

The advanced feature of Wordle <http://www.wordle.net/advanced> is employed to weigh the words and features.



Figure 2: Three words to describe the experiences of the conference (see http://nogoodreason.typepad.co.uk/no_good_reason/2010/07/ou-conference-evaluation.html)

Comparing participants' perceptions before and after an event

Wordle visuals show the relative importance of the topics/terms and help in stimulating discussions, or for comparing before and after situations.

For example, at the start of the workshop, say, on 'Ethical principles of conducting research with human participants', the participants could be asked to present five key aspects that matter to them regarding the workshop topic (e.g. informed consent, right to withdraw, and so on). A Wordle can be created based on the inputs received from the participants at the start of the workshop. Let's assume that during the workshop, various scenarios and case studies of conducting ethical research were discussed. Then at the end of the workshop, the participants could again be asked to list five aspects that they feel are extremely important for conducting ethical research. A Wordle from these post-workshop inputs can be created and then compared with the Wordle produced at the start of the workshop. The comparison would show how the participants' perceptions might have changed by listening to the case studies, examples, and discussions during the workshop.

Getting a feel of the emerging themes from the data

Wordle does not support deep sense making but can help in getting a 'feel' of the significant themes in the data.

For example, we had recently conducted research on how blogging can support PhD students and their research skills development. Based on the data, we had received on students' perceptions about blogging, I have created the Wordle (**Figure 3**) to demonstrate how Wordle can show the significance for the students of some of the themes over others.



Figure 3: Students' perceptions about how blogging can support their research and skills development

Determining which issues or words are important in a presentation

Wordle can also be used to identify the frequently used words in a speech. For example, the text of a keynote address could be fed into Wordle to highlight the key points/themes that the speaker was raising in his address.

Wordle can also be used to compare two keynote addresses or talks. For example, the Guardian newspaper compared Nick Clegg's and David Cameron's addresses: please see

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/may/12/david-cameron-nick-clegg-statements-wordle>

Wordle for reflection

The Wordle visuals can also help in reflection. For example, activities such as the ones listed below could help attendees to reflect on the conference. The resultant visuals could be useful for the conference committee and the organising institution.

- If you have a printer option that allows for you to print to PDF, the best way to get a good image, to use in say a report or web page, is to use the print option and print to PDF then use the snapshot tool in Adobe Acrobat Reader to get an image.
- And finally the good practice for anything like this is you should give acknowledgement to the site that allowed you to produce the image (something like, 'Created using wordle.net').

Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank my colleague Karen Cropper <http://olnetpm.blogspot.com/> at The Open University, UK for her inputs and advice on how Wordle can be used. The section on tips and good practice guidelines is directly extracted from one of Karen's emails to me.

Dr. Shailey Minocha
Department of Computing
The Open University, UK
August 2010