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A BLENDED LEARNING APPROACH TO TEACHING SOCIOLINGUISTIC RESEARCH METHODS

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This article reports on the use of Wiktionary, an open source online dictionary, as well as generic wiki pages within a university's e-learning environment as teaching and learning resources in an Afrikaans sociolinguistics module. In a communal constructivist manner students learnt, but also constructed learning content. From the qualitative research conducted with students it is clear that wikis provide for effective facilitation of a blended learning approach to sociolinguistic research. The use of this medium was positively received, however, some students did prefer handing in assignments in hard copy. The issues of computer literacy and access to the internet were also raised by the respondents. The use of wikis and Wiktionary prompted useful unplanned discussions around reliability and quality of public wikis. The use of a public wiki such as Wiktionary served as encouragement for students as they were able to contribute to the promotion of Afrikaans in this way.

KEY WORDS
Wiki, blended learning, sociolinguistic research methods, collaborative learning

1. INTRODUCTION

Limited time during contact sessions for group work and fieldwork in an Afrikaans sociolinguistics module prompted a university lecturer to use a wiki for support in order to facilitate collaboration between students in a blended learning environment. Furthermore, this type of research is important as Garner, Wagner and Kawulich (2009:7) state that an 'aspect of research methods education that has received too little systematic attention in the literature is the use of computers'. In the South African, specifically also the Afrikaans, context the literature on blended learning in sociolinguistics classes at university level is limited. A wiki is one way in which learning can be facilitated outside of the formal classroom. From the literature it is evident that wikis have been successfully used for instructional purposes (cf. Kear, Woodthorpe, Robertson & Hutchison, 2010; Lundin, 2008; Olimpo, Davis, Lagman, Parekh & Shields, 2010; Ramanau & Geng, 2009). In South Africa Carr, Morrison, Cox and Deacon (2007) report on using a wiki for a final-year undergraduate political science course. However, the focus in these articles has been on collaborative writing as well as group work and not on the use of wikis to report on research undertaken by students or the use of a wiki as an instrument of peer assessment, as used in this study.

This study reports on the use of Wiktionary, an open source online dictionary, as well as generic wiki pages within a university's e-learning environment or learning management system as a means of developing teaching and learning material for an Afrikaans

undergraduate sociolinguistics module with approximately 34 third-year students. The aim of this module is to teach the basic principles of Afrikaans language variation and sociolinguistic research and a need exists for a platform that facilitates cooperative learning of this content. Research was conducted with the intention of determining whether a wiki could be used effectively to facilitate blended learning within a language classroom. To this end the concepts of communal constructivism, as a theoretical instructional foundation, as well as blended learning and wikis will be examined. Thereafter the research context, method and analysis of data are discussed. Consequently this study shows how a wiki can be used in a language classroom for more than just collaborative writing.

2. THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

2.1 COMMUNAL CONSTRUCTIVISM

The use of wikis to improve collaboration is driven by the need to facilitate communal constructivism in a specific university module. Communal constructivism is an extension of socio-constructivism or social constructivism and is a term coined by Holmes, Tangney, FitzGibbon, Savage and Mehan (2001:1). Holmes et al. (2001:1) define communal constructivism as follows: 'an approach to learning in which students not only construct their own knowledge (constructivism) as a result of interacting with their environment (social constructivism), but are also actively engaged in the process of constructing knowledge **for** their learning community' [emphasis in original.] According to Holmes et al. (2001:2) 'Social Constructivism is defined as a process by which students make meaning, and the central role their community, through culture and language, plays in this process'. Furthermore, because of the constructivist element included in this theory, the focus is on students constructing their own knowledge especially with interaction with others. The focus is not just creating knowledge, but also sharing it with others and this relates to the concept of learning with and for others. This approach can be implemented through group work or even peer tutoring (cf. Holmes et al., 2001:2-3).

The term communal constructivism is used by Holmes and Gardner (2006:85) to refer to an expanded definition of socio-constructivism where 'e-Learning provides the learners with the tools to create new learning for themselves and to contribute and store their new knowledge, in whatever form it is, projects, artefacts, essays and so on, in a communal knowledge base for the benefit of their community's existing and new learners'. Holmes and Gardner (2006:85) also note that socio-constructivism is extended due to the availability of effective media that takes communication out of the classroom and online. Holmes et al. (2001:2) emphasize Vygotsky's concept of children learning within themselves, as well as the influence of the social and cultural environment on children. In addition, Crook (1994:59) notes that Vygotsky regards cognition as being socially-mediated. Therefore there is sound theoretical support for this approach (cf. Carr et al. 2007:269).

Even though the work within a learning community and thus collective work is emphasized with communal constructivism, Holmes and Gardner (2006:87) state that both the individual and collective dimensions need to be addressed. A student, together with a tutor, develops

his/her own learning and then takes on the role of tutor scaffolding to others with less knowledge (Holmes & Gardner, 2006:87.)

