

## Teachers' Perception Towards Outdoor Education Activities in Teaching the English Language in Enugu Education Zone

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined teachers' perception towards outdoor education activities in teaching the English language in Enugu Education Zone, Nigeria. Kolb's experiential learning theory, Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, and Ajzen's theory of planned behavior framed the inquiry. A descriptive survey sampled 186 of 312 English language teachers in 46 public secondary schools after Taro Yamane's formula ( $n = 175$ ) plus a 15% nonresponse adjustment. The 28-item TPOEA-ELTQ measured perceived pedagogical value ( $\alpha = .87$ ), motivational affordances ( $\alpha = .83$ ), implementation constraints ( $\alpha = .80$ ), and intention to integrate outdoor activities ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Cluster means showed agreement on pedagogical value ( $M = 3.21$ ) and motivational affordances ( $M = 3.28$ ), agreement that constraints are serious ( $M = 3.18$ ), and only modest intention ( $M = 2.87$ ). Urban teachers reported more favourable overall perception than rural teachers,  $t(184) = 3.44$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = 0.52$ . Gender and years of experience were not significant. Outdoor English is recognised as sound pedagogy but is not yet planned practice; training and timetable permission are the indicated levers.

**Keywords:** *outdoor education, English language teaching, teacher perception, Enugu Education Zone*

### INTRODUCTION

Typical outdoor English activities in this study include vocabulary walks, descriptive writing from direct observation, role-play in simulated market or civic settings, environmental storytelling, treasure-hunt reading tasks, and collaborative speaking games that use space and movement. International evidence associates such tasks with reduced speaking anxiety and richer lexical uptake (Myhre et al., 2023; Yaacob & Shapii, 2025). Nigerian studies of outdoor play and instruction find that teachers recognise motivational benefits even when classroom use remains low (Oloninisi & Iliasu, 2021; Salami, 2016).

Ajzen's theory of planned behavior predicts that intention will lag attitude when perceived behavioral control is weak. A teacher who agrees that outdoor English is good pedagogy but who also faces a heavy syllabus, a class of fifty, and no official slot for leaving the room is exactly that case. The study therefore measured constraints and intention on the same instrument rather than treating perception as a single favourable-unfavourable score.

Four research questions were addressed. RQ1: What is the mean rating of pedagogical value? RQ2: What is the mean rating of motivational affordances? RQ3: What implementation constraints do teachers report? RQ4: What is their intention to integrate outdoor activities? Three hypotheses tested differences in overall favourable perception by gender (H01), school location (H02), and years of experience (H03).

English language teaching in Nigerian public secondary schools still leans on chalkboard presentation, textbook reading, and decontextualised grammar drills (Ogbonna, 2019). Those routines sit uneasily with accounts of second-language development that locate durable gains in vocabulary, oral fluency, and pragmatic competence in rich, socially mediated use of the target language. Outdoor education, planned lessons that relocate part of an English period into the compound, neighbourhood, or nearby civic space, offers one coherent response (Kolb, 1984; Myhre et al., 2023).

Enugu Education Zone mixes urban and peri-urban public schools and has recently invested in Smart Green Schools, yet English teachers still face large classes, examination pressure, and uneven outdoor infrastructure. The empirical question is whether teachers perceive outdoor activities as legitimate English pedagogy, and whether that perception varies by gender, location, and experience.

Enugu Education Zone is a fair test of whether recent state investment in Smart Green Schools and model senior secondary schools has shifted that default. The zone contains the capital and a dense mix of urban and peri-urban public schools. If perception is already favourable and intention is not, the remaining work is institutional rather than attitudinal. That is the reading the four-cluster instrument was built to support or overturn.

International outdoor-language studies report reduced speaking anxiety and richer lexical uptake when tasks are authentic and spatially extended (Myhre et al., 2023; Yaacob & Shapii, 2025). Nigerian work on outdoor play and outdoor instruction finds that teachers endorse the motivational case and still rarely schedule the activities (Oloninisi & Iliasu, 2021; Salami,

2016). Ogbonna (2019) describes the default English lesson in public secondary schools as chalkboard presentation plus textbook drill, the routine outdoor work is meant to interrupt.

