

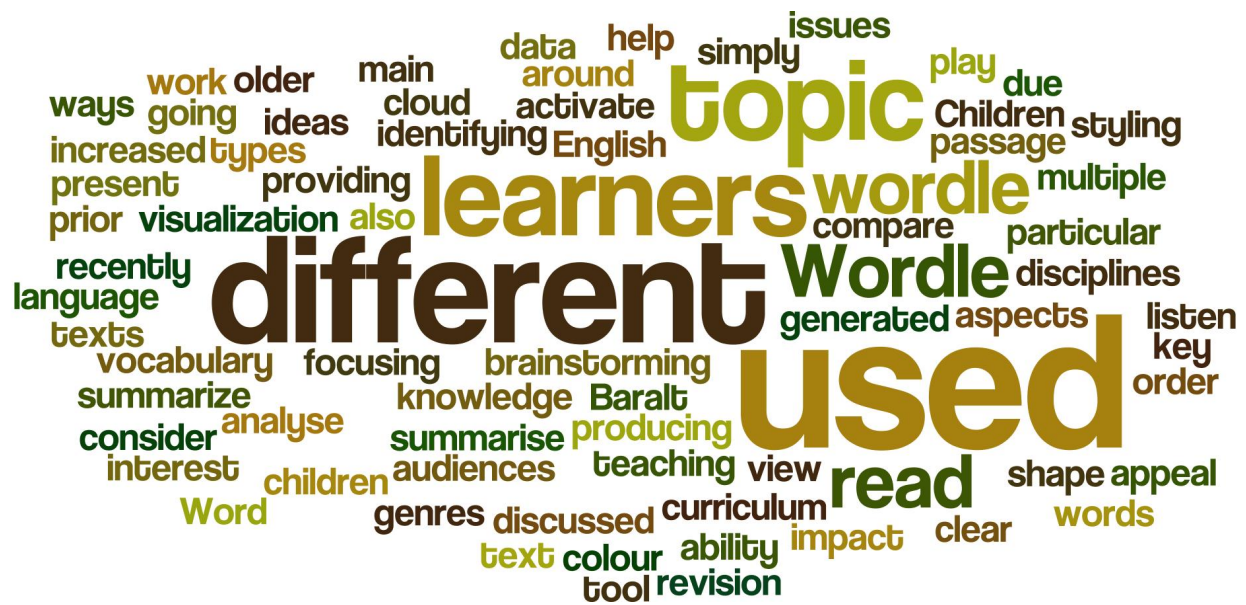
# **Teachers' Level of Awareness in Using Wordle to Teach in Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal**

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## **Abstract**

The study investigates teachers' level of awareness in using Wordle to teach in Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri. The study is guided by a research question and a hypothesis. Descriptive research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study comprised 200 English language teachers in public schools in Owerri Municipal and since the population is not large, the entire population constituted the sample size. A well validated researcher developed scale tagged: Teachers Level of Awareness on Use of Wordle Rating Scale (TLAUWRS) was used for data collection. Test and re-test approach was used to establish the reliability coefficient of 0.81. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer the research question while z-test statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant levels. Findings showed that teachers' level of awareness on the use of Wordle in teaching of English studies was low. Recommendation among others include that seminars and workshops should be organized for English language teachers on the use of Wordle in secondary schools.

**Keywords:** Wordle, awareness of teachers, Owerri municipal, secondary school, English



## Introduction

The primacy of language in human history has never been in doubt. Language is the means through which humans communicate, encode knowledge and pass it on to subsequent generations, investigate reality, and entertain themselves (Danesi 2013). Language is purely a human attribute setting man in contradistinction to other animals. The importance of communication to man is incalculable, especially when daily human interaction is considered. Language therefore remains potentially a communicative medium capable of expressing ideas and concepts as well as moods, feelings and attitudes. Distinguishing the communicative abilities of humans, Denham and Lobeck (2011) note that language makes humans different from the other animals that are unable to use it for communication. Language is not only a resource for meaning making, knowledge, and experience; but it also provides an avenue for people to do things or carry out orders. It is also used to transmit cultures for it is impossible or very difficult to understand language without the attributes of culture (Adeyemi 2011). Only by ensuring its use and development at all levels can the tragedy of the disappearance of languages, which ultimately means the impoverishment of humanity, be prevented.