The communal constructivist approach has specific implications for the use of blended learning where materials can easily be produced electronically, be distributed and kept for reuse. Pachler (2001:20) mentions that '[n]ew technologies allow users to create and distribute their own work and become active participants in the culture creation process'. Pachler (2001:20) also adds that this implies that students should be taught higher order skills as well as 'electronic/informatic, visual and critical media literacies'. In the classes, reported on in this research, computer literacy especially in terms of being able to create and edit wiki pages was essential.

2.2 BLENDED LEARNING

The context in which this research takes place generally employs face-to-face interaction, however, an online component was added to the teaching and learning environment by means of using a wiki. The term *blended learning* refers to an integrated approach to learning with traditional face-to-face and computer-supported, web-based or online approaches (cf. Cunningham, McDonnell, McIntyre & McKenna, 2009:57; Graham, 2006:4; Holmes & Gardner, 2006:10, 14, 110; Lajbcyier & Spratt, 2007:12; Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007:1, 26, 226; Nel, 2005:67-68, 109; Nel & Wilkinson, 2008:145; Oosthuizen, 2004:14; Prinsloo & Van Rooyen, 2007:53; Thorne, 2003:2; Tshabalala, Ndeya-Ndereya & Van der Merwe, 2014:102-103).

Alternative terms exist for this mixed approach to learning. Bates (2005:8) mentions distributed, mixed mode or hybrid learning as terms to 'designate a combination of face-to-face and online teaching'. Bates prefers to use the term *mixed mode* where class time is reduced for more time spent studying online and hybrid and blended for the sake of adding online teaching to regular class time. Furthermore, Oosthuizen (2004:1) defines blended learning as 'the mixing and integration of different learning delivery approaches, including face-to-face classroom teaching, e-learning and self-paced computer-mediated learning to create a single learning programme'. Oosthuizen (2004:1) adequately brings the essential components of blended learning together, although a differentiation between e-learning and self-paced computer-mediated learning could be questioned because it is clear from the literature that self-paced computer-mediated learning could be considered to be part of e-learning. In addition, Fee (2009:16) defines e-learning as 'an approach to learning and development: a collection of learning methods using digital technologies, which enable, distribute and enhance learning'. In this definition, the emphasis is less on the medium, but more on the result achieved with the medium.

Furthermore, Rennie and Mason (2004:97) describe blended learning as a customized mix of learning opportunities that 'takes cognition of the subject(s) being learned, the level of study, the method of interaction with the tutor (and other learners), as well as the abilities and motivations of learners'. In this statement the content, level of study, method of interaction and student ability and motivation are also mentioned and this accentuates the fact that any study of blended learning cannot just focus on the delivery method. Therefore, participants (lecturer and student) as well as the content should also be considered.

2.3 WIKIS AS INSTRUCTIONAL TOOL

A wiki was used as instructional tool in this research. Wikis refer to web software that allows for easy creation of wiki pages that can be edited by anyone. Shih, Tseng and Yang (2008:1039) define a wiki as a 'web-based hypertext system which supports community-oriented authoring, in order to rapidly and collaboratively build the content'. A widely used example of a wiki is *Wikipedia* (http://en.wikipedia.org) which is an encyclopaedia to which anyone can contribute. By using similar software, wikis can be created for any purpose (cf. Ebersbach, Glaser & Heigl, 2006:1-30; Fee, 2009:87; Littlejohn & Pegler, 2007:103; Lundin, 2008:435; Parker & Chao, 2007:57; Richardson, 2006:1, 8, 59-61).

The origin of the name *wiki* can be traced back to the WikiWikiWeb developed by Ward Cunningham in 1995 (Bonk, 2009:235-240; Ebersbach et al., 2006:10; Richardson, 2006:59). The main purpose of the software was to enable users to publish information quickly and easily while also documenting all the editing steps. The name *wiki* is derived from the Hawaiian word 'wiki-wiki' which means 'quick' or 'hurry' (Bonk, 2009:235; Ebersbach et al., 2006:11; Parker & Chao 2007:57; Richardson, 2006:59).

The effective use of wikis in the classroom has already been proven by earlier studies (Carr et al., 2007; Lundin, 2008; Olimpo et al., 2010). Wikis allow students to quickly and easily work together on texts (Lundin, 2008:434; Matthew, Felvegi & Callaway, 2009:51; Macdonald, 2008:154, 160; Olivier, 2011:123; Richardson, 2006:61, 65). Matthew et al. (2009:62-64) also note that participants, in a study focusing on the use of a wiki in a learning situation, found that wikis are useful learning tools and that the participants assumed ownership of the wiki as they were involved in generating content.