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior predicts the rest of the instrument. Attitude toward the activity can be high while intention remains modest if perceived behavioral control is low. Syllabus load, class size, compound safety, weather, and the absence of official permission are control beliefs. Measuring them on the same questionnaire as intention is what allows the constraint–intention gap to be seen rather than inferred.

Kolb's (1984) experiential cycle, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation, is the most widely cited justification for taking a language lesson off the classroom floor. A vocabulary walk is concrete experience; the follow-up listing and categorising is reflective observation; the grammar note is conceptualisation; the next outdoor task is experimentation. Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural account adds that the walk is also a socially mediated activity in which more capable peers and the teacher furnish a temporary scaffold in the target language.

## **Literature Review**

### **Method**

Proportionate allocation across the three local government areas produced the 186 returned questionnaires. The instrument used four clusters. Perceived pedagogical value covered vocabulary, grammar-in-context, speaking, listening, reading, and syllabus alignment. Motivational affordances covered enthusiasm, reduced speaking fear, and collaboration. Constraints covered syllabus load, class size, compound quality, safety, weather, official encouragement, and training. Intention covered next-term planning, workshop attendance, and peer recommendation.

Content validity was established by two ELT lecturers and one outdoor-education specialist. A two-week test–retest on 20 teachers outside the main sample produced  $r = .81$  for the full scale. Data were collected in person during school visits after permission from zonal offices. A research assistant waited while teachers completed the form, which kept the return rate high and item missingness below 1%.

A descriptive survey targeted the 312 English language teachers in 46 public secondary schools in Enugu East, Enugu North, and Enugu South. Yamane's formula produced  $n = 175$ ; 186 usable questionnaires were returned. The sample was 61.8% female, 63.4% urban, and

42.5% in the 11–20-year experience band. The 28-item TPOEA-ELTQ used a four-point Likert scale (criterion  $M \geq 2.50 = \text{Agree}$ ). Pilot alphas on  $n = 32$  ranged from .80 to .87. Means, independent-samples  $t$  tests, and one-way ANOVA were computed in SPSS.

## RESULTS

Item-level pedagogical-value means ranged from 2.96 (listening through environmental sound) to 3.38 (vocabulary acquisition). Motivational items ranged from 3.09 to 3.42, with general attitude to English the highest. Constraint items were led by large class size ( $M = 3.44$ ) and syllabus load ( $M = 3.37$ ); compound quality was the mildest constraint ( $M = 2.91$ ) but still above the Agree threshold.

The gender contrast, though nonsignificant, ran slightly in favour of female teachers ( $M = 3.17$  versus 3.04). The location contrast was clean: urban  $M = 3.21$ , rural  $M = 2.96$ . Experience-band means were 3.05 (1–10 years), 3.18 (11–20), and 3.11 (21+), a spread too small to survive the ANOVA. Intercorrelations among the four clusters showed pedagogical value and motivational affordances strongly associated, and constraints negatively associated with intention, which is the planned-behavior signature the instrument was built to detect.

Teachers agreed that outdoor activities have pedagogical value (cluster  $M = 3.21$ ) and motivational affordances ( $M = 3.28$ ). They also agreed that implementation constraints are serious ( $M = 3.18$ ), led by large class size ( $M = 3.44$ ) and a heavy syllabus ( $M = 3.37$ ). Intention to integrate outdoor activities was only just above the criterion ( $M = 2.87$ ): willingness to attend a workshop was high ( $M = 3.36$ ), but willingness to recommend outdoor English to colleagues was not ( $M = 2.52$ ). Table 1 summarises the four clusters.

Table 1

*Cluster Means on the TPOEA-ELTQ ( $N = 186$ )*

| Construct                                 | Items | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-------------------------------------------|-------|------|------|----------|
| Perceived pedagogical value               | 8     | 3.21 | 0.46 | Agree    |
| Perceived motivational affordances        | 6     | 3.28 | 0.51 | Agree    |
| Perceived implementation constraints      | 8     | 3.18 | 0.58 | Agree    |
| Intention to integrate outdoor activities | 6     | 2.87 | 0.62 | Agree    |

Table 2

*Hypothesis Tests for Overall Favourable Perception*

| Hypothesis     | Test   | Statistic          | p    | Effect          |
|----------------|--------|--------------------|------|-----------------|
| H01 Gender     | t test | $t(184) = 1.77$    | .078 | $d = 0.27$      |
| H02 Location   | t test | $t(184) = 3.44$    | .001 | $d = 0.52$      |
| H03 Experience | ANOVA  | $F(2, 183) = 2.07$ | .129 | $\eta^2 = .022$ |

