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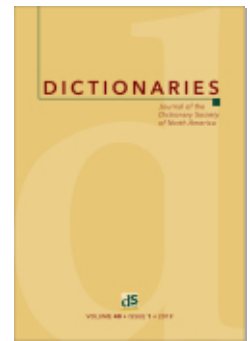
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Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America,
Volume 40, Issue 1, 2019, pp. 139-164 (Article)

Published by Dictionary Society of North America

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/dic.2019.0005>



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The Value of Local Dictionaries in the Caribbean: The Example of Saba



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ABSTRACT

While the Caribbean is home to at least seventy languages and hundreds of dialects, the region has had published only a handful of local dictionaries—that is, dictionaries for specific islands, island conglomerates, or coastal communities. Dictionaries are especially important for underrepresented communities such as those of the Caribbean, from both a linguistic perspective and an ethical one. Using the Sabaan English dictionary *A Lee Chip* (Johnson 2016) as an example, this article proposes two primary ethical functions of local dictionaries in the Caribbean. First, these dictionaries engage in rewriting the linguistic histories of communities whose language varieties have been labeled “broken” or “corrupt” for centuries. Such linguistic error correction (Labov 1982) can be achieved through the very publication of the dictionary, as well as through subsequent public presentations and media coverage. Second, local dictionaries can preserve knowledge under threat of extinction as a consequence of neocolonialism. Blurring the boundary between dictionary and encyclopedia (Silverstein 2006, Peeters 2000), this preservation can occur by the inclusion of local flora and fauna terms, as well as notes regarding the usage of certain plants and the connection of words to certain customs (Baksh-Comeau and Winer 2016). This article shows how local dictionaries in the Caribbean

are not only valuable for the fields of linguistics, language contact, and lexicography, but also for the underrepresented and historically exploited speech communities they document.

Keywords: Saban English, Caribbean lexicography, ethical lexicography, creoles, postcolonialism, neocolonialism, linguistic preservation, local lexicography

INTRODUCTION

Despite the linguistic richness of the Caribbean, the majority of its language varieties lack dictionaries to call their own. Lexicographers have faced challenges in the Caribbean due to a lack of written records in marginalized communities, as well as prevailing linguistic subordination and insecurity (Allsopp 1983). These two trends owe likely to the region's complicated—and often violent—linguistic past. During the colonial period, the genocide of Amerindians resulted in the loss of countless indigenous languages (Devonish 2007). Eurocentric views of language during (and long after) colonialism placed “standard” European languages above other language varieties. This resulted in the disfavor, and even decline, of heritage languages in the Caribbean—indigenous languages, creoles, and other local varieties (Reid 2012).

Multiple threats face languages of the Caribbean today. First, indigenous languages and creole languages continue to occupy subordinate status in comparison to colonizer languages. Eurocentric descriptions of creoles have portrayed them as deficient or “broken” (Holm 2000; DeGraff 2005a; Sabino 2012). As a result, these varieties are often absent in education as well as scholarly or literary writing and continue to face stigma (Devonish 2007; Spears and Berotte Joseph 2012; Youssef 2002). Negative stigma poses a threat to the language and its speakers, as speakers aware of negative stigma surrounding their language variety may, as a result, experience low self-worth, underperform academically, or stop using the variety altogether (Rickford and Rickford 1995; Bradley 2002). Second, economic and socio-cultural shifts are taking place throughout the Caribbean at a rapid rate. Due to globalization and neocolonialism, islands that were agrarian economies for centuries are shifting towards—or have already transitioned into—service-based economies (Weis 2003; Wijesinghe, Mura, and Bouchon 2017). As the

“linkage between the dominant language and social mobility” strengthens, local languages face threat of decreased usage (Romaine 2010, 321). With the decline of agriculture and maritime activity comes the decline of language use surrounding those practices. In fact, endangered languages tend to see lexical items with the strongest historical and cultural ties (e.g., terms for local traditions, flora, or fauna) disappear first (Nettle and Romaine 2002; Romaine 2010).

Linguists and lexicographers have tools to help prevent language loss and the cultural loss associated with it. Here I argue that dictionaries serve two ethical functions beyond their typical linguistic ones: (1) rewriting the linguistic histories of subordinated communities and (2) preserving knowledge under threat of extinction. To support this thesis, I provide examples from the recently published island-specific dictionary *A Lee Chip: A Dictionary and Study of Saban English* (Johnson 2016). The book details the lexicon, grammar, and pronunciation of the English variety spoken on Saba. Located in the Eastern Caribbean, Saba is a small, six-square-mile island. It was settled by the Dutch in the 1640s, followed shortly thereafter by English, Irish, and Scottish settlers, and enslaved Africans brought from other Caribbean islands. Saba has had a majority English-speaking population since the eighteenth century (Hartog 1975). The local language variety that developed, Saban English¹, is an English-lexifier “dialect creole variety” (Aceto 2003), with evidence of Dutch and West African languages in its phonology, grammar, and lexicon (Myrick 2014; Myrick and Naborn 2017; Wolfram and Myrick 2017).