The flexibility of wikis provides many possibilities for lecturers. Carr et al. (2007:267) also state that wikis 'are under-scripted in that they are designed to support flexible (and possibly open ended) collaborative writing projects rather than publication of predetermined knowledge'. According to Ebersbach et al. (2006:11), wikis can either be used within a closed group or be directed to a wider audience over the World Wide Web. Therefore, wikis can be considered to be means towards possible collaborative constructions of knowledge (Matthew et al., 2009:52; Richardson, 2006:61, 65). Parker and Chao (2007:58) also note the collaborative properties of wikis and confirm that wikis can act as a platform for a community of practice which, in turn, refers to a group of people engaged in learning. An important feature of wikis is, according to Macdonald (2008:154, 160), that it can be used by students to comment on each other's work.

The nature of the medium also changes the way students approach texts as they are not the same as printed texts and in addition a number of characteristics make lecturers favour this medium. Ebersbach et al. (2006:13) note that wikis allow for the creation of associative hypertexts with non-linear navigation structures that employ hyperlinks to accommodate movement between pages. Editing wiki texts is also very easy and users do not need any additional software to access or edit wikis. According to Macdonald (2008:174), 'the use of forums or wikis allows for the assessment of the process of collaboration and scope for assessing the contribution of individuals to the group effort'. However, as Macdonald (2008:162) points out, before collaborative tasks can be done students need to practise the

following skills: team-working, negotiation skills, group decision-making and task management. Therefore, only by means of sufficient preparation of students and adequate facilitation by lecturers can collaboration be ensured.

In the module, referred to in this study, the site Wiktionary (http://af.wiktionary.org/) was used. Zesch, Müller and Gurevych (2008:1647) define Wiktionary as a 'multilingual, web-based, freely available dictionary, thesaurus and phrase book, designed as the lexical companion to Wikipedia'. According to Zesch, Müller and Gurevych (2008:1647) the entries on Wiktionary are:

> ...accompanied with a wide range of lexical and semantic information such as part of speech, word sense, gloss, etymology, pronunciation, declension, examples, sample quotations, translations, collocations, derived terms, and usage notes. Lexically or semantically related terms of several types like synonyms, antonyms, hypernyms and hyponyms are included as well.

Despite the many possibilities provided by Wiktionary, only a set of basic elements per lexical item was provided for students in the class reported on in this study. Wiktionary allows for customization of entries, however, within the Wiktionary community it is accepted that when new entries are added set templates are used. The Wiktionary community include, as with Wikipedia, volunteers that contribute entries as well as volunteers that act as administrators by editing contributions and doing quality control. A simplified template with explanations was provided for students to make editing easier as some training is required before students can use a wiki (cf. Ramanau & Geng, 2009:2625). For the purposes of the module, the Afrikaans language Wiktionary was used. This is shown in screenshot 1 below and is available online at: *http://af.wiktionary.org/wiki/Tuisblad*