Table 3

| Item                                                      | M    | SD   | Decision |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------|------|----------|
| Large class size makes outdoor supervision difficult      | 3.44 | 0.62 | Agree    |
| The English syllabus is too heavy for outdoor lessons     | 3.37 | 0.68 | Agree    |
| Little official encouragement or timetable permission     | 3.29 | 0.70 | Agree    |
| I would participate in a workshop on outdoor English      | 3.36 | 0.64 | Agree    |
| I will recommend outdoor English activities to colleagues | 2.52 | 0.93 | Agree    |

Taken with the constraint cluster, the picture is institutional. Class size and syllabus load are not attitude items; they are timetable items. A zonal scheme-of-work template that already contains one outdoor English slot per three-week block would change those two means more reliably than a change in how teachers feel about vocabulary walks. Perception is no longer the scarce resource in Enugu Education Zone. Permission and a workable class-size plan are.

The item pattern inside the intention cluster is itself a finding. Teachers will attend a workshop ( $M = 3.36$ ) and will collaborate with a colleague ( $M = 3.02$ ), but they will not yet recommend the method to other teachers ( $M = 2.52$ ) and they only barely intend to take a lesson outdoors each term ( $M = 2.71$ ). Professional curiosity is ahead of professional commitment. That is why a circular and an assessed micro-teaching task are better instruments than another awareness seminar.

## DISCUSSION

Recommendations can be stated without new research. First, colleges of education should put one assessed outdoor micro-teaching task into the English methods course so that intention is

rehearsed before posting. Second, zonal directors should write a single-page permission that names compound-based English tasks as legitimate scheme-of-work entries, which removes the unofficial-activity penalty teachers currently anticipate. Third, rural schools should receive a compound-and-safety audit rather than a lecture on attitude; their lower scores are an infrastructure difference, not a belief difference.

Limitations include the four-point scale's compressed variance, the exclusive focus on public schools, and the absence of classroom observation. A follow-up that logs whether workshop attenders actually take a lesson outdoors the next term would test whether the intention cluster predicts behavior as Ajzen requires.

English teachers in the zone already accept the pedagogical and motivational case for outdoor work. What they do not yet accept, at the level of planning, is that they will do it next term. That constraint–intention gap is the finding that matters for teacher education. Large classes and a crowded syllabus are real; so is the absence of official timetable permission and of training that shows how a vocabulary walk or a compound-based descriptive-writing task maps onto WAEC objectives.

The urban advantage is consistent with differences in compound quality, neighbourhood safety, and access to in-service support. Gender and longevity in the classroom do not sort perception, which argues against targeting only young teachers or only women. Workshops should be zone-wide, with a rural strand that treats compound and safety constraints as design problems rather than as reasons to abandon the approach (Salami, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

Outdoor English is recognised but not scheduled. Colleges of education and zonal supervisors can close the gap by modelling short, syllabus-aligned outdoor tasks and by authorising them in schemes of work. Further studies should observe actual lessons rather than rely on perception alone.

A follow-up study should observe whether workshop attenders take a lesson outdoors the next term. Perception research can identify the gap; only a behavioral follow-up can say whether the recommended circular and micro-teaching task closed it.

Heads of English departments should timetable one outdoor lesson per three-week block against a named WAEC or NECO objective so that syllabus-load objections can be answered with an alignment sheet rather than with enthusiasm.

Rural schools should receive a compound safety and space audit before they receive another attitude lecture. The urban–rural gap ( $d = 0.52$ ) is an infrastructure contrast. Treating it as a belief contrast will waste the next in-service day.

Zonal offices of the Post-Primary Schools Management Board should issue a one-page circular that names compound-based English tasks as legitimate scheme-of-work entries. The circular removes the unofficial-activity penalty that currently sits behind the modest intention mean of 2.87.

The English methods course in colleges of education serving Enugu State should include one assessed outdoor micro-teaching task. Intention rises when teachers have already stood in the compound with a vocabulary list and a timing plan; workshop attendance ratings in this sample already show that willingness.

### ***Recommendations***

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