A Lee Chip is the first dictionary of Saban English, and its author, Theodore Johnson, a Saba native who now practices law in Aruba, compiled and published it under the direction of sociolinguist Walt Wolfram. I served as the book’s copyeditor and contributed chapters on grammar and pronunciation. The book comprises four sections: an “Introduction” section includes one chapter on the history of the English language on Saba and another on how to navigate the dictionary; the

¹ While its most accurate typological description is a “dialect creole variety,” Saban English—like many other language varieties spoken on small islands/communities—has been described as a creole (see, e.g., Crane 1971, *Ethnologue* 2018), a contact variety (Wolfram and Myrick 2017), a combination of creole and uncreolized regional English, depending on speaker ethnicity (Holm 1989, 453), and a dialect (Myrick 2014).

section “Dictionary of Saban English Usage” contains over 1,450 words and phrases and seventy-three local sayings; the section “Saban English Grammar and Pronunciation” catalogs Saban English morphological and syntactic features, as well as phonological patterns; finally, the “Supplements” section includes a list of local flora and fauna, a list of local fishing rocks and fishing grounds, and a poem written by a local Saban. The title, *A Lee Chip*, means “a small morsel of something” in Saban English, as the book is meant to represent a portion of Saba’s history and culture: its language.

Like many other Caribbean varieties, Saba’s local language variety has been ignored, mischaracterized, and subordinated in the past. As a result, *A Lee Chip*—like other Caribbean dictionaries that have been published—functions as a tool for legitimizing the systematicity and history of the language variety, as well as instilling pride in its speakers. Furthermore, as Saba undergoes economic, political, linguistic, and sociocultural shifts that threaten language loss, the dictionary is an important tool for helping to preserving local knowledge.

LANGUAGE IN THE CARIBBEAN

The Caribbean region—including all islands of the archipelago, as well as Belize and the Guyanas—is home to twenty-three indigenous Amerindian languages, four European languages, one African language, at least twenty-three creole languages, seven post-emancipation immigrant languages, and at least nine indigenous sign languages (Ferreira 2012; Lewis 2009). Institutionally and ideologically, the majority of these are disparaged in favor of the “standard” European languages of their locales. For instance, French-lexifier creoles such as Haitian Creole and Guadeloupean Creole have historically been relegated inferior status to Standard French (DeGraff 2005a, 2018; Maher 2013; Racine and Morisseau-Leroy 1975). English-lexifier creoles such as Jamaican Creole and Trinidad English Creole have been considered inferior to Standard English (Alleyne 1994; Bryan 2004; DeCamp 1971; Winford 1976). These patterns hold true for Dutch-lexifier and Iberian-lexifier creoles as well, and the prestige of the European standard is not coincidental. The conceptualization of creoles and other Caribbean language varieties as “primitive,” “corrupt,” “bad,” or “broken” ties directly to the imperialism, colonialism, racism, and classism of Caribbean history

(DeGraff 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Devonish 2007; Youssef 2002). Eurocentric views of language have tended to place written literary traditions above oral traditions, and Caribbean language varieties have primarily been oral languages (Roberts 1997; Schneider 2007; Sindoni 2010). The small number of published texts written in local Caribbean language varieties (due to educational inequality and to pressures to write in standard languages, among other reasons), coupled with insufficient written documentation of Caribbean language varieties by linguists, has resulted in a continued subordination of these varieties (Romaine 1988; Sindoni 2010). Recent decades, however, have seen not only an increase in texts written in local language varieties but also support from schools and ministries of education for the use of local varieties in school-based writing.

Dictionaries can aid in the legitimization of a language or dialect (Béjoint 1994; Butler 1997; Hilliard and Wolfram 2003; Schneider 2007). In fact, many lexicographers writing in postcolonial or neocolonial situations have used dictionaries to push the cause of language legitimization. Cummings and Wolf's *Dictionary of Hong Kong English*, for instance, "hopes to make a modest contribution to the recognition of that variety as a legitimate and independent variety of English" (2011, xvii). Butler's *Macquarie Dictionary* (2007) was written to give legitimate status to Australian English, which had been viewed as a corruption of British English: "The dictionary gave a validity to Australian English that meant it could no longer be swept aside by foreign editors" (2007, foreword). Dictionaries are a powerful tool for legitimization in westernized societies especially, where "for a language to gain official recognition requires the existence of accepted reference books, i.e. dictionaries, grammars, and usage guides" (Schneider 2007, 52).