Screenshot 1: The Afrikaans Wiktionary

3. RESEARCH CONTEXT AND METHOD

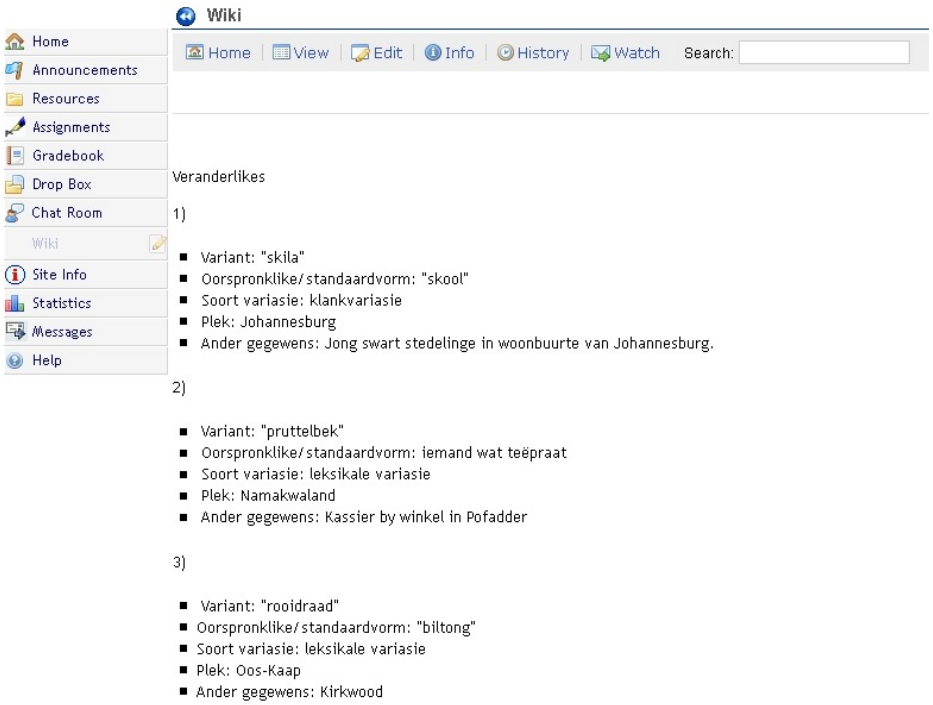
3.1 CONTEXT

As part of an undergraduate module in Afrikaans linguistics the field of sociolinguistics and related research methods are explored. The theory behind basic linguistic fieldwork was handled in the classroom and an overview was done on major historical language variation studies. The students, in groups, were then required to put what they have learned into practice by doing fieldwork themselves. Students recorded unique linguistic elements and identified the type of variation. The variable, type and context of where and when the variable was observed were then recorded on an internal wiki. In the process of identifying variation by the students, students were encouraged to follow the steps (Hudson, 1996:150) below:

- selecting speakers, circumstances and linguistic variables;
- collecting the texts;
- identifying the linguistic variables and their variants in the texts;
- processing the figures; and
- interpreting the results.

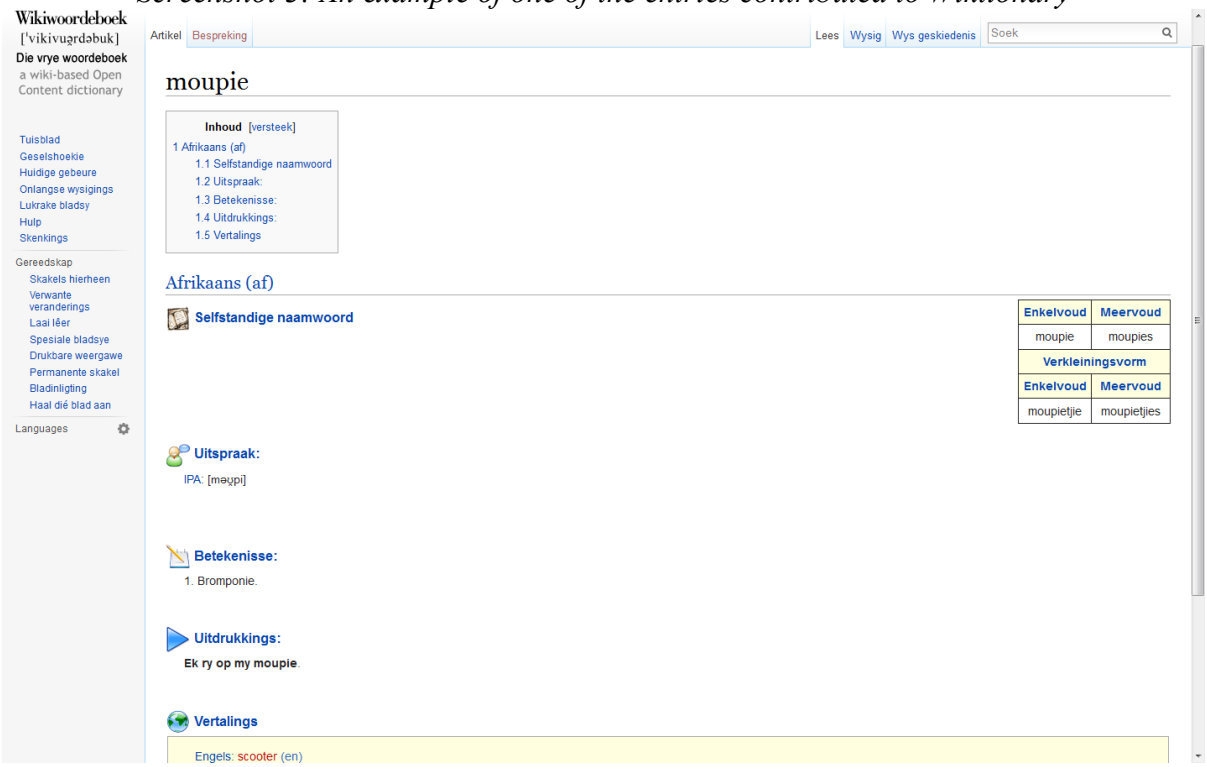
The materials were first placed on a closed wiki on the university's Sakai-based e-learning environment, called *eFundi*. Here all the linguistic variables collected by the students were listed, categorized and the process followed by the students was reported. It is also in this environment that peer evaluation took place. Screenshot 2 shows some examples of items found by the students as recorded on the wiki prior to peer evaluation.