In education, the English language is the medium of instruction with the effectiveness of the educational programme in the country depending to a large extent on whether or not effective

communication has taken place between the teacher and the learner. Performance of students in English language determines how well they fare and are able to cope with the other subjects. Studies have shown that students hardly speak fluently as a result of paucity of vocabulary. Beimiller and Slonim(2001); Clegg et al(2009) Hart and Risley (1995, 2003) identified poor vocabulary knowledge as a primary cause of poor performance in essay writing and academic failure in general with Okueso (2016) stating that the situation has become worrisome, and thus requiring urgent attention. Osikomaiya (2013), and Onabamiro (2010) observe that poor performances exist in English Language both in internal and external examinations in the nation. In 2014, only 31.28% of 529, 425 students passed with credit in English Language from available WAEC records. This poor performance has continued as only 38.68% of 616,370 students that sat for the WAEC in 2015 had credit pass in English language.

The reasons for these scenarios are many with the role of the teacher and his method of imparting knowledge being part of the contributory factors to the dwindling students' communicative abilities. Knowledge of words continues to be one of the best predictors of reading achievement (Richard 2005 and Broomely, 2004). Yet, vocabulary appears to be diminishing in today's students (Manzo, Manzo and Thomas 2006). Vocabulary is generically referred to as the knowledge of words and word meanings, (Barannestri and Salvadin, 2011). Specifically, we use vocabulary to refer to the kind of words that students must know in order to read with comprehension (Kamil and Hiebert, 2005). Vocabulary is the most important component of language knowledge, being the best predictor of language performance; however, many students get to secondary school with a relatively small vocabulary, which prevents them from achieving their potential (Schmitt, 2008).

Wordle is a web-based tool that can help cement the interface between reading and writing. The tool produces word clusters based on the frequency of words occurring in a sample of writing. Tafazoli (2013) discusses how Wordle can be used in teaching different aspects of the English language curriculum. He states that it can be used to activate prior knowledge about the topic while providing clear view to learners about what they are going to read. In other words, it can be used in brainstorming before learners listen to or read a passage or text. Viégas, Wattenberg and Feinberg (2009) confirm that educators use Wordle to communicate ideas or concepts; as an entry point into discussion. Others use it to teach spelling by creating Wordles of new vocabulary, and then quizzing students on various aspects of the displays. This study therefore investigates the secondary school teachers' level of awareness in using Wordle to teach vocabulary.

There is a growing body of scholarship suggesting the potential benefits of Web2.0 applications aimed at providing teachers and students with a practical framework upon which to

develop critical thinking skills and tools for independent word learning. For example, Selwyn (2007), Murphy and Lebars (2008), Odom (2010), Vaughan (2010), and Williams and Chinn (2010) all report findings endorsing the role of Web2.0 tools could play in high school student learning.

Studies have also shown that greater gains accrue when language instruction moves away from the traditional approach of learning of words to a more innovative one. Innovation therefore is a deliberate attempt to move educational practices from its traditional approach to new ways. It is aimed at improving the quality of existing practices. As a departure from the old way of doing things, it is the driving force in teaching and learning. Its importance cannot be overemphasized as it is not an accidental occurrence but a deliberate effort to bring about changes by integrating old and new ideas (Mkpa and Izuagba 2012, Ike and Iwu 2001).

Visual literacy has become the hallmark in the 21st century world with the educational uses of Wordle becoming increasingly exciting. According to Ohler (2009), “being able to read and write multiple forms of media and integrate them meaningfully is the new hallmark of literacy”.

Despite the above, Wordle still has some limitations. McNaught and Lam (2010) are of the view that Wordle should not be used as a stand-alone teaching tool. They argued that since Wordle is a frequency based tool, it works best when analyzing text in which the full responses of the informants have been preserved. Other limitations to consider when working with Wordle are that the words are retrieved out of context and that it is not possible to trace the codes back to the original text. Words are treated as isolated units, making the process fast, but at the cost of dismissing contextual elements such as the semantics of the words, and the phrases or sentences the words were a part of. Therefore, they recommended using Wordle as a supplementary tool in research.