In areas with histories of colonization, the publication of a dictionary can strengthen national and linguistic identity (Schneider 2007). In Australia, national unity was a motivation for the publication of the *Macquarie Dictionary*: "The end result ... is a dictionary that characterises us as a community. It is an objective account but beneath its ordered surface lies the hot blood of a shared experience, of a long history of such shared experiences" (Butler 2007, foreword). In the Caribbean, this regional pride was a central motivation for Allsopp's groundbreaking *Dictionary of Caribbean English Usage (DCEU)* (1996). A goal of *DCEU* was to provide "sufficient ground to build Caribbean pride to replace the

earlier colonial shame-facedness and inhibitions beguiling the region” (Allsopp 1996, xxxi). Allsopp’s dictionary was a pioneering publication, seeking to establish a norm for Caribbean English. It was also published as a response to the demands of teachers in the Commonwealth Caribbean to help increase students’ British exam achievement rates (Siegel 2019). However, the focus on unity and standardization—as well as on the British Caribbean—came at the price of exclusion, as Aceto (1998, 413) points out in his review of *DCEU*:

[Allsopp’s] map of Caribbean English speakers is largely determined by whether or not a nation has status as an ex-British colony Consequently, millions of Caribbeans who speak their English varieties in locations with a colonial history different from the former British West Indies have been excluded from representation in *DCE*, without any comment.

The English of Puerto Rico (where English has official status) goes unmentioned in the dictionary, as do the English-derived creoles spoken as first languages in much of Central America (Aceto 1998). St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba—three Caribbean islands that have had an English-speaking majority since the seventeenth century (Aceto 2015; Williams and Myrick 2015)—are also absent. The English spoken in Samaná, Dominican Republic (see, e.g., Tagliamonte and Poplack 1988) and the Gustavia English-speaking community in St. Barths (see, e.g., Decker 2015) were also not included. Thus, the treatment of Caribbean English as a singular entity may achieve Allsopp’s goals of standardization and unity, but it overshadows many rich varieties of English that make up Caribbean English. This overshadowing of regional and community-level variation is a problem faced by any general dictionary (Montgomery 2013). But it is a problem that can be addressed by regional and local dictionaries.

Scholarly dictionaries exist for a small number of Caribbean language varieties. In the French-speaking Caribbean, dictionaries exist for at least six islands/locales, but dictionaries are still needed for the French Creoles of Trinidad, Venezuela, Grenada, and San Miguel (Panama), as well as French-official Caribbean signed languages (Siegel 2018). According to Lambert’s (2017) catalogue of Anglophone dictionaries in the Caribbean, there are about nineteen scholarly dictionaries (i.e., of high lexicographical quality, written for an academic market)

of Caribbean varieties of English, five of which were published at universities. Of the nineteen scholarly dictionaries, three cover Caribbean English as a whole. The remaining sixteen cover just nine localities: the Bahamas; Barbados; Carriacou (Grenada); Jamaica (four dictionaries); Panama; Saba; St. Kitts and Nevis; Trinidad and Tobago (two dictionaries); the US Virgin Islands (four dictionaries). The three most cited of these are the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cassidy and Le Page 1980), *Dictionary of Bahamian English* (Holm and Schilling 1982), and *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* (Winer 2009). The most recent of these dictionaries is *A Lee Chip: A Dictionary and Study of Saban English* (Johnson 2016).

Before the publication of *A Lee Chip*, few scholarly publications describing Saban English existed. Instead, many popular discourses about Saban English were based on misinformation, and with no textual evidence to counter them they were largely maintained. The first function of local dictionaries I will discuss is that of *error correction*, including what error correction is, why it is needed, and some of the ways in which *A Lee Chip* has contributed towards error correction.

NEED FOR ERROR CORRECTION: A HISTORY OF MISCHARACTERIZATION

Labov's (1982, 172) principle of error correction posits, "A scientist who becomes aware of a widespread idea or social practice with important consequences that is invalidated by his [or her] own data is obligated to bring this error to the attention of the widest possible audience." The need for linguistic error correction is especially strong in the Caribbean, as the language varieties of the region have long been exoticized, deprecated, and even pathologized. The historic mischaracterizations of local Caribbean language varieties were not mere oversights; they had a clear foundation in racist and classist ideologies (DeGraff 2003; Meijer and Muysken 1977; Davis 1966). According to DeGraff (2003, 393), the inaccurate descriptions of creole languages during the colonial period directly mirror the "inferior sociopolitical, economic, and biological status initially accorded the Africans by European observers." DeGraff includes an excerpt of a nineteenth-century dissertation, in which the author claims that slaves are unsuccessful at mimicking their master's language because they belong to a different race and therefore

have different vocal tracts and different lips (Poyen-Bellis 1894, qtd. in DeGraff 2005a, 550). And while this racial-biological view was mostly abandoned by the twentieth century, the conceptualization of creoles as “failed imitations” was not. DeGraff (2003, 394) provides Bloomfield’s (1933, 472–74) infamous quote:

Speakers of a lower language may make so little progress in learning the dominant speech, that the masters, in communicating with them resort to “baby-talk”. This “baby-talk” is the masters’ imitation of the subjects’ incorrect speech . . . The creolized language has the status of an inferior dialect of the masters’ speech. It is subject to constant leveling-out and improvement in the direction of the latter.