Screenshot 2: The wiki on eFundi, the university's e-learning environment



The recorded variables were then peer reviewed and after discussions between the groups that selected and those that evaluated the variables certain items were then prepared and placed on the Internet on the Wiktionary site. An example of a published item on the Afrikaans Wiktionary, as researched and evaluated by students, is displayed in Screenshot 3.

Screenshot 3: An example of one of the entries contributed to Wiktionary



With regard to learning materials, the reporting and reflection of the execution of these steps by the students allowed for the creation of material on wikis that can even be reused in future classes. Thus students not only recorded the linguistic variables they identified, but also reflected on the research process by explaining the steps followed.

3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION

The research population for this study consisted of a group of third-year linguistics students (n=34) that all took part in the wiki exercise and a smaller group of students completed an open questionnaire (n=22). All of the students were Afrikaans mother-tongue speakers. Despite the fact that not all the students completed the questionnaire the total population of the class was at least included by means of using the wiki.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The findings that are reported come from reflection done by the students on the wikis as well as short e-mail questionnaires (cf. Addendum B) completed by the students at the end of the module. With regard to ethical considerations it is important to note that informed consent

was obtained from all the participants, completion of the questionnaire was voluntary and that all data was handled anonymously. The researcher collected relevant responses from the wiki while facilitating group work on the online wiki interface. The e-mail open-ended questionnaires were completed by the students at the end of the course. The collected data could then be analyzed.

4. ANALYSIS OF DATA

The qualitative empirical data in this article is derived from written reflection by students on the wikis as well as short e-mail questionnaires. The data was coded by means of *Atlas.ti* qualitative research software. This software allows creation of codes and association with quotations in order also to determine overarching themes from the data. As such, *Atlas.ti* does not identify codes, but helps with the organisation and presentation of qualitative data analysis. The following themes were identified: e-learning, nature of the assignment and wiki environment with several subordinate codes.

4.1 THEME 1: E-LEARNING

Code: Level of computer literacy

Not all the students were at the same level in terms of computer literacy and hence the medium was experienced as challenging; this issue was also mentioned by some of the respondents (respondent #5 and #22 for example) and is also supported by the literature (Ramanau & Geng, 2009:2625). In this regard it is important to note that some basic knowledge of wiki code (also refer to Addendum A) is necessary and instruction as given on basic wiki coding conventions before students used the wiki. In terms of this study a handout with instructions was also given out, however, time permitting it is suggested that the skill of editing a wiki is practiced with the class in a dedicated computer room. The technology allows for students to be able to take part from any computer connected to the Internet. The translations of the responses are provided in italics.

- ...ons het net bietjie met die rekenaar self gesukkel omdat ons nie baie selfvertroue met rekenaars het nie (#5)
  ...we only struggled somewhat with the computer itself because we do not have self-confidence when using computers (#5)
- Ek het op skool IT-klasse gehad wat verpligtend was (#6)
  I had compulsory IT classes at school (#6)
- Ek kan met ’n rekenaar werk, daar is net nou en dan iets waarmee ek sukkel, maar ek leer darem vinnig. (#13)
  I can use a computer, only now and again there might be something I struggle with, but I learn quickly. (#13)
- Ek het Rekenaartoepassingstegnologie tot matriek gehad. (#15)
  I had Computer Applications Technology up to matric. (#15)
- Ek is eintlik baie ongeletterd as dit by tegnologie kom! Daar word algemeen aanvaar dat rekenaarvaardighede hand aan hand gaan met mense van ons ouderdom, maar die enigste kontak wat ek met rekenaars het, is skoolverwant en dit wat ek tot dusver op

universiteit geleer het. (#17)
I am actually quite illiterate when it comes to technology! It is generally accepted that computer skills go hand in hand with people from our age, but the only contact I have had with computers was in school and what I have learned since being at university. (#17)

As the computer literacy levels of students differ, opportunities should be provided for students that lack the necessary skills to be helped by lectures or through pairing with able students that can aid them in this regard.

Code: Physical location

Students appreciated the fact that working online meant that the group did not have to be physically together and that learning was not confined to the classroom (respondent #3).

- ... dit is maklik om op jou eie te doen en is nie gebonde aan 'n spesifieke tyd of klas nie (#3)
  ... it is easy to do this on your own and you are not bound to a specific time or class (#3)

One respondent (#22) even noted that this is an environmentally friendly way of completing assignments and generating learning material.