The main objective of the study is to ascertain to what extent the teachers are aware of the use of Wordle in teaching vocabulary in the Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri zone.

## **Hypotheses**

Teachers’ awareness in using Wordle to teach vocabulary in senior secondary schools is not significantly different where the average level of significance is 2.5

## **Theoretical Framework**

The use of Wordle which is a Web 2.0 tool in teaching stems from the constructivist teaching and learning theory propounded by Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky and Brunner (1990). This theory

was adopted for the study. The underlying premise is that knowledge is not given but constructed based on the learners' prior knowledge. Constructivism theory believes that an individual develops his reasoning with the pattern he sees (Major and Mangope, 2012). The classroom is a constructed place which is situated in a society. This is where professional teaching and learning take place and are made available for each individual to internalize and construct knowledge that is useful in the learning. In this theory, the child is responsible for the construction of his knowledge, through the interaction of new ideas with his prior knowledge (Major and Mangope, 2012).

This constructivist approach establishes a crucial paradigm shift as today's literacies are encouraging the audience not just to be passive consumers but active contributors of their own digital experience Gilbert (2007), Asselin and Moayeri (2011). Likewise, this shift is occurring in an education context, with the focus moving away from the display of an individual's knowledge or skills to that of collaborative and interactive learning with others. The learner thus feels able to introduce his/her own content into the classroom and not just receive what has been handed out to him/her.

The constructivist approach asserts that learning should come from the student and not the teacher; the teacher's role is to create an environment in which the learner has the freedom to construct understanding (Baviskar, Hartle, and Whitney, 2009)The constructivist approach has, however, been criticized (Altun and Buyukduman, 2007; Liu and Matthews,2005) but none of the criticisms invalidates the basic premise that constructivism is a good learning method because children learn best when they are allowed to construct personal understanding based on their experience of things and reflection on those experiences. This forms the basis for the use of Wordle in teaching as it is manipulative and appeals to all the senses. The use of Wordle in teaching motivates, fascinates, stimulates interest, and facilitates interaction and critical thinking among learners. It is based on the foregoing that the researchers set out to examine the level of awareness of the teachers in using Wordle to teach, bearing in mind its impact on teaching and learning.

## **Research Methodology**

The researcher adopted the descriptive survey design to seek information on the level of awareness of teachers in using Wordle to teach vocabulary in Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal. The population of the study comprised all English language teachers, both males and females in Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal with estimated population of 200 teachers. The instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. Likert's four-point

scale was used to elicit information from part B of the questionnaire while part A consists of the bio data indicating the following variables – gender, age, years of experience, qualifications. The reason for the use of this instrument is to reach out to people with varied years of experience and qualifications.

### Data Presentation

**Table 1: Respondents by sex (sex frequency)**

<b>Distribution of Respondents by sex</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% Frequency</b>
Females	122	61
Males	78	39
Total	200	100

The above table shows that there were more females (61%) than males (39%). This was noted to be somewhat consistent with the distribution of the number of female teachers who are more than the male teachers in Owerri Municipal zone.

**Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by years of Experience**

<b>Distribution of Respondents by years of Experience</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% Frequency</b>
1-10 years	50	25
11-20 years	102	51
21-30 years	36	18
31-40 years	10	5
41-50 years	2	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

In the above table, 50 (25%) respondents had 1-10 years working experience and 50 (25%) respondents had 11-20 years' experience which is the highest. 36 (18%) respondents were in the group with 21-30 years' experience. only 10 (5%) were within the 31-40 years' experience. 2

(1%) respondents were within the 41-50 years working experience. It is interesting to note the bulk of respondents were in the range of 11-20 years working experience. Thus, the bulk of the respondents were mature and experienced teachers.