Local Caribbean varieties with majority white speakers (e.g., Saban English, St. Barth Creole) were marginalized as well, on the basis of social class. Discussing the reasons for the decline of French Creole in St. Barthelemy, Maher (2013, 182) explains:

In the late eighteenth century, speaking Creole would have symbolized one’s experience as a planter and owner of slaves. . . . But over time, French Creole in the Caribbean became associated with the poor and uneducated social classes; it no longer had a positive social value.

Because the Caribbean’s history is filled with inaccuracies, mischaracterizations, and Eurocentric and class-based prejudice, it is crucial for dictionaries to engage in error correction by highlighting the legitimate status of Caribbean language varieties. Error correction becomes an especially urgent matter when we consider that the misinformation spread about Caribbean varieties has not been limited to word-of-mouth or travel pamphlets: even linguists have perpetuated myths about Caribbean language varieties. Sabino’s (2012) chapter on “Hubristic Eurocentrism” and DeGraff’s articles (2003, 2005a, 2005b) on creole exceptionalism chronicle the racist and Eurocentric roots of creole stigmatization by scholars. Drawing upon over three centuries of creole studies, DeGraff (2005a) illustrates the extent to which linguists have exceptionalized creoles (as being different from other languages) via six discursive tropes: creoles as “degenerate offshoots” of European ancestors; creoles as language subject to “decreolization qua

language death”; creoles as “special hybrids” with exceptional genealogy; creoles as languages with a “history of abnormal transmission”; creoles as resembling early human language; and creole as “contemporary Ursprachen” or “living fossils” of human language. The “degenerate offshoot” trope is one of the oldest and longest lasting. Early creolists conceptualized creoles as corrupt descendants of European languages; this line of thinking continued into the twentieth century. DeGraff quotes linguists from the early, mid-, and late twentieth century who have described creoles as having limited vocabulary or simplified—even absent—morphology. The latter of these descriptions comes from a racist tradition of viewing African-language speakers in the Caribbean as having “not evolved the cognitive capacity required to master the structural complexities of European morphosyntax” (DeGraff 2005b, 297).

The past half century has seen a rise in the number of linguists advocating for the legitimacy of, equal status of, and importance of studying creoles and other local Caribbean language varieties. At the beginning of the current century, Holm (2000, 1) wrote the following:

It is only comparatively recently that linguists have realized that pidgins and creoles are not wrong versions of other languages but rather *new* languages. . . . They are new languages, shaped by many of the same linguistic forces that shaped English and other ‘proper’ languages. (original emphasis)

Today, scholarly organizations such as the Society of Caribbean Linguistics and the Society of Pidgin and Creole Linguistics support the study of, and error correction related to, local Caribbean language varieties. Despite disagreements about creole exceptionalism,² scholars of pidgin and creole languages agree on the legitimacy and linguistic systematicity of creoles, as the introductory chapter of *The Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures* (Michaelis et al. 2013, xxxiv-xxxv) states:

All experts in this field [of pidgin and creole language studies] agree that pidgins and creoles are new languages that are distinct from the languages from which they took the bulk of their lexicon, and not just “corrupted” or “broken” versions of their lexifiers (lexicon-providing languages).

² See DeGraff (2003, 2005a), Bickerton (2004), and McWhorter (2012, 2018) for debates surrounding creole exceptionalism.

While thousands of scholarly publications contain material that clearly counters misconceptions about creole “brokenness,” paywalls or readability make these texts inaccessible to the majority of the world’s people. By contrast, whether people actually read dictionaries or not, their mere existence gives legitimacy to a language variety (Dolezal 2008; Schneider 2007). In the Caribbean, dictionaries have the capability of accomplishing error correction, as their very publication “is likely to be communicated to many and increase pride” despite going unread by the majority of speakers (Schneider 2007). In Jamaica, for instance, the publication of the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* (Cassidy and LePage 1967) has countered centuries of scholarly and popular descriptions of Jamaican English as “broken” or “corrupt.”

