

Teacher's notes

Using a word cloud maker to self-assess writing

Summary

Language level	A2–B1
Age	Primary 9+, Secondary, Adult
Length of lesson	30 minutes + homework
Materials	internet access PC or tablet for the teacher and all learners in class interactive whiteboard or projector a word cloud maker e.g. Wordle, WordItOut, Wordsalad (app) slides: <i>Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing</i> student's handout: <i>Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing</i> A2 or B1

Language objectives	– to write a story about the past – to self-assess vocabulary in a story using a word cloud
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Additional objectives	– to read other learners' written work – to provide feedback on other learners' written work
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Rationale

Autonomous learners take responsibility for their own learning. This includes self-assessing their work and not relying on you for feedback on their strengths and weaknesses. However, not all learners are able to self-assess their work effectively and need support and guidance on how to do this. This lesson helps learners to develop the skills needed to assess their use of vocabulary in a written text using a word cloud.

Learners analyse a model text first. They then write their own text and analyse it using a word cloud, and then edit it.

Materials

- PC, laptop or tablet for the teacher and all learners, in class and at home
- interactive whiteboard or projector
- internet access
- a word cloud maker e.g. Wordle, WordItOut, Wordsalad (app)
- slides: *Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing*
- student's handout: *Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing* A2 or B1

Preparation

1. Check your school's guidelines for using third-party digital tools such as word clouds. If your learners aren't adults, you will need to get parental permission before sharing anything with your learners.
2. Familiarise yourself with how to make word clouds. Try out the tools, choose the one which you like best and check that it works on the browser you use in class.

Procedure

1. Show the class Slide 1 from the PowerPoint *Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing*. Ask if anyone knows what it shows. Explain that it's a word cloud: a picture of a text. The large words appear in the text more often than the small words. Put learners in pairs to discuss what they think the text is about. Give them a time limit of around 2 minutes. Elicit ideas from the class but don't tell them whether they're correct or not.

2. Give learners a copy of the Student's handout: *Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing*. Ask them to look at *Activity 1* and check their ideas. Elicit what the story is about. Answer: It's a description of a person's memory of the first time they went to the sea.

A story about the past (A2)

I remember the first time I saw the sea. I was nine and I lived with my parents and sister in the middle of a city. Our holidays were usually in the country, but this time our parents took us for a beach holiday. We were really excited. We wanted to make sand castles, eat ice creams and look for fish.

The journey was long. When we arrived, it was really warm. I could smell the salt in the air. The sea looked amazing so I ran quickly towards it. I heard my parents calling me but I didn't stop. I ran straight into the water. It was really cold! It was strong, too. A big wave came towards me and I fell. Luckily, my dad picked me up and I could breathe again.

A story about the past (B1)

I remember the first time I saw the sea. I was about nine and I lived with my parents and sister in a city far from the coast. Our holidays were usually in the country but our parents decided it was time for us to see the sea. We were really excited. We wanted to make sand castles, eat ice creams and try to find sea creatures.

The journey was really long but finally we arrived. It was an unusually warm day. I remember it clearly. The sky was bright blue with just a few small clouds. There was a light breeze and I could smell the salt in the air. The sea looked really amazing so I ran towards it as fast as I could. I heard my parents calling me but I didn't stop. I ran straight into the water. Firstly, it was freezing! Secondly, I didn't expect the sea to be so strong. A big wave came towards me and I fell back onto my feet. Some salty water went up my nose and I started to cough. Luckily my dad picked me up and I could breathe again.

3. Keep the word cloud up on the board. Ask your learners to look at *Activity 2* and discuss the questions in pairs. Elicit answers from the class.

Answers:

1. The words *parents* and *really* are repeated. Other frequent words are: *water; towards; ran; time; sea*.
2. They could use *mum and dad* instead of *parents*; *very* instead of *really* (exception: *totally amazing*); *the sea* instead of *water*; *walked fast/jumped/skipped* instead of *ran*; *ocean* instead of *sea*. They use *time* twice with no obvious synonym.
3. If we use a variety of words, it makes the writing more interesting for the reader.
4. Yes
5. No

4. Show the class the homework task on *Slide 2*. Explain that they are going to write about one of the topics on the board. Ask learners to choose a topic.
5. Ask learners to look at *Activity 3* and talk them through the homework task steps. By making a word cloud from the text and self-assessing their vocabulary learners can then rewrite and improve their story.
6. Learners share their stories with you online, by email or a Learning Management System, or bring a paper copy to class.

In the next lesson

1. Show Slide 3 from the PowerPoint *Using a word cloud maker to self-assess your writing*, or write the following Questions on the board:
 - What did the word cloud tell you about your writing?
 - How did you change your writing?
 - Was the word cloud easy to make? Why/Why not?
 - Do you think it helped you? Why/Why not?
 - Will you use it again to self-assess your writing? Why/Why not?
2. Put learners in pairs to discuss the questions. Give them about 5 minutes for this.
3. Elicit some ideas from the class. Did they find the self-assessment task helpful or not and why/why not? Encourage learners to think about the benefits of using the word cloud but also the limitations. Find out from the class how many learners might use this tool again.