**Table 3: Respondents by highest professional qualification.**

<b>Respondents by highest qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>% Frequency</b>
Master's degree	<b>39</b>	<b>19.5</b>
Bachelor's degree	<b>92</b>	<b>46</b>
Diploma Certificate	<b>67</b>	<b>33.5</b>
Untrained	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table shows that only 39 (19.5%) respondents were Master's degree holders, which is the highest qualification, while 92 (46%) were Bachelor's degree holders. As many as 67(3.5%) of the respondents were diploma and/or certificate holders while only 2 (2%) were untrained. Thus, the number of qualified as compared to untrained teachers was very high being about 98.86%.

### **Research Question**

What are the teachers' level of awareness in using Wordle to teach vocabulary in Senior Secondary Schools in Owerri Municipal?

**Table 4. Respondents level of awareness**

<b>SN</b>	<b>QUESTION</b>	<b>Highly Aware</b>	<b>Aware</b>	<b>Lowly aware</b>	<b>Not Aware</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>A v</b>	<b>Remark</b>
1	Wordle can be used to enhance composition writing	40	75	80	125	320	1 . 6	<b>Rejected</b>
2	Wordle can be used to teach parts of speech	32	63	132	105	458	2 . 3	<b>Rejected</b>
3	Collocation in vocabulary can be	76	120	134	74	404	2 .	<b>Rejected</b>

	enhanced by teaching with Wordle						0 2	
4	Wordle can be used to predict content of the reading.	84	96	94	100	374	1 . 9	<b>Rejected</b>
5	Wordle can be used to increase registers in English language	132	180	204	5	359	1 . 8	<b>Rejected</b>
6	Wordle can be used for collaborative learning	192	135	100	36	463	2 . 3	<b>Rejected</b>
7	Wordle can lead to increased retention rate.	244	198	72	42	556	2 . 8	<b>Accepted</b>
8	Wordle can lead to good sentence formation.	160	99	80	87	462	2 . 3	<b>Rejected</b>
9	Wordle can be used to teach synonyms and antonyms	192	60	180	42	474	2 . 4	<b>Rejected</b>
	<b>Average Mean</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>Rejected</b>					

From the table, the average mean of 2.2 indicates that teachers were not aware of the use of Wordle in teaching vocabulary.

### **Discussion on Findings**

The study was aimed at investigating the level of awareness of the English language teachers in Owerri Municipal zone. In response to the Research Question, an average mean score of 2.2 in the level of awareness of teachers in using Wordle to teach vocabulary in Senior Secondary School was rejected as it was below the accepted mean score of 2.5. The teachers showed low level of awareness in its use to teach parts of speech, collocation of vocabulary and ability to predict the content of which Cochrane (2006) says is one of the uses of Wordle. Whereas Tafazoli (2013), suggests that Wordle can be used to increase registers in the English language, the teachers' response did not agree with this as their average score was below the accepted



value. Mamor and Mangope (2012), aver that the use of constructivism can lead to an increase in knowledge which Wordle does. With the rejection of item no. 6 with an average mean of 1.8, the teachers have shown a low level of awareness that Wordle can be used for collaborative learning. The teachers also exhibited a higher level of awareness that Wordle can help increase retention. An average mean of 2.2 is an indication of the rejection of Research Question as it was below the accepted average mean score.

From the findings, it was obvious that the teachers were lagging behind in the use of some of these innovative tools in teaching. It is therefore the duty of the Ministry of Education to review the curriculum from time to time in order to incorporate programmes and ideas that can bring the teachers at par with some of the best practices in teaching and learning that obtain elsewhere. The textbooks should also be reviewed to incorporate the visuals and hands on activities which help in teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom.

## **Conclusion**

The researchers have gone a long way in ascertaining the level of awareness of the English language teachers in the use of Wordle to teach English vocabulary. The findings indicate a low level of awareness by the teachers. In order to eradicate the low performance in examinations in the English language by the students, there is need for a change of methodology in teaching to embrace the more innovative ones. It is obvious that the world has become digitalized. So many web tools are created to make learning fun and to make the students creative and constructive. It has also been proven that the visuals help a lot in retention. The implication is that when Wordle is incorporated in teaching vocabulary, there will be a remarkable improvement in the written composition as well as oral communication due to the increased word power in their vocabulary. This may eventually eradicate the mass failure in the English language in examinations.

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