Similarly, *A Lee Chip* had linguistic errors to correct regarding Saban English. While the variety has been more ignored by researchers than commented upon, the scholarly descriptions it has received—like those of Jamaican English and other Caribbean varieties—have historically been descriptions of linguistic subordination and exceptionalism. The earliest scholarly writing to mention Saban English may be Price’s (1934) *Geographical Review* article, “White Settlement in Saba Island, Dutch West Indies.” It should be noted that the article is problematic for multiple reasons, including blatant white supremacist discourses throughout. While Price does not describe Saban English in detail, he does comment that “the people [of Saba] use a debased form of English of limited vocabulary... spoken in a high sing-song voice” (1934, 48). The “debased” nature of Saban English is not elaborated upon, but the characterization certainly mirrors tropes of Caribbean varieties as corrupted European languages. Regarding the “high sing-song voice,” folk commentary on the prosody of Saban English is not unique to Price’s article. In *History of Saba*, Hartog (1975) notes that “Saba’s English acquired its own style, different from that of St. Maarten and St. Eustatius. It is more melodious.” The description of Saban English as sing-songy appears not only in these texts. While carrying out fieldwork on Saba, I encountered many Sabans who espoused the notion of the language variety as melodic, especially when describing residents of the Hell’s Gate village. Furthermore, commentary of a “melodic nature” of Caribbean varieties has been documented in other Caribbean speech communities as well. It seems prudent that an acoustics-based prosodic analysis of Saban English be carried out by a linguist and—perhaps—that the next edition

of *A Lee Chip* include a description of Saban English prosody. It is likely that, because prosodic analysis is time-consuming (in both collection and analysis), there have been so few such studies carried out in the Caribbean region.

Another scholarly text containing commentary on Saba's language variety is the anthropological ethnography *Educated to Emigrate: The Social Organization of Saba* (Crane 1971). During her discussion of the island's education system, Crane (1971, 179) observes:

Language instruction causes some of the most serious educational problems, especially because Dutch is legally the primary language, although a 'Creole' English is the language spoken in the Windward Islands. ... an added language difficulty stems from the broad gap between the 'Creole' English which is commonly spoken and the Standard English which is taught in the schools.

During the time of Crane's research, school instruction occurred in Dutch; (standard) English was taught as a subject. While Crane describes a "broad gap" between Standard and Saban English, she does not provide any examples of how the language varieties differ.

Comprehensive descriptions of Saban English were first published in the 2010s (e.g., Myrick 2014; Williams and Myrick 2015), and these focused mostly on phonology and grammar. Due to the lack of scholarship on—and historical mischaracterizations of—Saban English, the publication of *A Lee Chip* has provided a wealth of linguistic information to linguists and the general public. As such, *A Lee Chip* serves to correct previous errors made in the descriptions of Saban English. For instance, the description of Saban English as having a "limited vocabulary" is challenged by the mere existence of the 314-page dictionary. Additionally, in multiple ways the book refutes the portrayal of Saban English as "debased": highlighting the rich history of Saban English (in a chapter entitled "The History of English on Saba"); illustrating the systematicity of Saban English grammar (e.g., explaining the rules governing *habitual 'be'* and *had+past perfect*) and phonology (e.g., explaining the rules governing post-vocalic /r/ realization, which are complex in Saban English); providing examples of linguistic preservation (e.g., the retained distinction of the NORTH and FORCE vowels; that is, the vowels in *morning* and *horse* have remained distinct from those in *mourning* and

hoarse); highlighting features shared between Saban English and other varieties (e.g. African American English, Irish English, and Appalachian English).

Error correction did not occur only within the pages of *A Lee Chip*. Since the dictionary's publication, Johnson and I have given formal presentations about Saban English to audiences in multiple countries—Johnson in his discussion of the work at Dutch cultural centers in the Netherlands and Aruba, my discussion of it at academic conferences and colloquia, and together in St. Maarten, St. Eustatius, and Saba, where we discussed the dictionary at community centers. These talks have served to educate audiences within and outside the Caribbean about the systematic nature and legitimate status of Saban English. We have also spoken about issues of language equality on a podcast and a radio show, discussing the ways in which Caribbean varieties have been unfairly characterized due to Eurocentric views of language. We utilized media coverage of *A Lee Chip*'s publication as a platform to engage in error correction, via discussions of language diversity and even language policy.

An article published online in *The Daily Herald*, the leading newspaper for St. Maarten and the Northeast Caribbean, announced the publication of *A Lee Chip* ("Theodore Johnson's New Book on Saban English" 2016). It discussed the origins of the project—how Johnson moved to the Netherlands twenty years ago for law school, began jotting down Saban phrases and words he missed hearing, and eventually started interviewing older Sabans to collect and verify words. The article also highlighted components of Saban English, including examples of linguistic features. It also appeared online at *Saba-News.com*, the leading online news source for the island of Saba, as well as in print in *The Daily Herald*'s "WeekENDER" issue. The article included important quotes related to linguistic awareness, preservation, and pride, such as the following one by Johnson discussing the inception of the dictionary project: "I realized that our dialect [Saban English] was something very special and needed to be preserved for future generations" ("Theodore..." 2016). For many Saban readers, this may have been the first time they had ever encountered the idea of Saban English being special or worthy of preservation, let alone seeing the idea in writing. The article also included important information related to the legitimate linguistic status of Saban English, providing, for example, explanations of

grammatical forms such as *habitual -s*, *had+past tense verb*, and *adjective reduplication*, written in understandable language and accompanied by examples:

In Saban English, a habitual action will often have an 's' added, e.g., *We walks a lot in the mountain* instead of 'We walk a lot in the mountain.' You will also notice that the past perfect tense (had + past tense verb) is often used for simple past (one-time and/or permanent) events, e.g., *He had gone to the Windwardside to pick up the boxes* rather than "He went to the Windwardside to pick up the boxes." Sabans also tend to use a lot of double adjectives instead of the standard 'very + adjective' form, e.g., *'Man, he got a good, good price'* or *'That car is red, red.'* ("Theodore..." 2016)

The article not only highlighted the structured and historical nature of Saban English, it also showcased vocabulary words unique to Saba, such as

guavahorse (a walking stick insect), *jilly* (slime from a spoiled tuber), *knock your hoe off the handle* (to stop working for the day), *macaw* (red-tailed hawk), *scraper* (a locally made garden tool to clean out weeds and loosen dirt from around plants) and *wad* (head cushion for carrying burdens on the head) ("Theodore..." 2016)

Many Saban readers may never have realized the unique status of these words, as most are used fairly commonly on the island. The article also appealed to St. Maarten readers by including words that are used on Saba and other Caribbean islands: *"coal pit* (a large pit containing green timber burnt to create charcoal), *mauger* (skinny or thin), *Old Year's Night* (New Year's Eve), *stupidness* (nonsense) and *woodslave* (gecko)" ("Theodore..." 2016).

DeGraff (2018) argues that error correction is not enough—that we should strive towards language policy and other changes at the institutional level. In 2017, when Johnson was interviewed by *The Daily Herald* about a recent talk he had given in The Hague, he used the platform to call for the inclusion of Saban English within Saba's education system ("Include Saban English at School, says Ted Johnson" 2017).

Error correction within popular media outlets is important, because popular media can be read or heard by speakers of the language variety at hand. Because media coverage of local dictionaries is largely available online and often free-of-charge, it has the ability to spread ideas of linguistic legitimization to a wider audience than a dictionary itself. Media thus provide an avenue for locals to learn about their local dictionary without having to purchase it. It is crucial for error correction to reach the eyes and ears of the speakers themselves. Language attitude surveys and ethnographic research reports have revealed that creole speakers often view their language as of low status or even “broken.” Thus, lexicographers engaged in writing and publishing local dictionaries should make sure to utilize media and other post-publication opportunities to engage in error correction.

THE NEED FOR PRESERVATION: LOCAL KNOWLEDGE UNDER THREAT

Local languages with disfavored status face threat of decreased usage and eventual death (Romaine 1988). The Caribbean is no stranger to language death; in addition to the many Amerindian languages lost as a result of European genocide, multiple creoles have died over the past two centuries (Alleyne 2004; Devonish 2010; Ferreira 2012). Devonish (2010) gives the example of the Dutch-lexifier Creole Negerhollands of the Danish (now US) Virgin Islands, which went extinct in the 20th century:

Gone with these were the various continuities, linguistic and cultural, from the indigenous, African and European languages which contributed to their formation. With their disappearance, important aspects of the linguistic and cultural heritage of the Caribbean have been lost.

Like all languages varieties, Caribbean language varieties face the loss of certain lexical items as a result of decreased usage. According to Nettle and Romaine (2002), lexical items with strong ties to cultural heritage tend to disappear from an endangered language first. Thus, a threat to a community’s lexicon can be seen as a threat to a community’s heritage.

Heritage preservation is of especial importance in the Caribbean due to the region's relatively recent colonial past:

During enslavement and prior to independence, in many of these states, determined steps were taken to eradicate, suppress or devalue the heritage of the "Other". As a consequence, scant respect was paid to the heritage of the majority who lived in the space known as the Caribbean. This has led to considerable and irreplaceable loss of heritage in some cases while, in other instances, many containers of heritage are becoming increasingly fragile and/or threatened by a range of degrading factors – manmade, natural or artificial. (Watson 2002).

Local dictionaries have the ability to record, preserve, and transmit knowledge which may otherwise be under threat of extinction (Barbato and Varvaro 2004, 432). So as cultural preservation becomes an increasingly larger priority in the postcolonial Caribbean (Watson 2002), local dictionaries can aid in the preservation of local knowledge under threat of extinction due to globalization and neocolonialism. This preservation can occur through the inclusion of local flora and fauna terms, as well as notes regarding the usage of certain plants and the connection of certain words to certain customs (Baksh-Comeau and Winer 2016). As flora and fauna are not only defined, but also described with cultural, historical, ecological, and/or environmental details, the boundary is blurred between dictionary and encyclopedia (Silverstein 2006; Peeters 2000).

