanced written exam performance. *Research In Learning Technology*, 22.
- Sundin, O. (2011). Janitors of knowledge: Constructing knowledge in the everyday life of Wikipedia editors. *Journal of Documentation*, 67, 840-862.