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WORD TAG CLOUDS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING: USING WEB 2.0 TOOLS IN THE CLASSROOM

Abstract:

Word tag clouds, artful images of word mash-ups, are ubiquitous. One can see them on billboards, in magazines and newspapers, on invitations and posters and even on moving vehicles. Advertisers have been using the power of word clouds to draw in patrons for almost ten years, yet the efficacy of these simple images often goes untapped by educators. The presenters aim to change that by sharing a multitude of activities and uses for word tag clouds in language (EFL, ELL, FLL) acquisition. The participants will leave the workshop armed with skills and ideas to implement in their own classrooms.

There are many word tag generators, but among them none is easier to use than Wordle. The presenters will first share model lessons for vocabulary, grammar, and reading created with Wordle. Additional sites such as Word Sift and Tagxedo will then be demonstrated for other uses to inspire language learners. Examples of student created word clouds will highlight the versatility and utility of these simple and FREE Web 2.0 tools. Moreover, surveys of hundreds of students who have used word tag clouds in our classes will demonstrate the power of this tool to both delight and enlighten learners.

The presenter's word cloud activities and lessons can easily be adapted for all ages and levels of language competency. The materials are simple to prepare with only minimum technological skills and limited time. Sample lessons include ice-breakers, simple poetry writing, sentence construction, vocabulary practice, critical thinking and reading exercises. Given that the presenters are English language instructors examples are provided of students' work in English language acquisition but are readily adaptable to any language class.

Keywords:

Web 2.0, word tag clouds, language learning, TESL, teaching methods, EFL, Wordle, students, English language learning

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