Regarding flora, local ecological knowledge of non-industrialized societies has recently "come to be viewed not only as an important part of the community's cultural heritage, but also as a vital resource for researchers involved in activities like conservation biology" (Si 2011, 169). Using the *Dictionary of the English/Creole of Trinidad & Tobago* as an example, Baksh-Comeau and Winer (2016) highlight the importance (and the challenges) of including local flora entries in dictionaries. They stress working cooperatively with herbaria and botanists to ensure accuracy and completeness, as well as including common and scientific names along with the local terms; accuracy of the entry includes not only local uses, but also any other known information (e.g., effects, dangers).

Saba faces the threats of globalization that many Caribbean islands do. The island has undergone drastic economic and socio-cultural changes in a short period of time. Until the twentieth century, Saba remained relatively isolated because it lacked natural beaches and ports. In fact, the island had no airport until 1963 and no pier until 1976. Until then, visitors and travelers had to be brought in by rowboat. In addition to being isolated from other islands, the mountainous, volcanic-based terrain of Saba sustained intra-island isolation as well. Saba had only footpaths for travel until the late 1950s, when a paved road began to connect the four villages for the first time. Saba's first motor vehicle arrived in 1955. Public electricity was absent from Saba until the 1960s as well.

Up until the 1940s, the majority of Sabans attended school only through the seventh grade (the highest grade on the island). After the seventh grade, most men and women stayed on Saba to work unless they could afford to pursue higher education. Men fished, farmed, and built boats, while women took care of the homes by childrearing, cooking, and sewing needlework pieces. The needlework known as "Spanish Work" or "Saba Lace" was intricately hand-sewn cloth pieces, such as handkerchiefs and tablecloths. In fact, by 1928, the Saba was exporting close to 15,000 dollars' worth of needlework each year (Saba Tourist Bureau 2014). By the 1960s, however, the time that Julia Crane (1971) carried out an anthropological survey, only 28 percent (129/471) of adult men were farmers, and only 16 percent (73/471) were fishermen, a huge decrease from three decades prior, in which the majority of men did one or both of these activities for a living. The second half of the twentieth century on Saba was characterized by rapid technological advances. In addition to its new roads, public electricity, and motor vehicles, Saba gained local and long-distance telephone capabilities, satellite television, faxing capabilities, and then internet. Currently, the entirety of the island is a WiFi hotspot. The three grocery stores on the island import much of their food from the United States. Based on interviews I carried out with Saban residents in 2012 and 2014, about 1 percent (~5/~500) of adult men were identified as farmers. Today, Sabans work in service (restaurant and hotel work), government, and construction. With the decline of agriculture and maritime activity comes the decline of language use surrounding those practices.

In fact, endangered languages tend to see lexical items related to flora, fauna, history, and customs disappear first (Nettle and Romaine 2002; Romaine 1988).

A Lee Chip contains 247 flora entries and 108 fauna entries (comprising twenty-three bird entries and eighty-five fish/sea life entries). A flora and fauna index appears in the back of the book to help readers easily locate the pages for these terms. Below are two examples of detailed flora entries. (The notation “Angu, Baha, and Jmca” marks this term as also used in Anguilla, the Bahamas, and Jamaica; the notation “HG” marks usage in the village of Hell’s Gate). Note the connections made to medical use, farming, and leisure.

headache bush *n.* (Angu, Baha, Jmca) or headache leaves; the copper bush plant, often used in Saba for making hedges (*Acalypha wilkesiana/amentacea*). Locally there are two varieties: one is more reddish in colour and one more greenish in colour. The crushed leaves were traditionally applied to the forehead as a headache suppressant. The branches of this plant were also used in times of drought as animal fodder. It is also known as *red heady bush* (HG) for the red variety.

mahow tree *n.* a small tree with smooth leaves and white fruits. Its dark green leaves are said to have a peppery taste (*Daphnopsis americana ssp. caribaea*). The small white berries are favoured by the local land crab. The bark was used to make rope and could be used to tie grass that was cut for cattle. The wood was also used formerly to make tops for children.

Owing to Saba’s rich maritime history, a supplementary section catalogues the names and descriptions of fishing locations. These include seventeen fishing banks, ten fishing marks, and 141 fishing rocks. Many of the names of the banks, marks, and rocks are closely tied to local histories, which is a property of an ecologically embedded language (Nash 2015, 2016).

Johnson (2016, 289) notes the following about the inclusion of the fishing rocks, marks, and banks:

Due to a significant decline in fishing on the rocks, especially by the youth of Saba, many of the names listed hereunder are in danger of being lost forever. This list can hopefully be a reference for anyone in the future interested in Saba's fishing past and for those who will continue to fish Saba's shores in the future.

An example of three fishing rock entries are provided below.