4.2 THEME 2: NATURE OF THE ASSIGNMENT

Code: Process followed in completing assignment

An important aspect of feedback from the students was that they could reflect on the process followed in the completion of the assignment. A concern raised by one of the respondents (#20) was that it was clear that not all the research was done at the same level. It is especially in this regard that cooperative learning can take place as students could help each other through comments on the wiki. Peer group assessment also contributed to cooperative learning through two-way communication on the wiki. With regard to reflection on the use of the wiki, students mentioned the following:

- Ons het variante bespreek en rondgesoek vir variante wat ons dink aanvaarbaar genoeg vir die opdrag sou wees, eers 'n paar geskrap en gewysig, om sodoende tot 'n konsensus te kom van bepaalde variante vir die gebruik van die eerste opdrag. (#11)
  We discussed variants and looked around for variants that we thought would be appropriate enough for this assignment, we first removed and edited some in order to come to an agreement on which variants would be used for the first assignment (#11)
- Ek is nie seker of almal se navorsing op dieselfde vlak was nie en of almal die opdrag mooi verstaan het nie. (#20)
  I am not sure whether everyone's research was on the same level or whether everyone understood the assignment completely. (#20)

The interaction above (#11) shows evidence of effective collaboration using wikis. In addition to the aforementioned comments on the process, a lot of emphasis was placed on the use of the wikis by the respondents.

Code: Using wiki in completing assignment

The respondents enjoyed the use of wikis and regarded it as a good alternative to more traditional assignment formats (#14). The medium was also seen as new and interesting and the fact that the medium facilitated practical application of the module content was also appreciated (#17).

- Die blootstelling wat ons aan die proses van dataversameling gekry het, was sinvol en die verskillende variante waarmee ons kennis gemaak het, was interessant. Dit was ook lekker om tegnologie soos die wiki by die onderrigmetode te betrek. (#14)
  The exposure we got to the process of data collection was meaningful and the different variants we encountered were interesting. It was also nice that a technology such as a wiki was used in the instruction. (#14)
- ...ek dink die wiki-opdrag is insiggewend en ’n afwisseling van die gewone opdragte (#14)
  ... I think the wiki assignment is insightful and a change from normal assignments (#14)
- ... dis blootstelling aan nuwe en interessante media. (#17)
  ... it is exposure to new and interesting media. (#17)
- ... elektronies is ’n lekker manier om opdragte te doen en dit was lekker om praktiese werk te doen en nie net hope teorie te moet leer nie... (#17)
  ... completing assignments in an electronic manner is a nice way of doing assignments and it was also nice to do some practical work and not just study a lot of theory... (#17)

It is clear that students appreciated the fact that they were introduced to another type of medium and that it was a positive change from what they consider being traditional instructional mediums. However, some students did react negatively to the use of wikis.

Code: Negative reaction towards using a wiki with the assignment

- Ek sal eerder iets soos ’n normale opdrag wil inhandig. (#15)
  I would prefer handing in a normal assignment. (#15)
- Dit is vir my baie moeite en ek verkies dit om eerder ’n opdrag in harde kopie in te gee. Mens het ook nie altyd toegang tot die internet nie. (#16)
  It is a lot of trouble and I prefer handing in an assignment in hard copy. One also does not always have access to the Internet. (#16)
- ... ek hou niks daarvan (wiki-opdrag) nie, ek verkies harde kopie of e-pos. (#19)
  ... I do not like it (wiki assignment) at all, I prefer hard copy or e-mail. (#19)

Some students preferred completing assignments in hard copy or even by e-mail (#16 and #19). It was not clear from all the respondents why this medium was not preferred, however,

one respondent indicated that using a wiki amounted to spending a lot of time on the task and that the respondent did not always have access to the Internet. Such negativity should also be seen within the context of students' computer literacy and ease of use of e-learning environments. The wiki as medium also prompted the respondents to comment on the wiki environment especially in terms of reliability and quality as well as cooperative learning and the external impact of using Wiktionary.

4.3 THEME: WIKI ENVIRONMENT

Code: Reliability and quality of wiki content

Students appeared reluctant to use public wikis (such as Wikipedia or Wiktionary) as a source of information as they question the reliability and quality of the content (#3, #5, #10, #16 and #22). However, some students did acknowledge using such websites for background reading and preparation (#3, #4, #7, #12 and #14). As a result the issue of reliability of Wikipedia and Wiktionary was discussed in the class and students experienced how easy it is to contribute to and edit these websites. None of the students indicated, however, have edited or contributed to any wiki prior to this class. Respondent #12 noted that Wikipedia has 'no academic value'. Some of the relevant responses included:

- Ek is nie mal daaroor om dit as betroubare bron te gebruik nie, omdat ek dink inligting maklik verkeerdelik daarop kan kom. Ek moet egter sê dat dit 'n baie goeie vertrekpunt is as jy inligting of 'n vinnige agtergrond oor 'n onderwerp soek. (#3)
  I don't like using it as a reliable source, because I think that wrong information can easily be placed on it. I must say that it is a very good starting point or if you need brief background on a certain topic. (#3)
- Na my mening is Wikipedia 'n goeie manier om uit te vind waaroor gaan iets waarvan jy geen vorige kennis het nie. Ek sal dit egter nie as 'n akademiese bron gebruik nie, aangesien enige iemand inligting daarop kan verander en bylas. (#4)
  In my opinion Wikipedia is a good way to find out what something is about if you do not have any prior knowledge on the topic. However, I would not use it as an academic source, because anyone can change and add information on it. (#4)
- As studente word ons verbied om Wikipedia te gebruik. (#6)
  As students we are not allowed to use Wikipedia. (#6)
- Dis 'n goeie wegspringblok om navorsing vanaf te begin, maar daar word vir ons gesê dat dit nie 'n voldoende wetenskaplike bron is nie en dat ons moet versigtig wees om dit te gebruik. (#7)
  It is a good starting point for research, but we are told that it is not an adequate scientific source and that we should be careful in using it. (#7)
- Dit is oop vir enige iemand om inligting daarop te plaas dus is dit nie altyd betroubaar nie (#8)
  It is open and anyone can place information on it and it is therefore not always reliable. (#8)
- Dis vir my aanvaarbaar indien jy net jou algemene kennis wil uitbrei of wil uitvind van iets, maar dit het nie akademiese waarde nie. (#12)

For me it is acceptable if you want to extend your general knowledge or want to find out about something, but it does not have academic value. (#12)

- Ek dink die raadpleging daarvan is nuttig vir die verkryging van agtergrondkennis rakende bepaalde onderwerpe. (#14)
  I think consulting it is handy for getting background knowledge on certain topics. (#14)
- Ek het nog nooit daarvan gebruik gemaak nie, dus weet ek nie heeltemal waaroor dit handel nie. (#21)
  I have never used it and therefore do not really know what it is all about.(#21)

From the responses it is evident that students are aware that sources on the Internet are not necessarily reliable and that through using wikis they now know how easy it is to edit and contribute to sites such as Wiktionary or Wikipedia. The class discussion around reliability of online wiki resources proved to be a very positive unplanned advantage of this research. Another important advantage of the wiki is that it facilitates cooperative learning.

Code: Cooperative learning

The students were very positive about reviewing other students' work as in this way they could also improve their own postings and linguistic fieldwork methods. However, there were some concerns for student reviewers on the reliability of materials provided by peers on the wiki. Responses include:

- Dit is ook lekker om te kyk na hoe die ander mense die opdrag gedoen het. (#4)
  It is also nice to see how other people did the assignment. (#4)
- ... dit dwing jou om na ander se navorsing te kyk en dan meer te leer (#5)
  ... it forces you to look at others' research and then learn more (#5)
- ...dit is maklik om jou klasmaats te bevoordeel. Ons beskik nie oor die nodige kennis om te bepaal of dit werklike akkurate navorsing was of nie. (#7)
  ... it is easy to favour your class mates. We do not have the necessary knowledge to determine if it was actually accurate research or not. (#7)
- ...die wiki is maklik en toepaslik, waar enige een 'n ander een se navorsing kan sien (#11)
  ... the wiki is easy and relevant as one can see other's research (#11)
- ... studente is subjektief en nog kinders as dit kom by evaluasie, ons het vooropgestelde idees en kan vinnig van die kriteria afdwaal. (#19)
  ... students are subjective and still children when it comes to evaluation, we have preconceived ideas and can easily stray from the criteria. (#19)

From the responses it is clear that the students did learn from each other (#4 and #5) in a communal constructivist manner (cf. 2.1). However, the concern was raised that some students could favour the students they assessed (#7) or did not have enough skills to do proper assessment (#19). Hence, for group peer assessment to be successful, some time should also be spent on training students on how to do effective assessment. In this regard, in addition to instruction on how to do assessment, it might be useful to also include students in the compilation of assessment criteria (cf. Sivan, 2000; Smith, Cooper & Lancaster, 2002).

For the sake of this exercise the problems in terms of fair assessment were cancelled out through facilitation by the lecturer/researcher with constant access to the wiki and the archives of any contributions or changes made on the wiki by the students. A more positive aspect of the assignment was the use and the impact of the Wiktionary.

Code: External impact of using a wiki

One of the respondents (#7) was of the opinion that through the use of the public wiki, Wiktionary, a contribution is made to the development of the Afrikaans language. The following responses were noted:

- ... ons maak ’n bydrae tot die uitbreiding van Afrikaans op die internet (#7)
  ... we make a contribution to the expansion of Afrikaans on the Internet (#7)
- Ek het gehou daarvan dat ons blootstelling kry en ons navorsing kon deel met die wêreld, letterlik, en dit was baie lekkerder om so te werk as om nog ’n referaat of skryfstuk te skryf. (#20)
  I liked that we got exposure and that we could share our research with literally the world and it was a lot nicer to work like this than to write another paper or essay. (#20)

It is evident that the students acquired new skills in terms of using wikis and that they appreciated the sharing of research through the use of the wiki interface. The use of a Wiktionary for language promotion was also evident from one of the responses (#7).

5. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A wiki, as an e-learning resource, proved to be very effective in creating a learning community through which knowledge could be constructed. However, the level of computer literacy proved to be a problem. Contrary to perceptions about the computer literacy of students, as evident from the responses, some students still require additional instruction in this regard. Although editing a wiki might not be an essential skill for all university students, it is important that general computer and internet skills are taught and reinforced throughout a student’s studies at university. An element of e-learning highlighted by the respondents was the fact that work could be done on the wiki regardless of where you were and that group activities could be done without having all the group members in the same physical location.

The respondents also commented on the nature of the assignment. The students were able to reflect on the process of doing research as well as working on the wiki. This content was very valuable for instructional purposes, but also for research. The content relating to the research process could also be reused in similar classes in future. Both positive and negative attitudes were recorded in terms of using wikis for the assignment. The respondents appreciated using different types of media and the hands-on approach to research facilitated by the medium. However, some respondents did indicate that they did not appreciate using wikis and preferred completing assignments in hard copy and that they did not always have access to the Internet.

The wiki environment also prompted further responses. Using wikis and especially Wiktionary led to responses in terms of questionable reliability and quality of Wikipedia and Wiktionary as public wikis. This issue also stimulated a very efficient discussion on online reliability and quality in the class. The wiki successfully facilitated cooperative learning by allowing for easy moderated group interaction. The external impact of seeing the worth of the sociolinguistic research through online publication on Wiktionary was received positively by the respondents. Even the promotion of the language itself through the use of the public wiki was mentioned. Hence leading to promotion at both corpus and status language planning level of the language.

6. CONCLUSION

Despite the lack of studies on the teaching of sociolinguistic research methodology at undergraduate level, this article shows how wikis can be used effectively within the language classroom, as wikis provide many opportunities for collaborative work. Through wikis a blended learning approach can be followed where classroom teaching is enhanced with online reporting, discussion and reflection. The importance of the closed wiki (as opposed to a public wiki, such as Wikipedia and Wiktionary) is also clear from this study as the lecturer has control over what is done in the wiki and which students are actively using the wiki. Hence some form of moderation by the lecturer is necessary. Whether content placed on a wiki can be reused still needs to be evaluated in future presentations of this module. In terms of this particular study it is clear more focus could be placed on the reflection on the research process. For this purpose a wiki might not be the most appropriate medium and something like a blog, used as a research journal, can be considered.

This study demonstrates how technologies such as wikis, as also used previously in other studies, could be employed to effectively contribute to cooperative and interactive learning of sociolinguistic research methods. Furthermore, material can be developed effectively by students for reuse within the language classroom.

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Addendum A: wiki code

Description	Wiki code (Wiktionary)	Wiki code (eFundi)	Result
Italics	The "Wiki"	The ~~Wiki~~	The *Wiki*
Bold	A '"new"' site	A __new__ site	A **new** site
Italics and bold	"""Wikipedia"""	"""Wikipedia"""	***Wikipedia***
Strikethrough text	The <strike>old</strike> new site	The <strike>old</strike> new site	The ~~old~~ new site
Underlining	The <u>wiki</u> site		The wiki site
Headings	=Heading 1= ==Heading 2== ===Heading 3===	h1 Heading 1 h2 Heading 2 h3 Heading 3	**Heading 1** **Heading 2** **Heading 3**
Bulleted list	* First item * Second item ** Additional item	* First item * Second item ** Additional item	■ First item ■ Second item ■ Additional item
Numbered list	# First item # Second item ## Additional item	# First item # Second item ## Additional item	1. First item 2. Second item 2.1 Additional item
Hyperlinks (An internal wiki hyperlink can be inserted by adding text in square brackets)	[Introduction] [www.google.co.za] [www.google.co.za|Google]	[Introduction] http://www.google.co.za [www.google.co.za|Google]	Introduction www.google.co.za Google
Inserting images	[[Image:logo.gif]]	{Image:logo.gif}	

Addendum B: E-mail questionnaire

1. Describe your level of computer literacy.
2. What is your opinion about the use of wikis such as Wikipedia and Wiktionary?
3. Have you made any contributions to wikis outside of this class?
4. Who of your group worked on the wiki on eFundi?
5. Why were the person(s) mentioned in question number 4 chosen to work on the wiki?
6. Who of your group worked on Wiktionary?
7. Why were the person(s) mentioned in question number 6 chosen to work on the wiki?
8. How did you conduct the research for this task? Explain.
9. How did you experience the cooperation within your group? Explain.
10. Which problems did you experience with the wiki task? Why?
11. Which part of the wiki task did you think was positive? Why?
12. Would you like to use a wiki in class again? Why?