(Location on coastline)	(Name of fishing rock/area)	(Description)
Flat Point	Johny Frau's Pond	So named because of the legend of Johny Frau whose corpse was said to have washed up in this tidal pool (cp. Johnson 1989, 80)
Jes Quarter	The Split Shoal	A rock parted in two halves
Ladder Bay	Governor's Rock	This rock was named after a local governor Mr. Engel van Beverhoudt, known at that time as a 'vice-commander', who died due to a falling rock hitting his head from the cliff above while fishing at this rock ...

While fishing receives its own supplementary section, Saban history and customs are described throughout the dictionary. For example, the entries for *bread line* and *spyglass*, below, include definitions and connections made to Saba history (CE notes usage in Caribbean English; WS, BT, and SJ refer to the villages of Windwardside, The Bottom, and St. Johns).

bread line

n. a gathering place on a wall or some rocks where older men come together to meet and talk the latest gossip. Each person had a pre-determined sitting place; this term could have originated from US term *bread lines* in the

Great Depression. In WS for example there were traditionally 4 bread lines (on the Fort, Brother's rum shop, the corner of Leonard Johnson's garage and in front of Carl Hassell's shop) and in the BT and SJ at least 2 each; see SH1986/214 p.6. "The old men had gathered as usual on the stone wall opposite the Big Rock Market in Windwardside. The so-called 'bread-line'. The old Saban tradition of men gathering in the evenings and sitting on a stone wall rehashing the events of the day, is still carried on."

spyglass

n. (CE) a term still in use locally for a pair of binoculars. This could be derived from old seafaring days when spy-glasses were quite common as a boat telescope. Saba was renown[ed] within the Caribbean from the mid 1800s until the mid1900s for its high percentage of able seamen and licensed captains. Spyglasses would have therefore been commonly used objects formerly on the island.

While bread lines are no longer commonplace on Saba and spyglasses less central to everyday life, the phrases are still used—especially by older Sabans. The documentation of these words and phrases is a way for future Sabans to understand what Saba was like in the past. In discussing heritage preservation in the Caribbean, Watson (2002, 670) argues that "by not taking the necessary conservation and preservation steps now, future generations will be denied access to their heritage, an essential contributor to their understanding of their past, present and who they are." The call for local Caribbean dictionaries is urgent.

CONCLUSIONS

Dictionaries are tools of legitimization and preservation. These two processes are important for speech communities of the Caribbean region, where local language varieties have been delegitimized throughout colonialism, and face threat of leveling or loss as a result

of neocolonialism. While general dictionaries (like *DCEU*) may achieve standardization or unity, as well as highlighting regional variation, they often overshadow important community-level variation due to limited space, scope, time, and goals. These trends have symbolic repercussions.

Holbrook (2013, 13) points out that there is “a general attitude among some linguists, including some creole linguists (although generally not those studying the Caribbean English-lexifier creoles), that if you see one English-lexifier creole of the Caribbean, you’ve seen them all.” He points to umbrella terms like “Lesser Antillean Creole English” used by Kephart (1984, 28) to refer to “an English-lexifier creole variety found mainly in the Windward Islands (Grenada, the Grenadines, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, Dominica)” as well as the depiction of Jamaican and/or Guyanese as prototypical of the rest of the Caribbean English-lexifier creoles (Holbrook 2013, 13). This, in turn, does take away some linguistic agency of individual islands and its speakers.

Local dictionaries are best positioned to legitimize and preserve local language varieties. As such, I have argued in this article that local dictionaries fulfil two ethical functions. First, local dictionaries rewrite linguistic histories of communities whose language varieties have been labelled “broken” or “corrupt” as a result of racism, classism, and Eurocentrism. Second, local dictionaries can preserve knowledge under threat of extinction by including and detailing local flora and fauna terms, as well as notes regarding the usage of certain plants and the connection of words to certain customs (Baksh-Comeau and Winer 2016). It is important to note that these two functions and the threats they address are not independent from one another. The need for error correction in the Caribbean is a result of centuries of colonialism, racism, and Eurocentrism. These forces led to inaccurate descriptions of creoles, as well as prejudiced subordination of them. These same forces, and the new forms they take under neocolonialism and globalization, pose threats to the local knowledge of Caribbean communities.

Throughout the article, I have used examples from *A Lee Chip* to show ways in which these ethical functions have been achieved, have been attempted, or should be pursued in a future edition. My hope is that this article will inspire the publication of more local dictionaries in the Caribbean. Just as *A Lee Chip* will be a resource for the community of Saba, future dictionaries in the Caribbean can serve as valuable tools

for the communities they document and serve. Fortunately, institutions such as The Allsopp Centre at the University of the West Indies, Cave Hill, Barbados, are actively pursuing and publishing Caribbean dictionary projects dedicated to error-correction and local knowledge conservation. The Centre has multiple projects underway, including a bilingual culinary dictionary of Caribbean English with Costa Rican Spanish, as well as a multilingual dictionary of medicinal plants of the Caribbean region, and is seeking to document the regional lexicons of the French-official Caribbean (Siegel 2018).

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